# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

**SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 148**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SESSION 1988-89**

COMPRISING PERIOD
27 FEBRUARY—10 MARCH 1989

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PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

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SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. J. Coxon

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

# THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 148**

**SEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89**


# House of Commons

*Monday 27 February 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## ENERGY

### South Coast Oilfields

2. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the extent of oil deposits in Poole bay and the Solent; and what special measures he expects to be taken to protect this coast line when these fields are developed.

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison):** There are no proven oil deposits in the Solent.

Results from recent drilling suggest that the Wytch farm oilfield extends offshore to the south-east of Poole harbour. Before approving any proposals for further development I shall continue to want to be satisfied that the right measures are taken to protect the environment, as they have been thus far.

**Mr. Atkinson:** I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the close interest that he has taken in this matter and I especially thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his visit to the area last Friday together with my hon. [redacted] the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). Does my right hon. Friend agree that Poole harbour is one of this country's most popular and attractive leisure and recreational areas on which tens of thousand of jobs in tourism depend? Notwithstanding British Petroleum's expertise and excellent record on environmental protection, what plans does my right hon. Friend have to protect our beaches from any oil spillages that may take place?

**Mr. Morrison:** I agree with my hon. Friend that the area which he and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) represent is attractive and brings in a lot of money due to its tourist value. With regard to oil spillages, the normal considerations apply in terms of any approval given for exploration and development.

**Mr. Barry Field:** Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that there are some misgivings about solfire and aerial spraying to deal with oil spill problems? Will my right hon. Friend consider two excellent products manufactured in my constituency—the frogmat boom and the vikona skimmer—which have proved to be considerably more effective in dealing with oil spills?

**Mr. Morrison:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to the excellent products manufactured in his constituency. I assure him that the best type of equipment would be used in what I hope is the unlikely event of any oil spillage.

### Home Insulation

3. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many low-income households have been insulated under programmes initiated by the Energy Efficiency Office; and how many more are expected to be insulated in the current year.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** Some 480,000 low-income homes had been insulated under the community insulation programme up to the end of March 1988. Around a further 125,000 homes will have been insulated by the end of the current financial year.

**Mr. Patnick:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. It is good to know that progress has been made.

The Government should be congratulated on this programme on two counts as it both helps people on low income and assists in saving energy.

**Mr. Morrison:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. My hon. Friend will recall, not least because he represents the city where the headquarters of the former Manpower Services Commission were located, that the programme was introduced by the Government through the Manpower Services Commission. As a result, the people to whom my hon. Friend referred have been helped.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Is the Minister aware of the organisation in Aberdeen known as SCARF—"Save Costs and Reduce Fuel"—which has done an excellent job in assisting low-income families to insulate their houses? Is he further aware that that organisation is facing some difficulties in getting its funding renewed? Will he therefore speak to the Secretary of State for Scotland and do all that he can to ensure that SCARF is able to continue its excellent, first-class work?

**Mr. Morrison:** To be honest I am not totally aware of the particular organisation to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The hon. Gentleman will be aware, however, that when I had principal responsibility for the programme I was in contact with all the voluntary organisations involved. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has recently changed the upper limit to £40, which I believe will improve the potential of the programme.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** First, I endorse what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has said because SCARF also operates in my constituency and I believe that its work should continue. Does the Minister accept that self-congratulation is not in order when in reality the programme has been cut by the Government and the budget of the energy efficiency office has not just been cut but is to be further cut within the next two or three years? Does the Minister agree that if the Government are serious about energy efficiency it is time that they brought in a comprehensive programme to ensure that the targets that they claim to support can be met?

**Mr. Morrison:** The hon. Gentleman uses the word "target", and that is exactly what the Government have done for the whole range of efficiency measures. We have targeted them on the areas where they will be most productive and the people who are most in need.

**Mr. Morgan:** Does the Minister agree that if the Government are to make a reasonable contribution to reducing raw energy demand without affecting people's comfort he will need to do something rather more dramatic in consultation with his colleagues at the Department of Employment to see that the rules are sufficiently relaxed to facilitate the programmes in England and Wales covered by Neighbourhood Energy Action? The NEA is based in Newcastle but covers major cities where, up until Christmas, it was expected that in 1989 the number of people employed on draught proofing and neighbourhood insulation schemes for low-income households would fall to one eighth of the level in 1988.

**Mr. Morrison:** If the hon. Gentleman talked to Neighbourhood Energy Action he would find that it has welcomed the initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, but principally by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, to cover the very point raised by the hon. Gentleman. We must now see whether that initiative works through the system in the ways that both the hon. Gentleman and I would like to see.

## CEGB (Emissions)

5. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the cost for the Central Electricity Generating Board to comply with the European Community directives on emissions of carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer):** The CEGB has estimated that the cost of meeting its obligations under the EC directive on the reductions of sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions from large combustion plant will be about £2 billion at 1988 prices. There is at present no EC directive governing emissions of carbon dioxide.

**Mrs. Gorman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware of the excellent report in the *Spectator* recently orating that human casualties from direct and indirect coal pollution in the United Kingdom are probably about 1,700 per year and that in terms of its devastating environmental effect coal power is much more harmful and expensive than nuclear power?

**Mr. Spicer:** There is no known way of making electricity which does not have a considerable environmental impact. My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to some of the environmentally harmful and in some cases disastrous impacts of coal production. For that reason, we are engaged in a massive cleaning up of coal-fired production to reduce sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) told us last week that a dose of germs was good for for us. Why has she changed her mind about sulphur emissions?

**Mr. Spicer:** My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is right on this issue as she is on so many others—especially in terms of the last part of her question, to which I did not address myself. It is true, of course, that nuclear power contributes considerably towards a cleaner environment.

**Dr. Michael Clark:** Whatever the cost in money terms, is my hon. Friend aware of the cost in terms of despoiling the countryside by taking limestone to use as the active ingredient in the FGD process? Is that not, therefore, another instance of nuclear energy being cleaner, safer and environmentally more attractive?

**Mr. Spicer:** About 2 per cent. of limestone production will be used for the entire retrofit programme. My hon. Friend is right to say that there are great benefits to be had from nuclear power. That is one of the reasons why we are determined to include it in the range of options for the production of electricity.

## Redundant Mineworkers

6. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 30 January, *Official Report*, column 5, if he will now indicate what measures he will take to resolve the problems for redundant mineworkers created by the restart programme; and if the will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** We intend to make an announcement about this problem shortly.

**Mr. Skinner:** At the last Energy Question Time we had the same sort of reply from the Secretary of State for Energy. I hope that the Minister will be more helpful and that the harassment of redundant miners will cease as soon as possible. When my hon. Friends recently met Ministers such as the Secretary of State for Energy, they were given answers such as, "I would love to do it but I cannot find a way." It is time that a way was found, that it was communicated to the Department of Employment and that miners were treated like mine managers who were made redundant and who finished up with £100,000-plus in golden handshakes. When we try to find out the facts the Department of Energy and Hobart house will not tell us. Let us have everybody treated in the same way.

**Mr. Spicer:** One or two legal and administrative complications remain outstanding. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Energy and for Employment are agreed that these must be resolved urgently.

**Mr. Andy Stewart:** My hon. Friend knows that Sherwood has more miners than any other constituency, and that more than 5,000 miners in Sherwood took advantage of the generous redundancy scheme. Those people have been treated fairly and courteously, and have had no complaints, but will my hon. Friend ensure that they are exempt from certain provisions of the Social Security Bill, and will he agree on that with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment? Will my hon. Friend also ensure that it is recognised that they are officially retired, and that they are removed from the unemployment register?

**Mr. Spicer:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out that this was one of the most generous redundancy schemes ever known. Many other industries would have welcomed a similar scheme. My hon. Friend will have to wait for the final decision and the announcement that we shall make as to what will be done in the future.

**Mr. Eadie:** The Under-Secretary of State must be aware that when the miners' parliamentary group met the Secretary of State for Energy and the Minister of State, Department of Employment, they specifically said, and the group accepted, that they wish to resolve the problem. I do not know how long it will take to do that, but as they have said that they wish to resolve the problem, will the Minister consider issuing an edict to the Department of Employment and others saying that they should stop harassing ex-miners?

**Mr. Spicer:** We are certainly considering whether some administrative arrangements can be made along the lines suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Rost:** Does my hon. Friend accept that many miners who were made redundant would have been able to obtain jobs if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had not reneged on his promise to free the private sector and to allow private sector investment to compete with British Coal, which would have resulted in many more jobs being available?

**Mr. Spicer:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy announced in the autumn that it is our intention, after the next general election, to privatise the coal industry. We think that that is the best way to handle the future of the industry.

**Mr. Barron:** Restart interviews are not for everybody but for a group of people made redundant between 1983 and 1986 and aged between 50 and 60. The Minister says that this problem will be resolved. The Minister of State, Department of Employment, had this brought to his attention in July of last year but we are still waiting for a decision to be taken and for the harassment of this small group of ex-miners to stop, allowing them to go on with what they were led to believe was a retirement from the coal industry. Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that this was even stated in written evidence given to the Secretary of State for Employment?

**Mr. Spicer:** The hon. Gentleman will know that it was always made clear that the terms of the redundancy agreement, rather than being as the hon. Gentleman has suggested, included availability for work. Now the question whether any special consideration should be given to them arises. There has never been any doubt about the availability for work conditions being applied——

**Mr. Barron** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Spicer:** The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but the question now is whether we should make special exemptions on top of that.

## Electricity Privatisation

7. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the protection of low-income consumers' rights in the light of privatisation of the electricity industry.

**The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson):** I have received some representations on the need for measures to protect the low-income consumer of electricity.

**Mr. McAvoy:** Would not a more extensive energy-saving programme be more helpful to low-income households, as it would ensure that less heat is wasted?

**Mr. Parkinson:** As the hon. Gentleman may have heard us say, we have put a considerable push behind the community insulation programme. We have a technical difficulty because of the change in the training scheme, but we want to see the scheme renewed and taken up again as soon as possible.

**Mr. Baldry:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best protection for the low-income consumer will be competition? Should not the Opposition be reminded at every possible opportunity that under this Government, even taking into account the April increases, electricity prices will have fallen in real terms by 8·1 per cent., whereas under the Labour Government they increased by

the equivalent of two percentage points every six weeks? The Opposition should never be allowed to forget that or to get away with it.

**Mr. Parkinson:** My hon. Friend is right. In considering the Electricity Bill in Committee, we find it difficult to reconcile the Labour party's posture as the friend of the consumer with its record when in Government. The Labour Government presided over record price increases week after week.

**Mr. Madden:** Surely it is high time that the electricity, gas and water industries had a common policy to avoid disconnections, especially those involving low-income families and pensioners, so that those vulnerable groups and others are not left without heat, light or water for months or, in some instances, years on end, as has happened?

**Mr. Parkinson:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a common code for electricity and gas. The code has been modified and has been shown to work. Disconnections of gas supply fell by 21 per cent. last year. *[Interruption.]* Questions about water supply disconnections should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

**Mr. Michael Morris:** Is not one of the great benefits of privatisation the fact that it clarifies, not least in administrative form, the rights of consumers, which is to the benefit of all consumers, including those on low incomes?

**Mr. Parkinson:** Yes, Sir. Several new rights are given to consumers under the Electricity Bill. As I announced to the Committee, the changes proposed for gas by the director general of Ofgas will be extended to the electricity supply industry. That will put the low-income user of both sources of power in the best position ever.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** Is the Secretary of State aware that in my constituency 60 per cent. of households have incomes of £4,000 per year, or less and that it is an area of especially high unemployment? Does he appreciate that paying energy supply bills is a special problem for those who are unemployed? Will he consider the particular problems of the town of Mountain Ash, where gas and electricity supply disconnections have increased fourfold in the past nine years? Will he consider also the implications of the present policy for low-income consumers?

**Mr. Parkinson:** Under this Government, help to pay heating bills is a consumer's right. That was not the position under the Labour Government. Under this Government, there has been an increase from £90 million to more than £417 million in the support given through the heating allowance, which is now built into income support. The voluntary code and the introduction of prepayment meters has had a dramatic effect on disconnections throughout the rest of the country. I shall be meeting representatives of the South Wales Electricity Board tomorrow evening and I shall bring the matter to their attention.

**Mr. Blair:** As fuel costs to the electricity industry have fallen by more than 7 per cent. in real terms in the past two years, will the Secretary of State strike a blow against inflation and help the consumer by cancelling the 6 per cent. proposed price increase in April?

**Mr. Parkinson:** In arriving at the proposed price increase, the industry has taken into account the reduction in its coal bill. The proposed increase might otherwise have been higher. Whatever the increase is, it will be below the rate of inflation. Once again, it will be this Government who are keeping price increases below the rate of inflation. It was the Labour Government who increased them ahead of the rate of inflation.

## British Gas (Debt and Disconnections)

8. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the current policy of British Gas on debt and disconnections.

**Mr. Parkinson:** The Director General of Gas Supply recently announced agreement with British Gas on new methods of debt collection with a view to reducing the number of disconnections.

**Mr. Greenway:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that welcome news. A reduction of 21 per cent. in disconnections in 1988 is significant and demonstrates that the structures that were put in place are working. I am sure that the new procedures which my right hon. Friend has just announced will help to get the number of disconnections down even lower. However, is it not the case that British Gas in the private sector is showing a flexibility and compassion which it could not show in the public sector? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the same arrangements about disconnections will apply to electricity and that no one should be cut off simply because they have difficulty paying a bill immediately?

**Mr. Parkinson:** I think that in this case the electricity industry can claim to have set the pace for the gas industry. The electricity industry has substantially improved the position, principally as a result of the introduction of pre-payment meters. Their introduction in the gas industry will produce a similar and welcome improvement.

**Mr. O'Brien:** Will the Secretary of State examine the reason why cut-offs are so frequent among lower-paid people who use gas? In my constituency there are elderly people who use gas only for a gas poker. Yet their accounts show that two units plus standing charge works out at more than £3 per unit. Such crippling and cruel incidents are happening. Will the Secretary of State consider the crippling effect of standing charges on low-income families who use a minimum amount of gas?

**Mr. Parkinson:** This matter has been examined by both Labour and Conservative Governments, who concluded that the standing charge is the fairest way to recover the fixed overheads accompanying the supply of electricity and gas. They concluded that the people who would suffer from the abolition of standing charges would be those on low incomes, whose bills would rise.

**Mr. Hannam:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a direct link between the very helpful downward trend in disconnections and the fact that gas prices have dropped by 9 per cent. since gas privatisation? Is that not an indicator for the future of the electricity supply industry, in which there will also be downward pressure on prices?

**Mr. Parkinson:** My hon. Friend is right. The Opposition predicted all sorts of huge escalations in gas prices as a result of privatisation, but in fact gas prices have fallen since privatisation.

## Nuclear Industry

9. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs are supported directly or indirectly by the nuclear industry in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Parkinson:** I understand that the total number of jobs directly dependent on the United Kingdom nuclear industry is estimated at about 120,000. The number of jobs indirectly dependent on the nuclear industry is estimated at around 60,000.

**Mr. Ward:** Does not my right hon. Friend's reply show what a significant contribution nuclear power makes to the United Kingdom economy? Does it not also show how important it is in providing jobs, particularly in the north-west?

**Mr. Parkinson:** Yes, my hon. Friend is right. The nuclear industry is a very important source of well-paid jobs. It also makes a substantial contribution to the improvement of the environment.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Why have the Government been so callous in their approach to the fast breeder reactor programme, which is supported by many of the Secretary of State's colleagues, if the nuclear industry is so important? Why have the French now decided to proceed with the full-scale development of such a programme? What do they see in the fast breeder reactor programme that the Secretary of State fails to see? Are they just brighter?

**Mr. Parkinson:** I explained to the House that, first of all, we have not been callous about the fast breeder reactor. We are giving Dounreay five years more for the operation of the reactor and approximately nine years more for the reprocessing plant. Dounreay will continue to be a very substantial contributor to the Caithness and Sutherland economy for years to come.

There is a very simple reason why the fast reactor programme has been brought to an end. No one wants to build one. There is no customer in the United Kingdom, nor is there likely to be for the next 30 or 40 years. That is why we have taken a realistic view about the prospects for that technology.

**Sir Trevor Skeet:** Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that not only jobs are at stake, but technology? The United Kingdom's pressurised water reactor programme is far too small, and the amount of nuclear-generated electricity is small by comparison with France, Sweden and a number of other major states.

**Mr. Parkinson:** That is true, but we believe that we have at present just about the right level of electricity coming from nuclear power. We have a diversity of supply—with coal, oil, gas and nuclear power—that gives us the security that is a vital part of the industry.

## British Nuclear Fuels plc

10. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the value of the overseas earnings of British Nuclear Fuels plc for the last year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** British Nuclear Fuels' overseas earnings in the financial year 1987-88 were £134 million. Reprocessing contracts have been signed totalling £2·77 billion.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Does my hon. Friend agree that that is not only excellent news for the industry but makes a substantial contribution to our balance of payments?

**Mr. Spicer:** Yes, BNF's overseas earnings make a substantial contribution, and will increasingly do so. BNF will be one of Britain's biggest yen earners, having already contracted business worth more than 500 billion yen or £2·5 billion.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Minister give an assurance that, when contracts are finalised with the Japanese Government and other Governments, they will include a provision that waste will always be returned to the country of origin, and that it will not in future be buried in the so-called offshore dump for nuclear waste that is to be built off the west coast of Cumbria when Nirex has managed to fix the inquiry? We support the nuclear industry, but do not accept that we should take everybody's nuclear waste in the future.

**Mr. Spicer:** No decision has yet been made about where nuclear waste will be buried, if it is buried. I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance he seeks; since 1976 all contracts for overseas earnings include an option providing for the repatriation of the waste, and those options will be exercised.

**Mr. Jack:** Will my hon. Friend join in congratulating the workers of British Nuclear Fuels' Springfields division in my constituency on their contribution to improved productivity, which contributed to our nuclear industry's remarkable export performance?

**Mr. Spicer:** Yes, gladly.

## Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary

12. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The latest annual report of the chief constable of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary was published in August 1988. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Norris:** Does my hon. Friend share my concern that the constabulary is armed? If he can confirm that that is the case, will he indicate which Secretary of State of the time first authorised the arming of the authority's constabulary?

**Mr. Spicer:** Yes, I confirm that the constabulary does carry arms when required. The Secretary of State who, in 1976, took the decision to arm the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary was the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) or, as he then was, the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** Will the Minister acknowledge that Liberal Members at the time voted against the arming of the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary? Will he also say whether he is prepared to give an assurance to the House that when either the authority on the nuclear industry is privatised, there will not be an upsurge of private armed police forces in this country?

**Mr. Spicer:** In answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, we have no plans to privatise the Atomic Energy Authority. As to the hon. Gentleman's first question, the Liberal party was ill-advised, as usual, in taking that particular decision—as in so many others that it takes.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Does my hon. Friend accept that if the Central Electricity Generating Board persists in sending spent nuclear fuel to Morecambe, the authority will have to increase its constabulary? In view of British Nuclear Fuels' vast profits that my hon. Friend has just referred to, will he consider asking BNF to spend some of those profits on enabling each advanced gas-cooled reactor station to build stores for its own spent nuclear fuel, so that the CEGB will not try to send it all to Morecambe?

**Mr. Spicer:** That is a matter for the CEGB, and for planning procedures.

### United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association

13. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the committee of United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** I meet UKOOA often, but have no plans to do so currently.

**Mr. Doran:** When does the Minister expect to conclude his discussions with UKOOA and other operators about the installation of sub-sea emergency shutdown valves, and precisely when does he expect to publish the regulations?

**Mr. Morrison:** I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a specific date. Negotiations are continuing, and I am as concerned about the matter as he is.

**Mr. Barry Field:** I understand that the vessel that broke adrift in the North sea is soon to be replaced, and that that field will be back on stream. When he meets the association, will my right hon. Friend congratulate the field's operators on getting it back on stream in record time and in a very hostile environment?

**Mr. Morrison:** I assure my hon. Friend that I will do that, but I will also ensure that safety regulations are properly implemented in that and all other fields.

### Aberthaw A Power Station

14. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board about the future of Aberthaw A power station.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** None. I would expect Aberthaw A power station to play a useful role in the future plans of the National Power Company.

**Mr. Michael:** Is the Minister aware of proposals that low-grade coal should be used in a new process that also has considerable environmental benefits for the production of electricity at Aberthaw? Is he in favour of that development, and is he encouraging it? Has he received representations from the Secretary of State for Wales about the proposal, and will he tell us about it?

**Mr. Spicer:** I am certainly not aware of any representations sent by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that we are extremely interested in anything that improves the efficiency and lessens the environmental impact of Aberthaw and, indeed, of coal-fired stations throughout the country.

### South of Scotland Electricity Board (Coal Supplies)

15. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on recent initiatives taken by his Department in order to ensure that suitable arrangements are made between British Coal and the South of Scotland Electricity Board for the continued use by the South of Scotland Electricity Board of deep-mined Scottish coal.

**Mr. Parkinson:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have made it clear to both sides in the negotiations that the Government would welcome their reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement.

**Mr. Douglas:** That is a fairly interesting reply. Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that the national interest in this country, in relation to the continuation of deep-mined coal production in Scotland, will not be determined by the courts? Will he assure us that he and the Secretary of State for Scotland will use their persuasive powers with British Coal and the SSEB to ensure that contractual relationships are upheld and that deep-mined coal from Longannet and Cockenzie is used in power stations, so that we do not find ourselves in the farcical position of a Longannet project being written off the books because of a failure to reach agreement?

**Mr. Parkinson:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, the negotiations are to be carried out by the two concerns, not by the Government. I have, however, made sure—as I said that I would when I met the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends—that the negotiations are now being carried forward at the highest level in both companies, as a matter of urgency.

**Mr. Andy Stewart:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that British Coal's operating profits all come from the Nottinghamshire coal field? Why should my constituents suffer job losses when we are subsidising other areas in the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Parkinson:** I think that what the House wants is a sizeable, economic, successful coal industry, and the Government have been making substantial investments of taxpayers' money to give the industry every chance to be successful.

**Mr. Blair:** I shall welcome any intervention that the Secretary of State may make in the matter. May I impress on him that the future of the Scottish coal industry is clearly at stake in efforts to ensure that the dispute is

resolved? Does he agree that it would be absurd if the industry's future were determined in the courtroom rather than the boardroom?

**Mr. Parkinson:** I would not regard it as satisfactory if the courts were to make a final decision. Let me make it clear on behalf of the Government that I want both sides to get together and to reach a sensible agreement.

### British Gas

16. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas; and what issues were discussed.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Gas plc in November when a range of issues were discussed.

**Mr. Cox:** While I note that reply, will the Minister assure the House when he next meets the chairman he will raise the issue of the charges that gas boards impose on people who report a possible gas leak in their home? The Minister is no doubt aware of the urgency of checking possible leaks quickly, but often the cost of doing that is £30, £40 or £50. Does the Minister accept that that cost puts enormous numbers of people off reporting such leaks? Does he agree that there should be no charge on something so important?

**Mr. Morrison:** The hon. Gentleman has referred to a matter that is part of our ongoing discussions with British Gas. I know that British Gas shares the hon. Gentleman's concern on this matter, but ultimately somebody—the customer—must pay.

## THE ARTS

### Victoria and Albert Museum

57. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chairman of the trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum to discuss the restructuring of staff.

**The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce):** The organisation and management of the Victoria and Albert museum are matters for the director and trustees of the museum. I have every confidence in them.

The chairman and director have explained to me their plans, both to strengthen the scholarship of the museum and to improve its management of the collections. I fully support those objectives.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** Has the Minister seen the critical remarks of professor Martin Kemp, who has just resigned as a trustee of the V and A because he says that the Government are increasingly appointing to museum boards people who mirror their policies? Why does the Minister not admit that he wants more people who can be economical with the truth, such as the present chairman of the V and A, and not trustees who genuinely protect the country's heritage?

**Mr. Luce:** I deplore the way in which the hon. Lady phrased that question. The V and A has an outstanding chairman, outstanding trustees and an outstanding director. If the hon. Lady looks at the list of trustees, she will see a broad balance of interests, concerns and backgrounds, including three professors who concentrate on areas of scholarship, business men and people from public service. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister makes such appointments, it is important to ensure that there is a broad range of interests, which is what we have at the V and A.

**Mr. Cormack:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that even those who believe that he is right to have confidence in the trustees and the director, and even those who feel that the hon. Lady's slur was quite unwarranted and unworthy, feel that this incident has not been handled as well or as sensibly as it might have been, especially bearing in mind the long and distinguished service given to the museum by those who have been declared redundant? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity of thanking them for their services?

**Mr. Luce:** I understand my hon. Friend's point. I, too, attach the highest importance to good staff management and good personal relations. I must reinforce the fact that I fully support the overall objectives that are designed to maintain and enhance the standards of scholarship and research, to improve the standards of maintenance and management of the objects in the collections, as well as increasing the museum's contribution to education while attracting the public. All those are important objectives. I am grateful to all the staff, many of whom have served the Victoria and Albert museum for many years.

**Mr. Fisher:** Will the Minister explain the nature of the Government's interference, which was quoted by professor Martin Kemp as one of the reasons for his resignation from the trustees? Does he accept that, with so many of the staff voicing their concern and lack of support for the restructuring plan, all is far from well at the Victoria and Albert museum and that he could best fulfil his responsibilities by setting up a committee of inquiry into the running, the curatorial and administrative structuring and the funding of the museum?

**Mr. Luce:** I must reconfirm that there is no question of any Government interference in the management of the Victoria and Albert museum. I believe—I have made this clear repeatedly—that the Government should delegate responsibility for the management of the museums to the director, trustees and the chairman of the trustees. I am sure that that principle of devolution of authority is right.

As I have said, I support the general objectives of the restructuring which, incidentally, are in line with the changes made some months ago by the national maritime museum. The hon. Gentleman asked how that restructuring will take place. As I understand it, the changes will take between two and three years to be completed. I have been told by the director that she will undertake to review carefully the progress of the changes as they happen.

**Mr. Jessel:** How has management restructuring worked out in other museums such as the national maritime museum at Greenwich, the natural history museum and the science museum? Have they been able to retain the services of their top experts and scholars? Can my right hon. Friend throw any light on what differences there may be between what happened at those museums and what happened at the Victoria and Albert museum?

**Mr. Luce:** My hon. Friend is right to point out that over the months and years there have been a number of

management changes to modernise the administration of our great institutions. He is right to draw attention to the fact that the science museum and the natural history museum have experienced changes. The national maritime museum has experienced changes broadly in line with the concept behind the changes at the Victoria and Albert museum. They have relieved the scholars—to whose research work I attach the highest importance—of day-to-day management. The concept has been successfully implemented at the national maritime museum, from which we should learn a lesson.

### British Theatre Association Library

58. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what further representations he has received over the funding of the British Theatre Association library.

**Mr. Luce:** I have received many representations from organisations and individuals. I am hopeful that a solution will now be found to enable the continuation of the main services offered by the British Theatre Association in a suitable location.

**Mr. Winnick:** Is the Minister aware of the tremendous loss that would result if the association and the library were forced to close? How optimistic is the Minister that a solution will be found in the very near future? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that tremendous anxiety is felt, not only in the theatre world—where, as he must be aware, it certainly exists—but more widely? Scholarship is at stake, and one hopes that a solution will be found in the next few weeks.

**Mr. Luce:** To my surprise, I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman said. I certainly accept that the library and information services provided by the British Theatre Association library have been valuable, not only to professionals in the theatre, but to amateur dramatic societies around the country, for which they provide an important information service. I have instructed the British library to work intensively with the British Theatre Association library and other organisations with a view to seeking a viable solution. I have recently had meetings with the director, chairman and president of the British Theatre Association library, as well as British library officials, and I am confident that a viable solution will be found from one of the options that are being considered.

### Ethnic Minority Arts

59. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the results of the Arts Council symposium on ethnic minority arts.

**Mr. Luce:** I was able to attend this particular symposium with my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). The council reaffirmed its determination to pursue equality of opportunity across all areas of the arts.

**Mr. Baldry:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply and I am sure that he and the rest of the Treasury team are doing all they can to promote opportunities in ethnic minority arts. Does my right hon. Friend agree that one purpose of promoting opportunities in ethnic minority art is to achieve a greater understanding and tolerance of each other's cultures? If we do not learn to understand, tolerate and live with each other's cultures, we shall return to the dark ages.

**Mr. Luce:** I must agree with my hon. Friend. There is no shadow of doubt that Chinese, Asian and Afro-Caribbean cultures all have contributions to make to the culture of this country. The Arts Council is right to promote these policies, provided that they are based on the principle of equality of opportunity, which they are, and provided that any funds directed towards artistic organisations are based on the artistic merits of those organisations.

### Live Theatre

60. **Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment the Office of Arts and Libraries has recently made of the health and well-being of live theatre in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Luce:** Evidence from the public and private sectors shows that the theatre is in a healthy state. There are more than 600 venues in Great Britain, and about 350 separate drama companies. Attendance is around 50 million a year. The variety and quality of Britain's theatre make it the best in the world.

**Mr. Marshall:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer; he knows that I fully support all that he has just said. Will he take this opportunity to reassure those who work in the theatre that he recognises now, as he has done in the past, the continuing role of Government through other Departments—the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry—in encouraging private investment by so-called angels in future productions of the theatre?

**Mr. Luce:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who plays a prominent role as adviser to the Society of West End Theatres. I have repeatedly made clear my willingness—past and future—to hear the society's views on the health of the theatre in the West End. I am certainly keen to follow up my hon. Friend's suggestion.

### Royal Opera House

61. **Mr. Fraser:** To aks the Minister for the Arts whether he has discussed the redevelopment of the Royal Opera House with the chairmen of English Heritage and the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Luce:** The redevelopment of the Royal Opera House is, at this stage, a matter for the Royal Opera House development board to discuss with interested parties.

**Mr. Fraser:** How much truth is there in *The Guardian* allegation that there will be a major departure from the plans originally put to English Heritage? Will the Government ensure that there are sufficient funds for redevelopment in the interests of Covent Garden, so that the board of the opera house does not have to turn to short-term commercialism to achieve a lasting monument in London?

**Mr. Luce:** To answer the hon. Gentleman's first point—if this is what he was referring to—the suggestion of a wholly new concept known as opera in Disneyland is quite false, and the Royal Opera House has no such concept in mind. As the hon. Gentleman knows, it has for some time

been working on redevelopment proposals for the longer term—proposals devised for the 1990s—to modernise the institution, to bring it up to date and to ensure that it matches other great opera houses around the world. That will be done entirely with private sector development, and I wholly support the Royal Opera House's objectives in that direction.

## CIVIL SERVICE

### Trade Unions

90. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next plans to meet with officials of the Civil Service trade unions; and what topics are on the agenda.

**The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce):** I have no plans at present to meet officials of the Civil Service trade unions.

**Mr. Allen:** What pre-testing of coastguards' eyesight and hearing takes place, and what continuous assessment is there of their eyesight and hearing, given that more of them work at VDUs and listening stations, often, I am told, for 12 hours at a stretch? What breaks do they have during the day and throughout the year, so that their eyes and ears can recover? I know that that is a detailed question, but I should appreciate it if the Minister were to write to me with his thoughts and some accurate information.

**Mr. Luce:** I shall, of course, draw that question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who is responsible for coastguards. If the hon. Gentleman expects me to answer his question off the cuff, he thereby ensures that I am the Minister for everything.

**Mr. Holt:** My right hon. Friend usually trots out the answer that four fifths of civil servants work outside the south-east triangle when I ask questions about the movement of civil servants to the north of England. His answer earlier was disappointing: he does not appear to have plans to talk to the Association of First Division Civil Servants to ask why none of its members want to go to the north of England, and why so few are there. What is his Department doing to encourage other Departments to see that senior civil servants take their Departments with them to the north of England?

**Mr. Luce:** I am entirely sympathetic to my hon. Friend's views. My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General is responsible for the overall policy of relocation of civil servants. I have repeatedly made it plain that four out of five civil servants work outside Greater London, that in the past nine years another 12,000 have moved outside Greater London through dispersal and relocation and that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has identified a review of 34,000 civil servants who could possibly be moved. It is not certain whether they will be, but the review is under way. I hope that that encourages my hon. Friend.

91. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met Civil Service unions; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Luce:** I have meetings from time to time with representatives of Civil Service trade unions both centrally and during visits to Civil Service establishments. A wide variety of matters are raised.

**Mr. Barnes:** Has the Minister given further consideration to the demands of the Civil Service trade unions that interviewers for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys should be included in the principal Civil Service pension scheme, as contributions towards that scheme are already deducted from their salaries?

**Mr. Luce:** I note what the hon. Gentleman says, and I know that discussions are continuing. This is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I shall make a point of ensuring that the hon. Gentleman receives a specific reply on that issue.

**Mr. Jack:** My right hon. Friend will be aware of the great disappointment shown by many members of the Civil Service trade unions when his Department had to transfer to the Treasury my question on Civil Service relocations to the Fylde coast. Will he take this opportunity to endorse the Fylde coast as a suitable place for civil servants to work, and will he provide such information as is necessary to show that the Fylde coast is suitable to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General when he makes his decisions on the matter?

**Mr. Luce:** I understand my hon. Friend's sense of frustration, but there is a clearly laid-out division of responsibility between my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and myself on Civil Service matters. Where I can, I try to give a broad Government reply on Civil Service matters, even if they do not directly concern me. As for my hon. Friend's specific point, I shall draw my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to the importance of attracting more civil servants to the Fylde area and ensure that he takes that point on board.

**Mr. Madden:** To revert to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) about OPCS interviewers, has the Minister seen the leaflet issued by the Institution of Professional Civil Servants entitled, "Would you do this job?" Is the Minister aware that those 500 interviewers, who are mainly women, are badly paid and have no holiday or sick pay, no job security and no promotion prospects? They have been struggling for 10 years for a pension. Is it not high time that that injustice was remedied by the Minister and that those women, who often work irregular hours alone, at night and in dangerous circumstances, were given justice and a proper pension?

**Mr. Luce:** Although it is not my direct responsibility, I shall certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to the hon. Gentleman's points.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** Is it not the case that the Paymaster General's office is in Crawley? Does my right hon. Friend know whether the Paymaster General considers that to be the best place to deploy his resources rather than the north-east or the north-west?

**Mr. Luce:** It is only fair that I do not give a direct answer on behalf of my right hon. Friend. But he made it plain in a recent statement that we are reviewing the

position of 34,000 civil servants to see whether it is possible to relocate them. I hope that my hon. Friend realises the importance that the Government attach to relocation.

## Privatisation

93. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he has any plans to alter the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants in those units of administration and Government work that may be proposed for privatisation.

**Mr. Richard Luce:** No, Sir.

**Mr. Fisher:** Will the Minister confirm or deny the rumoured existence of a proposed Privatisation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which would remove the pension rights of civil servants?

**Mr. Luce:** I know of no such Bill. But let me make it plain that the policy on privatisation remains clear and consistent, as it has for the past 10 years. It is for each Government Department to review whether any of its operations could be more efficiently managed by means of privatisation. Failing that, there are other ways of dealing with the matter. If privatisation is an option, it is of course important to treat civil servants fairly and properly. Each case must be reviewed, and the Secretary of State for the Department involved will be accountable to the House.

**Mr. Barry Field:** If my right hon. Friend has no plans to alter the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants before privatisation, does he plan to introduce alterations to allow for regional pay, thereby saving the British taxpayer a considerable amount of money?

**Mr. Luce:** My hon. Friend has put his finger on an important point in terms of not only the location but the recruitment and retention of civil servants. Recent agreements reached with the Civil Service unions have led to greater flexibility in the arrangements, allowing for flexible pay to take into account people's skills and the area in which they work. That is the direction in which we are going, and I think it makes entire sense in terms of proper recruitment and retention policies.

**Dr. Marek:** The Opposition welcome the Minister's statement that he has not heard of the Privatisation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1990, and that at present he has no plans to change the existing pension entitlements of civil servants prior to privatisation in any area for which the Government may have such proposals. May I ask him to go a little further and say that is his view, and that in future he will oppose any changes in, for example, the pension entitlements of civil servants before any privatisation?

**Mr. Luce:** Each case has to be treated on its merits according to the circumstances. If we are talking about the Civil Service and our proposals for privatisation, clearly the options available to the civil servants who are involved will have to be set out—whether they stay in the Civil Service, or whether they have an option to transfer, in which case they will probably have the option to transfer their pension as well. Clearly, it is important to ensure that, so far as terms and conditions are concerned, civil servants are treated as fairly as possible.

## Short Brothers

3.31 pm

**Mr. Kevin McNamara** (Kingston upon Hull, North) *[by private notice]:* To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the future financial reconstruction of Short Brothers plc Belfast.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers):** The Government recognise the need to restructure the balance sheet of Short Brothers plc in advance of sale to provide a framework for the successful transition of the company into the private sector. In preparation for this, and in order to effect a reduction in the Government's liabilities, we propose to replace the company's indebtedness to commercial banks by convertible loans from the Government at national loans fund rates, with the intention of conversion into equity for disposal on sale of the company. An additional provision of £390 million has therefore been included in the 1988-89 Northern Ireland spring supplementary estimates; these are covered by the Draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which will be laid shortly. To facilitate this, an increase will be necessary in the Northern Ireland Office grant-in-aid to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, which will be provided for by a Northern Ireland Office late spring supplementary estimate. The issue of the loan to the company will be subject to the approval of the European Commission.

**Mr. McNamara:** I am obliged to the Minister for his statement. I only regret that it arose by way of a private notice question and was not volunteered by him as a statement to the House, as the issue had been trailed extensively in the press over the weekend. Indeed, it was the subject of a hostile leader in *The Daily Telegraph* this morning.

It is a matter that affects not only Shorts in Northern Ireland but a great number of subcontractors in this country. The future of Shorts has a sad history, which caused the Trade and Industry Select Committee to say that it

"has not developed as part of a carefully planned strategy but in too precipitate a manner."

Whilst we welcome the support that has been given to Shorts on this occasion, we regret very much that the Government were able to find adequate sums only when they intended to privatise the company, and not over the years when adequate capital could have prevented many of the problems with which Shorts has been confronted. The company now finds itself in exactly the same position as Rover was in when it was being sold off to British Aerospace.

There are a number of key questions that still have to be answered. The Minister has announced his arrangement. Presumably—will he confirm this—this money will come from the contingency fund. Secondly, can he state that the original tranche of £390 million as a supplementary estimate is only part of what is to be an overall package, and that further moneys will be available for whatever company decides, or is chosen, to purchase Shorts? The Select Committee estimated that between £700 million and £850 million would be needed to meet the accumulated deficit, future liabilities, working capital and launching aid for the FJX. The Minister has said nothing whatsoever about that launching aid, nor, indeed, has he announced who is to be on the shortlist of prospective purchasers of the company. Is he in a position to make that announcement now, as he has gone some way towards reconstructing the financial position of the company?

Yesterday, it was reported that GEC and Fokker would make a joint bid—GEC for the missiles division and Fokker for the aircraft and airframes division—but that if they were succesful, they would not be keen to pursue the FJX jet because of Fokker's interest in the Fokker F50. Will the Minister confirm that any joint venture bid will be committed to continuing the FJX and that launching capital for the project will be available from the Government? That is fundamental and of the utmost importance to the future of aircraft building in Northern Ireland.

Finally, will the Minister confirm that whoever purchases Short Bros, its headquarters and research and development will be kept in Northern Ireland, and that the proud name of Short will be retained? Instead of being dragged here to make statements on these important matters, will he give an undertaking that he will carefully inform Members from Northern Ireland who are interested in these matters and ensure that statements are made in the House, without his having to be pursued by means of a private notice question? Great sums of public money are at stake and all taxpayers have an interest. In particular, will the Minister give an undertaking that, when the time comes to make his decision on Harland, it will not be announced surreptitiously by a planted question, but in the open on the Floor of the House?

**Mr. Viggers:** The hon. Gentleman approached this question in his usual manner. We had intended to make the announcement this afternoon by a written question and answer and that would have been entirely appropriate because this is an interim measure as part of the privatisation process. The final amount of any reconstruction will depend on the outcome of negotiations with the prospective purchasers.

The hon. Gentleman said that the measure was precipitate. He must have forgotten that it was on 6 December 1984 when the Government expressed their intention to privatise Shorts. I announced in the House on 21 July 1988 that it was our intention to proceed on the current basis, and our policy has been consistent since then. The hon. Gentleman referred to the company's capital shortfall. That is the result of losses on the profit and loss account. He asked for details of the £390 million. These will be in the spring supplementary estimates. He then asked about lauch aid and prospective purchasers. It would not be helpful to Shorts, Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom as a whole for me to go into detail on our discussions with prospective purchasers. The negotiations are commercially confidential and that must be respected. The preferred option is to sell the company as a single entity. On that basis, proposals have been invited from private sector interests.

**Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop** (Tiverton): Will my hon Friend tell me whether statements about launch aid for the FJX will be made by Ministers from the Northern Ireland Office or from the Department of Trade and Industry? Clearly, if it were a United Kingdom firm, statements would come from the Department of Trade and Industry. It is important to know that, not least in relation to who

*[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]*

will respond to questions when the time is ripe on that matter, bearing in mind the recommendations of the Select Committee, of which I am a member. Which Minister will respond to those recommendations of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry—Ministers from the Northern Ireland Office or the Department of Trade and Industry?

**Mr. Viggers:** The handling of Shorts is generally a matter for the Northern Ireland Office, but the Department of Trade and Industry has 9·5 per cent. of the shares of Shorts and we consult with it closely. Launch aid for the FJX is tied up completely with our negotiations with prospective purchasers. It would be unthinkable for the Government to proceed with the FJX without knowing the clear intentions of the prospective acquirer.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): Does the Minister accept that the privatisation of Shorts is regarded as a delicate matter in this House and the Province, and that there is great anxiety that the Government are not giving a forthright, clear exposition of the privatisation? Will he give a clear and absolute assurance that the Government are determined to sell the company as a single entity? Will he make it clear that in those circumstances the Government recognise their obligation to provide the kind of launch aid that the FJX requires to ensure that the company can continue as a single entity? Will he undertake to give the House the assurance that any privatisation will prevent the possibility of subsequent asset-stripping, which is feared in Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Viggers:** I have said many times that our preferred option is to sell the company as a single entity. I have made it clear that the information memorandum was issued on that specific basis. Launch aid would be something for which the prospective acquirer would be eligible to apply to the Government. Of course, it would be the purpose of Government in Northern Ireland to ensure that the jobs and the skills are kept in Northern Ireland. It is for that reason that we are negotiating with full recognition of the sensitivity of the situation.

**Mr. Cranley Onslow** (Woking): How long does my hon. Friend expect that he will need to bring his negotiations to a conclusion?

**Mr. Viggers:** The privatisation of Shorts is causing concern to those who work for the company. While its board welcomes privatisation—as I believe do many of its workers—nevertheless uncertainty is always bad for any company. We recognise the need for urgency and we shall bring the discussions to a conclusion as quickly as we can.

**Mr. Doug Hoyle** (Warrington, North): While I appreciate what the Minister is saying about selling Shorts as an entity, does he agree that the press speculation about GEC and Fokker—that GEC is interested just in missiles and Fokker would not be interested in the FJX—leads to a lot of anxiety and anguish among people in Northern Ireland, especially those who are employed by Shorts?

Will the Minister say categorically that any decision to sell Shorts will involve it being sold to a company that is determined to take up the FJX project, which is essential to the success of Shorts?

**Mr. Viggers:** I am not responsible for press speculation, much of which is wide of the mark. It is the Government's clear and express intention that Shorts should be moved to the private sector. It has many high-quality skills and excellent products. We believe that the right place for Shorts is within the commercial disciplines of the private sector and we are confident that it will have a good future.

**Mr. Gerald Howarth** (Cannock and Burntwood): I warmly welcome this long overdue reconstruction of the company's accounts, and my hon. Friend's undertaking to expedite as quickly as possible the sale of the company and to relieve the uncertainty. Will my hon. Friend tell the House that the company has a healthy order book and that it is not a company devoid of good products to sell in the market place?

**Mr. Viggers:** I know that my hon. Friend follows this matter closely. He will be aware that the company has an order book approaching £1,000 million for a number of outstanding projects, including the Tucano, the SD360, the Starstreak missile and, of course, the important aerostructures business for Boeing and Fokker.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Will the Minister be careful about handing over a company such as Shorts to Lord Weinstock and his colleagues at GEC, who frighten those of us who are interested in protecting the taxpayer and in procurement on defence contracts? Is he aware that when we were examining in the Public Accounts Committee the question of irregularities in procurement and all sorts of overcharging by defence contractors it seemed that invariably GEC was there in the front line? Is it right that Lord Weinstock should be allowed to increase his monopoly when that is clearly against the national interest?

**Mr. Viggers:** I simply say that I believe that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are a slur on a fine British company.

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend has kindly told us the coupon of the commercial loan stock, but I do not believe that he has told us the terms. Can my hon. Friend inform the House of those terms? My hon. Friend may be aware that Westland Aerospace in east Cowes has been one of the main competitors of Short Brothers in obtaining Boeing composite wing contracts? Can he assure the House, and especially myself, that British taxpayers' money will not be used to subsidise future contracts and to take them—perhaps, to West Germany—in unfair competition with a company that has obtained those contracts through sheer guts and determination, excellent teamwork between management and the work force and without taxpayers' subsidy, despite the fact that unemployment in my constituency is above the national average, rather like Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Viggers:** As I mentioned in my original response to the private notice question, the loans will be from the Government at national loans fund rates and they will be convertible into the shares of the company at the time of the sale. My hon. Friend makes a fair point on behalf of his constituency company. I shall simply say that the objective is that Shorts should operate in a completely commercial environment.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): Are not private enterprise solutions for Northern Ireland, of all places, terribly inappropriate? A. J. P. Taylor, the

historian, talked about war Socialism as something that operated during the two world wars. There is great conflict in Northern Ireland and surely something that represented the collectivist solution would be the appropriate means of trying to handle the problems of the Province.

**Mr. Viggers:** Absolutely not. I am delighted that, in the past two years, unemployment has gone down from a headline total of 131,000 to a headline total of 111,000. That drop is not due to the public sector, but principally to the private sector, which has been investing in industry in Northern Ireland. I reject the hon. Gentleman's idea that a collectivist answer would be the right one for Northern Ireland. Although Shorts, which we are currently discussing, has maintained a roughly stable work force, the work force of Harland and Wolff has declined from more than 9,000 to about 3,000 during the time that it has been in public ownership. Such ownership is, therefore, absolutely no guarantee of employment.

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** (Dorset, North): Will my hon. Friend confirm once again that the people of Northern Ireland who work at Shorts stand to benefit from, and respond to, a measure of privatisation of the kind proposed just as much as any other people in the rest of the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Viggers:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I believe that 655,000 people work in about 17 enterprises that have been moved from the public sector to the private sector. If one were to ask most of those people now whether they wished to move back into the public sector, with all the problems involved, they would reject that suggestion out of hand.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): In welcoming this commitment to the future of Short Brothers, evidenced by the money made available to it, and to be carried out by the excellent principle of trying to get it into the private sector, may I ask my hon. Friend whether he has taken full account of the position of GEC as one of the potential bidders? That company is already a supplier of electronic components to Shorts and to its competitor, British Aerospace. Has my hon. Friend taken account of the fact that GEC is not only a prime contractor to the naval sector through its ownership of Yarrow Shipbuilders, but is the largest supplier of electronic equipment and is trying to buy the second largest supplier of electronic equipment? Since GEC can be regarded in this context as the referee and one of the players it is rather difficult to see how we can avoid allowing GEC to do rather well out of a monopoly position.

**Mr. Viggers:** Although individual companies may be prepared to identify themselves as interested in Shorts, it would be wrong for me to be tempted by my hon. Friend to comment upon any individual company. I do not propose to do so.

**Mr. Ian Gow** (Eastbourne): Is my hon. Friend aware that the rebuke from the Opposition Front Bench spokesman about his answer this afternoon is wholly unmerited? Is not the story of Short Brothers as a company in the public sector a deeply unhappy one? Since more than four years have elapsed since the Government announced their intention to privatise the company, will my hon. Friend understand that on the Conservative Benches, and apparently even in some quarters of the Opposition Benches, the view is that the sooner the company is privatised the better?

**Mr. Viggers:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am absolutely certain that Shorts has an outstanding future in the private sector.

## SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

**Mr. Speaker:** With the leave of the House, I shall put together the two motions relating to the Scottish Grand Committee.

*Ordered,*

That the matter of the National Health Service in Scotland, being a matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.

*Ordered,*

That the matter of Scottish Enterprise, being a matter relating, exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

**Mr. Speaker:** With the leave of the House, I shall put together the seven motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Limit of Basic and Special Awards) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Compensation Limit) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Employment Protection (Variation of Limits) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (United States of America) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

# Agriculture

*[Relevant European Community Documents: Nos. 10140/87 and 10419/88 on use of milk co-responsibility levy funds, 8502/88 on management and control of public storage of agricultural products, 8951/88 on the pigmeat market, 9658/88 on co-responsibility levy on cereals, 9275/88 on aid for conversion of agricultural production and 10416/88 on extensification of agriculture.]*

3.48 pm

**Dr. David Clark** (South Shields): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your guidance? You will recall that during last Tuesday's debate there was much reference to an important report by Professor Southwood on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. In the course of that debate, the Minister acknowledged the importance of the report and promised that it would be published. Within the past half hour he has kindly sent me a copy. It has come to our attention however, that instead of coming to the House with a statement and allowing hon. Members to cross-examine him, the Minister has called a press conference for later this afternoon outside this House. As the report is extremely serious and links animal health with risks to human health, and as there were two parliamentary questions on the Order Paper for answer on Thursday in the names of the hon. Members for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) and for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), can you advise us as to how we can get the Minister to treat the House with the courtesy that it deserves, by answering to the House rather than to the press?

**Mr. Speaker:** I hope that that might arise in the debate that we are about to have. Whether Ministers make statements is not a matter for me.

3.50 pm

**The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor):** I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents COM(89)40 on the 1989 Common Agricultural Policy price fixing proposals, Nos. 4536/89 on agricultural markets in 1988, 8960/88 on the sheepmeat regime, 10083/88 and COR 1 on imports of sheepmeat from New Zealand, and 9629/88 on cereals incorporation in animal feed and of the Government's intention to negotiate an outcome on all these measures which takes account of the interests of United Kingdom producers and consumers and of the need to keep Common Agricultural Policy expenditure for 1989 within the Budget figure and for future years within the budgetary guideline.

The House has an opportunity for a wide-ranging debate on agriculture. There is much ground for me to cover in commenting on all the issues set down on the Order Paper. There are a formidable number of issues, but I promise to be as brief as I can and I hope to cover most of them. Without preamble, I will deal first with the central element of the debate—the Commission's proposals for agricultural prices in 1989-90 and related measures.

I should like to deal at the outset with a ludicrous and unwarranted charge by the Opposition which I would have regarded as too petty to mention had not the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) tried to build it up over the weekend. That is the suggestion that the debate has been delayed. The truth is the exact opposite. We are holding it as early as possible so that the House can comment on the price package before we get down in earnest to the negotiations in the Agricultural Council. The debate is being held much earlier than last year, when it was held on 5 May. It is earlier than in recent years altogether. Before this year, the earliest occasion since 1984 was on 18 March. The debate could not possibly have been held earlier because last Monday I was at the Anglo-German summit in Frankfurt and, much more importantly, because the Select Committee on European Legislation needed to carry out its scrutiny first. I am grateful to the Committee for the work that it has done. I had an opportunity last week to give evidence to it. There is no substance in the Opposition charge.

With regard to the substance of the debate and the documents, I will begin with the price proposals for 1989-90. As the House is well aware, the negotiations on the Commission's price proposals are an annual event and in the past they have been protracted. Last year's settlement in July was painfully late. The Spanish presidency has set itself the commendable target of reaching a settlement in March or April. I am happy to work to that timetable and I hope that we shall be able to reach agreement in good time so that producers may make their decisions in the clear knowledge of the support framework that will obtain in the 1989-90 marketing years.

In making its proposals, the Commission emphasises that it has been guided by a number of principles. By and large, we find ourselves in agreement with most of the principles outlined in the documents. However, two of them are especially important. The first is the need to make production more market oriented. I firmly endorse that. The Council agreement of last February sent a clear message that agricultural production must become more attuned to the needs of the market place, and that support under the common agricultural policies should not be the major determinant in the operation of markets. The last price settlement reinforced that message.

There is still a way to go in reforming the CAP. I therefore agree with the Commission that these price negotiations should result in increased market orientation. This means, in particular, maintaining the restrictive price policy that the Community has followed in recent years, and continuing the process of making intervention less a market outlet and more a final safety net in the market. In those circumstances, it is logical that the Commission should generally propose a freeze in common prices.

At the same time, the Commission has rightly made it clear that it has no intention of adjusting the previously agreed stabilisers, which should be allowed to continue to work automatically when production exceeds the given levels. In all probability they will have the effect of reducing prices further for a number of commodities in 1989-90. There are two good reasons for that. First, while we have already made considerable progress in reducing the excess surpluses in most commodities, we cannot relax the pressures and allow them to grow again. Most people now recognise that the amount of taxpayers' money that we were spending on storage and disposal of surpluses was extremely wasteful of economic resources. Stabilisers are addressed precisely to that issue and must be allowed to work.

Secondly, one of the biggest threats to the CAP and hence to our farmers would be failure to achieve a successful outcome to the GATT Uruguay negotiations. In those negotiations to date, we have rightly claimed

credit for reforms that we have already achieved. It would weaken our position at a crucial stage in the negotiations if we were seen to be going back on those reforms.

The House will be well aware that the new legal tests on budgetary discipline play an important part in the annual CAP price proposals. The cost of the package must be containable within the agricultural guideline. The Commission's latest estimate shows that in the 1989 guideline there will be headroom of the order of 2·1 billion ecu, or about £1·35 billion. Additionally, the Commission's proposals would save 28 mecu, or £18 million. In 1990, the guideline is provisionally estimated at about 30 billion ecu, or about £19·4 billion. No forecast of expenditure has been made, but the Commission has assured the Council that the cost of the package—94 mecu, or about £61 million—can be accommodated without difficulty.

Given those figures, some people have already started to argue that we can take the pressure off CAP reform, but the Commission—rightly, I believe—has warned that the effects of the drought in North America have a considerable impact on the headroom in the guideline. It would be irresponsible to allow this temporary improvement to distract attention from the long-term need to work, within the Community and more generally in GATT, to reduce the over-production and excessive support worldwide to which I have already referred.

Moreover, the guideline is a ceiling not an entitlement. Eating it up now by a generous price settlement would only store up trouble for the future, making it much harder and more painful to control expenditure when markets are not so favourable. By the future I could even mean next year's price negotiations. It makes no sense to relax the brakes now, possibly adding new aids, as some member states would wish, only to have to take further much more restrictive measures next year, which could be more damaging to our farmers.

Another requirement of budget discipline is that if the outcome of negotiations shows Council willingness to adopt a more expensive package, Finance Ministers must be involved in the decision-taking process. It was not necessary to invoke this procedure in 1988 as the Commission took management decisions which fully offset extra costs. If any changes increasing costs are made to this year's package, I shall press for equivalent savings.

As I have said, the Commission draws attention in its proposals to the need to tackle the problem of CAP fraud. This is a major principle in the Commission document to which I shall refer. It is an issue that I have been raising regularly in Council meetings since becoming Minister and there is no question but that the United Kingdom has been raising the question of fraud in the CAP more than any other country. I am therefore pleased to see the prominence now being given to it. It is largely as a result of pressure by the United Kingdom Government that we now have first, an anti-fraud unit established in the Commission and, secondly, this new emphasis on the subject. What we now need is action, and in the initial comments that we all made on the package in the Council on 13 February I devoted a large part of my remarks to this subject and to a suggested action programme. I will list briefly some of the points.

In its document, the Commission suggests that there is a need to strengthen both the checks that member states make to prevent fraud, and the penalties applied when fraud is detected. We agree. I believe that we need clear operational rules and to agree uniform standards so that member states all understand what is required and apply the rules consistently. I shall promote and support appropriate and cost-effective changes in that area.

I welcome the role of the Court of Auditors in examining the value for money of Community policies and their administration. It has recently highlighted specific weaknesses both in present rules and in the way in which they are being applied.

The Scrutiny Committee draws the House's attention to the importance of the European Court of Auditors' report on intervention. I welcome the Commission's initiative in setting up a working party to study the recommendations of this report. There is a clear need to improve the controls over intervention stocks. I have asked for a discussion in the Council before the end of June, in the current presidency, so that we can consider the working party's report and, I hope, appropriate Commission proposals to tighten up Community rules in this important sector.

The Court of Auditors' findings on export refunds contained in the annual report on 1987 are also worrying. I support strongly the court's view that there should be a minimum level of physical checks on exports, and that such checks should take account of the value of the refunds to be paid and the areas of greatest risk so that there is concentration on the areas that will reap the greatest returns in terms of effort expended. We shall also follow up the court's ideas for Community rules on taking samples and on tightening the system of proofs of arrival. I have pressed the Commission and the Council to agree to the incorporation of the court's recommendations in a regulation which would require all member states to meet those standards.

I have emphasised the importance of following up those two reports by the Court of Auditors, but at present there is no guarantee that any action will be taken on special reports although annual reports are scrutinised in Brussels and by the House. In my view it is essential for the Council to agree a procedure for the future so that the necessary action can be taken on all the court's reports and I have pressed for that. It is also essential that in considering any future policies or major changes to regimes the susceptibility of any new proposals to fraud, or indeed mismanagement, should be much more carefully considered and given greater priority. I believe that this is a vital consideration in examining any changes. Unless we get the system right from the outset and limit the scope for fraud as much as possible, however good the system is thereafter we shall run the risk of further fraud. I am glad to say that we are now beginning to get that message through. I have dwelt on the fraud issue because I know that it is of great concern to the House and to the country generally, as indeed it is to me. Now that the Commission is considering the matter seriously, I am anxious that we should have a major drive in this area.

As is the normal practice, the price proposals themselves fall into three distinct parts. The first part sets out proposals for institutional prices for 1989-90. Secondly, there are proposals for related measures. Thirdly, there are proposals for agrimonetary changes. On prices, the Commission has generally proposed a freeze. However, reductions are proposed for sugar, indica rice and certain fruits and vegetables, some types of wine, field beans and certain types of seed. The Commission also proposes a further reduction in the price of durum wheat,

*[Mr. John MacGregor]*

and an increase in durum production aid. Increases are proposed in rates of aid for hemp and fibre flax and for certan types of wine. The proposed cuts are generally in line with the restrictive price policy essential if the process of CAP reform is to continue. We therefore support them, although the Government oppose the increases that I have just mentioned and believe that there is scope for some reductions in support where the market situation indicates that that would be appropriate—for example, in the fruit and vegetable sector.

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a risk of increasing budget expenditure if, for instance, continental farmers grow non-quota beets and compensation has to be paid to the African, Caribbean and Pacific ocean states? What is his attitude to that?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I shall be dealing with sugar almost immediately. I shall then be able to respond to my hon. Friend's intervention.

First, however, I stress the point that I was about to make. When talking about changes in price policy and changes in support prices, it is often forgotten that we are talking about support prices, not prices in the market place.

The Commission has proposed a 5 per cent. cut in sugar support to prevent prices for sugar beet getting too far out of line with those for other arable crops. That is the way it has put it. I acknowledge the case that the Commission has made for a reduction in price, and we welcome any proposals that will carry forward the process of CAP reform. On the other hand, sugar is a complex part of the CAP. Any cut in price has major implications for domestic growers and processors, for ACP countries which export sugar to us under the Lomé convention and for the sugar cane refining margin. There are also complicated public expenditure implications. We need to ensure that these problems do not outweigh the benefit of any price cut, and I shall certainly wish to address these issues in negotiations on the price package before we reach a final decision. As in all these matters, that includes listening to what the House has to say today on these matters.

I shall concentrate on just two of the Commission's proposals for related measures. The first is the reduction of the level of monthly increments and access to intervention, where appropriate, in the cereals, rice, oilseeds and proteins sectors. The House will recall that the Commission proposed reductions in the level of monthly increments in 1988. The final settlement included reductions in these increments, though smaller than the original proposals. This year the Commission has proposed a further 25 per cent. reduction in the level of the increments, as well as deferring the start of intervention by one month in 1989-90 and a further two months in 1990-91. For the cereal sector, this would delay the start of intervention until November for the forthcoming harvest and until January thereafter.

These proposals on delays and intervention are generally welcome and would represent a significant step in reducing the role of intervention in determining the operation of the markets for these commodities. This should help to ensure the objective that we have set ourselves—that intervention should be used only as a last resort, as a final safety net, and not as an alternative market outlet. I am not convinced that the change in the intervention arrangement needs to be phased in over two years. I am doubtful, however, about the wisdom of reducing the level of the monthly increments for oilseeds and proteins, given the substantial price cuts for oilseeds in recent years and the comparatively severe nature of the stabiliser for oilseeds and proteins. Adoption of this proposal could lead to producers switching back into surplus cereals. The result could well be that the change would turn out to be more expensive for the Community budget. I think that the House would agree that that would not make sense.

The second of the related measures is the proposal to extend stabilisers in the fruit and vegetable sectors.

**Mr. Ralph Howell** (Norfolk, North): I am concerned that my right hon. Friend is still suggesting that we should be cutting back on cereals. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, cereal stocks are at a dangerously low level. The FAO is calling for additional production of 200 million tonnes to bring stocks up to the safety level. It is calling for another 100 million tonnes to be produced to allow for the ever-increasing population that the world has to feed. The dumped market price of grain has just about doubled in the past year, yet we are still acting as though there were a huge surplus. I find that strange, and I think that we are on a most dangerous course.

**Mr. MacGregor:** If my hon. Friend turns out to be right about supply and demand in cereals, no one will be more pleased than I, but the threat that has been hanging over us in recent years and which has been the most difficult to deal with has been that of surpluses worldwide. Those surpluses have been driving down the world market price and increasing export refunds for the 30 million tonnes, approximately, that we have to export every year. This has been extremely expensive for the Community budget. In addition, there has been the risk of an international trade war in cereals, with no one benefiting at the end of the day. If my hon. Friend turns out to be right, I shall be delighted, but we cannot be sure that the position is as he describes it. The drought in north America last year has had a major impact on the present situation, but we cannot rely on continuous droughts and we know that a large proportion of the American land that was set aside is now coming back into production. We continue to have a substantial need to export cereals to Third world markets. Although world prices have risen, there is still a great difference between prices in the Community and prices coming out of intervention and the world price. We face an expensive arrangement in disposing of the surpluses through export refunds. There is still a problem of surpluses and the stabilisers are designed to correct it. There must be careful monitoring in the years ahead. I am quite sure that that aspect will feature in the GATT Uruguay round.

The second of the related measures extends stabilisers in the fruit and vegetable sector. The impact in the United Kingdom of any changes in this sector will be very small, but the sector is of great interest to us because it also needs the application of stabilisers and as a net contributor to the Community we are, as taxpayers, paying for the regimes. We therefore have a vested interest.

The Commission has proposed the introduction of stabilisers for two further products—apples and cauliflowers. That is sensible because both those commodities have been subject to substantial withdrawals in recent years. The extension of the stabiliser mechanism to them would mean that the vast proportion of expenditure in that sector would be covered by stabilisers. The Commission also proposes to extend the application of the stabiliser for some citrus fruits sent for processing and to extend processing aids to small citrus fruits. The first step is logical as it would subject both the main supportive disposal mechanisms—withdrawal and processing—to a common mechanism. However, we have doubts as to whether the extension of processing aids to small citrus fruit is justified and I shall be pressing the Commission to justify that proposal.

The third aspect of the price package relates to the agrimonetary proposals. Those are set against the background of the overall objective, to which both Council and Commission are committed, of eliminating real monetary gaps and therefore monetary compensatory amounts by 1992. As the House is aware, that is an objective for which the United Kingdom Government have strongly pressed. I believe that it is an essential aspect in achieving a single market in agriculture in 1992.

Devaluations or revaluations are proposed in this package for all member states with monetary gaps as a further stage towards that objective. For the United Kingdom, the devaluations already secured—the most recent of which took effect from 1 January 1989—taken with the strengthening of sterling, mean that our MCAs are now 24 to 29 points smaller than they were two years ago and are zero for beef, eggs, poultry and pigmeat. The Commission now proposes that one third of our monetary gaps, as they were at 1 January this year, should be removed in the price fixing. However, in spite of the agreement that I secured last year, it looks as though the Commission is proposing a faster dismantlement for those member states whose currencies are in the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism. I have made it absolutely clear that I oppose any discrimination between ERM and non-ERM members. We shall take a firm view on the agrimonetary proposals and on the precise details, as is usual, in the later stages of the negotiations and in the light of developments in the sterling exchange rate.

**Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop** (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend clear up one point? When he says 1992, does he mean in effect 1993, that is 31 December 1992 or 1 January 1993? I think that many people misunderstand that terminology.

**Mr. MacGregor:** We are looking at three stages. I would hope that that means the marketing years 1990, 1991 and 1992. We would be seeking to get the changes completed by January 1992.

With regard to the price package, the Commission has estimated that the proposals would reduce average common support prices by 0·2 per cent. in the European Community as a whole. However, after taking account of the proposed green rate changes, support prices in national currencies would rise on average by 0·6 per cent. For the Community as a whole, that would represent a cut in support—again, I stress that we are talking about support prices and not market prices—of 3 per cent. in real terms. In the United Kingdom, support prices would rise on average by 1·6 per cent. taking account of the proposed green rate devaluations. That could add about £50 million to aggregate farming incomes in a full year. The proposals would have no measurable impact on the retail food price index or the RPI.

With regard to other aspects of the documents before us today, I wish first to consider the sheepmeat regime. The reforms of the sheepmeat regime are important proposals which would affect the United Kingdom particularly because we are the biggest producer, exporter and consumer of lamb in Europe. The Commission's proposals aim to create a single market in sheepmeat, without charges or restrictions, by removing all national and regional variations and concentrating support through a common ewe premium payable in instalments and subject to headage limits. The premium would be calculated on the basis of a single EC-wide average market price, but with three regional coefficients reflecting production differences. That would be achieved by 1993 with a transitional period during which existing variations would be phased out. It would——

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I will give way when I have finished this sentence.

It would include the ending of the separate British stabiliser.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** That is exactly what I wanted to know. I thank my right hon. Friend.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am glad to have been able, for once, to answer my hon. Friend briefly and completely satisfactorily.

The Commission's proposals have been extensively criticised by British sheep interests, most particularly because they involve the abolition of the sheep variable premium and also because of the headage limit which, as I have made clear, we oppose.

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): That is what the Minister said about beef.

**Mr. MacGregor:** Yes, but we negotiated a substantial improvement in the headage limit on beef.

I have always stressed in Brussels the advantages of the variable premium schemes. The Commission's proposal on the variable premium is, however, just one of a number of proposals to abolish features of the present regime which give specific benefits to particular parts of the Community. For example, France would no longer enjoy special protection against imports from third countries, or the protection which clawback gives against imports from Great Britain. The Mediterranean member states would lose the concessions which give them a bonus on their ewe premium rates derived from the rate payable in France. In the comparatively brief discussions that we have had in the Council so far, therefore, the proposals have been criticised by most member states concerned from a wide variety of different points of view.

It is difficult to predict the outcome of these discussions on the future for the regime or when that outcome may be achieved, but I shall seek to ensure that there is a fair and affordable means of support to our sheep sector which ensures competitive terms to enable the United Kingdom to capitalise on its natural advantages as a sheep producer.

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): Will the Minister confirm that, in effect, he has just announced the end of the variable sheep premium in Britain? Can he tell us when the last premiums under the present scheme will be paid?

**Mr. MacGregor:** No, I would not confirm that. The discussions are still at a very early stage and it is not clear in which direction they will go. There are a wide variety of different points of view about the Commission's proposals and I would expect pretty intensive negotiations. It would not be right to say that the end of the sheepmeat regime would be the consequence of what I have said, nor is it clear at this stage what conclusion the negotiations will produce. I am determined to ensure an outcome to the negotiations which produces the best position for our highly competitive sheepmeat sector.

**Mr. Andrew Hunter** (Basingstoke): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will be seeking an increase on the present 18·1 million ceiling for breeding ewes? Is he looking for a larger capacity in Great Britain?

**Mr. MacGregor:** That relates to the separate stabiliser. We must try to make distinctions. While we have not reached agreement about the future of the sheepmeat regime, there is a separate stabiliser for the United Kingdom. It is not clear whether that will continue, but it was not possible to negotiate the same stabiliser for the United Kingdom as for everyone else because we have a different regime through the variable premium. In the current circumstances, it would not be possible to argue for an increase in that ceiling because the sheepmeat sector has become very expensive. However, we do not know what outcome will be achieved in the wider sheepmeat regime negotiations—in a unified regime there would be no separate British stabiliser—so it would be premature at this stage to say in precisely which direction we are likely to go.

With regard to the price level for sheepmeat and the position of the stabiliser this year, I agree with the Commission's view that a support price increase could not be justified. One way or another, we must tackle the level of support quickly, given that the cost of the sheepmeat regime is expected to double between 1987 and 1989 despite the operation of the stabiliser. The cost of the regime must also be of major concern in the forthcoming review, which is the key both to controlling Community expenditure on sheepmeat and to achieving future support arrangements which allow free and fair competition among producers in different parts of the Community.

In parallel with the sheepmeat regime proposals, the Commission negotiated with third country suppliers changes to the existing voluntary restraint agreements. The revised import arrangements for New Zealand sheepmeat are the first to come to the Council. That is an area in which a number of interests must be balanced. Community sheepmeat producers who had to accept the restraints of the stabiliser arrangements, and who face a major reform of the regime, understandably expect third country suppliers to share the burden, and I accept that. On the other hand, Community consumers do not want tighter restrictions on the range of products available to them. Moreover—this point is important in the context of the sheepmeat situation—New Zealand is entirely free to decide her own view of any constraint on access to the Community market in respect of sheep. New Zealand has established rights under GATT which the Community must respect, particularly at a time when the impetus is to open up markets.

In the Government's view, the Commission's proposal strikes the right balance and, as with the terms of today's motion, takes due account of the interests both of producers and of consumers. New Zealand has offered real concessions in terms of lower maximum quantities, specific limits on chilled sendings, and a price surveillance system. In return, the Community would make a further tariff concession and end the sensitive market area provisions. For me, that last point is very important.

In the cereal sector, the proposal for a cereals incorporation aid originated at the European Council last February, when the Commission was asked to consider ways of increasing the use of cereals in animal feedstuffs. The Commission made a proposal that was not accepted by the Council and which is strongly criticised—not least by ourselves. However, it was agreed that the Council, in considering the idea further, should be guided by a number of criteria—in particular, that any incorporation scheme must lead to increased use of cereals for animal feed, be controllable, and conform with the rules of GATT. In attempting to meet those guidelines, the Commission produced the present revised proposal.

I do not think that the Commission has succeeded in meeting the agreed criteria. Moreover, the scheme now proposed is very open to fraudulent abuse—an aspect to which I have already referred—and would create new distortions within our own animal feed industry and between member states. I know many people in this country who are concerned about that. For all those reasons, we are firmly opposed to the proposal. I am glad to report that when the Council met last December, the majority of other member states also had reservations.

The proposal concerning aid for small cereal producers follows an undertaking by the Council, reached as part of the 1988-89 farm price settlement, to arrive at a Community definition of a small cereal producer. In the event, the Council found it impossible to do so, but agreed instead that the existing rules, which permit member states to determine their own definition, can be maintained.

On other issues to which the documents before the House relate, there is considerable interest in encouraging farmers to switch to lower-intensity farming, which people feel can create real benefits for our landscape and environment as well as helping to reduce the output of unwanted crops. The extensification regulation—to use the ghastly jargon adopted by the Community—agreed by the Council last year, at the same time as the set-aside scheme, is an important step. It provides for member states to give financial incentives to farmers who undertake to reduce their output of certain surplus products by at least 20 per cent. That principle is easy enough to applaud—the difficulty is in finding acceptable and sensible ways of applying it in practice. As I have frequently said, such schemes must be properly run if public money is not to be wasted. Again, we do not want to open the door to fraud.

The administrative mechanisms necessary for extensification will need to be carefully worked out, especially in the livestock sector. That is why I was pleased when the Agriculture Council agreed this month that member states may apply extensification on a pilot basis until the end of 1990. That will provide an opportunity to try out schemes on a limited basis initially, to resolve some of the difficulties, and to see whether we can make such schemes

workable and effective. We are now studying ideas for a pilot extensification scheme for beef, to be introduced later this year.

In the arable sector, the obligation to apply schemes begins next year. Ideas include the possibility of encouraging a switch to organic farming or to spring-sown cereals and rapeseed. We are looking carefully into the practicalities.

In June 1987, the Council decided on an aid scheme to encourage farmers to convert to the production of non-surplus products. That scheme should act as a further complement to the stabiliser mechanisms in helping to restore balance to sectors in over-supply. Rules for the conversion scheme proposed by the Commission are now under discussion in Brussels. We must accept that scope for conversion is limited. It is important to ensure that conversion incentives do not create new surpluses or lead to distortion of the market for those producers who have already converted to alternative crops. To try to avoid those problems, the Commission's proposal lays down restrictive criteria for the selection of products, and member states have discretion as to exactly which products they wish to aid.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** Before the Minister leaves the subject of extensification schemes, I remind him of an undertaking that he gave the House some months ago, when he acknowledged that it would be appropriate to include conservation headlands in extensification schemes. In the scheme that he proposes to place before the House later this year, will there be any provision for conservation headlands?

**Mr. MacGregor:** That is obviously a possibility we must consider. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have a pilot project on conservation headlands in one of the environmentally sensitive areas, which will also help us in our considerations. I have also agreed to extend strips in the set-aside scheme, which to some extent is on the same lines. We are experimenting, but at this stage we cannot say exactly what we shall be able to include in the extensification scheme for the cereal sector. However, there will be plenty of opportunity to discuss it.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if extensification is the name of the game, nitrogen control will be one of the options available to him?

**Mr. MacGregor:** As my hon. Friend knows, the nitrate issue and the possibility of protection zones will be addressed in due course, as the Water Bill progresses through this House. We shall be consulting widely on how to implement any proposals relating to them. However, although they share some of the same elements, that is not what I mean by extensification. My hon. Friend refers to extensification as the name of the game. Like many other things, it has a part to play in enabling farmers to adjust, and in achieving a better balance between intensive farming—now that we have surpluses and the capacity to produce so much more from the same amount of land—on the one hand, and environmental and countryside needs on the other. I do not suggest that any one approach is the name of the game—all have a part to play and we must not exaggerate the extent to which they can do so or suggest that any of them is a panacea for the problems that I have described.

**Miss Emma Nicholson** (Torridge and Devon, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that as the extensification budget is only 3 per cent. of the common agricultural policy budget we cannot yet place any vast reliance on it as a source of alternative farming income, although it is something that we must monitor carefully as it develops in the years ahead?

**Mr. MacGregor:** That is one reason why I did not want to suggest that extensification represented a panacea or a major way through the problems. There are other reasons for coming to the same cautious conclusion at this stage. Certainly we are considering the various possibilities.

I wish to refer to two other issues. The Commission's report on the pigmeat market, commissioned by the Council, set out the probable causes of the crisis in the European Community pigmeat market in 1987 and 1988, the measures taken by the Commission, and the outlook for 1989. The report concluded, in my opinion rightly, that over-supply was the main cause of the depression in prices, but that existing market management measures were effective in alleviating—and I emphasise the word "alleviating"—the situation.

As the House knows, the pigmeat regime is a "light" one, with very limited market support possibilities. During 1987, two were used. Export refunds were significanly increased on several occasions, and exports from the Community rose from 360,000 tonnes in 1986 to 440,000 tonnes in 1987. In both 1987 and 1988 aids to private storage played a small part in restoring confidence and stabilising prices at a time when the market was particularly weak. However, I have some doubt as to the real benefits of private storage aids—which are used very little in the United Kingdom—and I feel that such measures needs to be used very sparingly.

In the report the Commission also expresses a willingness to consider further policy alternatives to bring greater stability to this sector. I see no practical alternatives. As we know, it is very easy to expand pigmeat production quickly, so any scheme to provide more price stability would quickly lead to another production surplus and to escalating costs. Intervention arrangements have been tried in the past—before we joined the Community—but had to be quickly abandoned, and the reintroduction of such arrangements would lead only to greater instability in the long term. We should therefore continue to allow the market to be regulated by the free play of supply and demand and the judicious use of the support measures already available.

Finally, I must mention the two documents containing the Commission's most recent annual communications giving information to the Council on how milk coresponsibility level funds are spent. As the House knows, the Government have always disliked and opposed the levy as a means of tackling the costs of the dairy regime—I apply this equally to the cereal sector—and I continue to take that view. The problem for us, however, is that the milk regime is still the most extensive and expensive in the CAP—at 4,700 million ecus in 1989, despite all the quota reforms. We can only consider reducing or eliminating the levy as those costs come down, which means, that we must achieve offsetting savings in other directions. I believe that a contribution can be made by the achievement of better value for money in the management of this market. In

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particular, I am pressing for the further reduction of subsidies for internal disposal of skim milk powder for animal feed.

The Commission's reports show that levy funds are used for two main purposes—to offset expenditure on dairy subsidies, and to expand the market for milk and milk products. The most recent Commission communication provides for an increase in the allocation of levy spending for promotional and market expansion measures from 31 to 51 million ecus, which is in tune with the views of both the United Kingdom industry and the Government. At the same time it is inevitable that a significant proportion of levy receipts will continue to be used to offset the heavy expenditure on subsidies in the dairy sector, and the document makes that clear.

Inevitably I have had to deal with many detailed matters in the large number of documents before us, but I hope that I have given an indication of the Government's position on all of them.

What is interesting about the Labour party's position is that, while Labour Members are quick to say that reforms are necessary—indeed, on a number of occasions the hon. Member for South Shields has given full support in the House to the position adopted by the Government on the CAP reform proposals, for which I am grateful—they somehow give the impression that such reforms can be achieved painlessly and without structural adjustment. Having been quick to call for reform, they are equally quick to complain about the consequences.That is the attitude of a party which never expects to have to make difficult decisions in Government because it does not expect to be in Government. That no doubt explains why there has not been a single constructive, thought-through proposal on agricultural issues from the Labour party—indeed, any of the parties opposite—and why we shall no doubt hear none today.

I hope that I have dealt with all the key issues contained in the formidable number of documents before the House. To pull the threads together, one of the main themes is that CAP reform—this can never be stressed too much—is in the farmers' interests as much as everyone else's. Without it, chaos loomed. That reform is now in place. Its pace is being maintained and must continue to be maintained, especially in the light of the GATT Uruguay negotiations. That is in the interests not only of consumers and taxpayers but of producers if we are to provide a stable basis for British and European agriculture in the 1990s.

While we are taking steps to make the CAP more market-oriented, we also need to prevent the money being spent on it, which is still a very large sum, from being directed into the wrong hands through fraud. We also need to pursue various policies to ease the process of change for farmers, to encourage less intensive farming and to promote policies to encourage and help farmers to create a new balance between agricultural production and the continued development of an attractive countryside for the benefit of all of us. It is my next objective to see real improvements in that regard, and I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will endorse our endeavours.

4.25 pm

**Dr. David Clark** (South Shields): The aim of the debate is to give the Minister some guidance about the feeling on both sides of the House before he continues discussions with his European colleagues in the Council of Ministers meetings next week and, probably, a couple of weeks thereafter.

Perhaps I could begin by agreeing with the Minister. I join him in applauding the endeavours of the Spanish presidency to reach an agreement by April, and I am heartened that he is going to do all that he can to bring that about. It is important that farmers, who need to plan ahead, know with some certainty what price they can expect in the coming 12 months. I also support the Government in their effort to ensure that surpluses which have been removed at great expense are not allowed to build up again. Storage has been one of the disproportionate costs of the CAP, and we must not waste the hard-earned finance needed to get these balances down.

I also support the Minister's efforts to ensure that whatever package we end up with from the price fixing takes us some way towards an accord with the current GATT negotiations. In the long term we must try to evolve a system of agricultural support within Europe that can be compatible with the wishes of other parts of the world. Finally, I strongly support the Government in their assurance—I think that this is what the Minister was saying—that there would be no discrimination in the agrimonetary system which would worsen the position of United Kingdom farmers.

When we had this more or less annual debate about 10 months ago—price fixing last year was very late, adding to the uncertainty of farmers throughout the Community—the general mood, probably on both sides of the House, was also one of uncertainty. There was a feeling that agriculture did not know where it was going. I little dreamed, however, that in 10 months the system would have deteriorated so badly. It now seems that the Government have singled out agriculture for treatment that they have already given to the coal and steel industries, and indeed to the rest of the economy. The time will come when the nation will pay dearly for the Government's follies in respect of those other industries. If they succeed in their apparent policy of attrition against agriculture, the effect on the nation may be catastrophic indeed.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): We all recognise that agriculture faces considerable difficulties at present, nowhere more than in my constituency, but surely the hon. Gentleman would agree that it is not good enough to say that the Government are to mete out the same fate that befell the coal and steel industries. I suppose that the hon. Gentleman implies by that that the Government allowed those industries to go to rack and ruin: that is the impression that he has sought to create.

**Dr. Clark** *indicated assent.*

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I see that the hon. Gentleman is nodding. I, on the other hand, believe that there is a lesson to be learned from those two industries. I agree that the short-term, drastic measures taken in those instances affected people personally and harshly, but those industries are now much strengthened and can look

forward to a prosperous and profitable future. That, surely, is the Government's aim, and that is why my right hon. Friend the Minister at the end of his speech asked for positive proposals from the Opposition.

**Dr. Clark:** The hon. Gentleman has partly understood the case, but he has got it wrong. I happen to agree that agriculture is an essential industry for this country, and I accept that coal is as well.

Another example which is close to my heart and in which I have a deep constituency interest is shipbuilding. As an island and a maritime nation we need shipping and a shipbuilding industry. However, under this Government both shipping and shipbuilding have been treated in such a way that they no longer exist, which means that if and when the revival in the economy takes place, we shall not have a viable shipbuilding industry.

If we allow agriculture to be run down to the same extent, there will come a time when we shall be short of food and unable to supply our own needs.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** With his interest in shipbuilding, the hon. Gentleman will know that Appledore Langham shipbuilders in my constituency has, in effect, been relaunched and is on the crest of a wave with orders pouring in as a result of the Government's privatisation policy. I have the greatest sympathy for Ferguson-Ailsa, which has not yet achieved that splendid result. However, the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric and deep feeling on this matter must not blind him to the good things that are happening and which point to the way ahead.

**Dr. Clark:** Obviously, I am pleased if there is a resurgence in the shipbuilding industry in west Devon. However, I find it sad that the town of Sunderland, which is in the constituency next to mine, and which was the largest shipbuilding town in the world, no longer builds ships, despite having the most modern shipyard in Europe and despite it having received orders from overseas. As I have said, if we allow the same thing to happen to agriculture, we shall deeply rue the day.

We all want a pleasant countryside—nobody wants that more than I do—but it must be a living countryside. The people who work and live there, expecially the farmers, produce something that is absolutely essential to us—food. The British press, oriented as it is to London and the metropolitan areas, often forgets that food does not come from the supermarket shelves and that it must be produced; and that water does not come from funny green bottles, but from our reservoirs and deep wells. We must accept that the supply of such commodities must be planned.

We should remind ourselves that, building on the success of the Labour Government's Agriculture Act 1947, we developed a system of agriculture that has meant that food shortages have ceased to figure on our political agenda, which is very welcome. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who is a farmer, constantly reminds me that the success of our agriculture has been brought about by a partnership between state and farmer, which, as he constantly reminds me, is one of the best examples, along with the National Health Service, of Socialism in practice, with everyone benefiting, in this case both consumer and farmer.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** I just wish the farmers would vote for us.

**Dr. Clark:** Well, they may do. Anyway, at least one does—in East Lothian.

It is no secret that the Prime Minister regards farmers with disdain, as the last remnants of the welfare state. She fails to understand the delicate balance between shortage and surplus. Tragically, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who should know better, seems to be going down the Prime Minister's route, as he made plain in his speech at the beginning of January at the Oxford farming conference.

Agriculture and food production is too important to be left to the whim of the free market. That is why it is essential that we have some partnership between the state and individual farmers. I have given that gloomy view because we have just received a report from the industry showing a drop of 25 per cent. in aggregate farm income last year, which was the worst year since the war. On top of that, farmers are now suffering badly from the Chancellor's policy of high interest rates.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** (Sherwood) *indicated dissent.*

**Dr Clark:** I see that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) disagrees, but the farmers to whom I speak are worried sick about the high levels of interest that they must pay——

**Mr. Stewart:** And about the weather.

**Dr. Clark:** I accept that the weather is important, but it is not responsible for the high interest rates that the farmers are having to pay on their capital investment and machinery. Whether the weather is up or down, the high interest rates are the result of the Chancellor's policies and they are making life hard for the farmers.

As the Minister acknowledged in his annual report, to make matters worse some sectors of the industry have done better, while others have done worse. Overall, although some have done perhaps slightly better this year, they still have bleak, if not perilous, prospects. I am thinking especially of the upland farmers, who tend some of the most attractive, remote and environmentally sensitive parts of the country. The Minister's announcement this afternoon about the sheepmeat regime rang of defeatism in my ears. I hope that he will fight much harder than he gave the impression of doing this afternoon.

Hon. Members of all parties can agree that since the war agriculture's productivity has been second to none. If other sectors of industry had been as successful as agriculture, we should not have found ourselves in the economic mess that we have repeatedly been in. Morever, if the Minister pursues the policies that he outlined today, we believe that he will damage that productivity and that the success that has been built up over the years will not continue. That will mean that we shall be short of food and heavily dependent on other countries to supply our basic food, which is not a sensible policy.

The irony is that the consumer has been paying an unduly high price for food. According to the report of the National Consumer Council, consumers have been paying roughly £14 per week too much. I know that the Minister accepts my point, but he does not seem to appreciate that most of that money does not go to farmers. Only about £1 in every £3 of the money spent on agriculture goes to farmers under the present common agricultural policy. I know that the Minister will probably agree with that figure. The other two thirds is spent on intervention

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storage, export restitution and—I know that the Minister acknowledges this—fraud. It is important that we do not allow stocks in intervention to build up, because the main expenditure is on intervention and the consequent export restitutions.

The Minister knows that the current CAP is madness. I know that he has tinkered with it and we applaud his efforts to try to improve the position, but the basic point, which I have made previously at the Dispatch Box, is that the Prime Minister is culpable for her failure to recognise that point in Brussels last year——

**Mr. MacGregor** *rose*——

**Dr. Clark:** I shall give way when I have finished this point.

On that occasion, when the EEC was literally on the verge of bankruptcy, the Prime Minister had the unique opportunity to force a full-scale reform of the CAP, which, tragically, she fluffed. If she had taken the Minister with her, I do not believe that she would have made that mistake, but since then we have been trying to make the best of a bad job. However, I accept that the Minister has tried to improve things and I happily give way to him.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The hon. Gentleman has pointed out that much of the current cost of the CAP goes on export refunds, which enable Community products to be sold at world market prices, but he has given the impression that none of that money goes to the farmers. He knows that that policy exists to find a market somewhere for those products because we do not require all the products in the Community.

I am not clear what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting for CAP reform on that issue. Is he suggesting that we should dispense with export refunds altogether? Perhaps he will be more specific. The hon. Gentleman referred to the report of the National Consumer Council; he knows that a large part of the calculation of the cost to families is based on the assumption that, if we imported food at current world prices, food would be cheaper. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that we should seek to bring Community prices down to the level of world prices and that those are the prices that farmers should obtain? Will he make his views clear on both points?

**Dr. Clark:** It is interesting that the Minister linked those two points because by doing so he showed the weakness of the CAP—and he knows it. The answer is simple: the right hon. Gentleman is right to say that if there were no CAP, world prices would be higher—nothing like as high as those of the CAP but, I freely acknowledge, higher than they are now. They are depressed because the market has been flooded with many commodities, as the EC has dumped exports of many surplus products. The Minister knows that, because we subsidise those export restitutions. We as taxpayers, are paying double. That is the key fallacy of the CAP and I am most grateful to the Minister for allowing me the opportunity to expose the basic weakness of the agricultural support system.

**Mr. MacGregor:** What alternative can the hon. Gentleman suggest to the lines that the Government are pursuing?

**Dr. Clark:** The basic point of the Labour party has been that a fundamental reform of the CAP is essential. We have supported the Minister, and the point that I was making before he intervened was that we support him in not allowing too much food to build up in the intervention stores. That is why we support the limited storage period that is discussed in the price fixing: it makes sense. If there is no food in the intervention stores, equally there is no surplus food for export restitutions and money is therefore saved.

On the subject of money, I shall take up another point which the Minister mentioned several times—fraud. I think he is getting the message that the British people are beginning to tumble to the extent of fraud in the EC and, in particular, in the CAP.

The Minister knows that this fraud involves not paper clips or pens but billions of pounds each year. We do not know the precise sum, but people are agreed that something inside the wide perameter of 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of the total EC budget is lost on fraud. Both figures are disgraceful. That is a staggering amount and something must be done about it.

I concede that the British Government and the Minister have raised the issue, but they have tended to dismiss it by suggesting that most of the fraud takes place in other countries. The general view in Britain was that it was people across the water, without good systems, who were always on the fiddle, and the finger was usually pointed at the poor Italians. At least, the British media saw it that way. However, I was interested to read an article in the French newspaper, 10 days ago which nailed that lie. It pointed out that *Libération*, while it was correct that the Italians had the worst record of fraud, with 131 cases in 1987, Britain, to our shame, came second with 93 cases, and France third with 75. I thought that it was staggering that we should be in second position. Furthermore——

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** At the risk of upsetting diplomatic relations, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is probable that every case of fraud in Britain was found out and the people involved were brought to justice? Is it possible that that may not be the case for the league leader that he has just mentioned, and that the gap between us may be vast?

**Dr. Clark:** I listened carefully to the hon. Lady and the charming way in which she phrased her intervention. Fraudsters, whether Italian, British or French, are all equally guilty of fraud. We have not done ourselves justice by trying to hide that. Some of the tales are absolutely incredible.

When one raises this point with the Italians they say, "Yes, we accept that we are worse than Britain, but the British are behind so much of the fraud in Italy." The Italians cite the example of Charles Kingsland. This is a remarkable case in which a former mayor of a small town, Bagheria and owner of an IDA company, was head of a syndicate. Ships were loaded with water-filled containers and barrels and left Sicily for London, from where they were supposed to sail for South America. Two other phoney companies were created in London by the English accomplice, Charles Kingsland, who is currently on the run from police. The matter came to light in 1981, when a barrel that was supposed to contain tomato concentrate burst open while it was being loaded near Palermo and the fraud squad finally became involved. This amazing

situation would be farcical and funny if similar cases did not occur on such a wide scale. We have further evidence that fraud exists on a wide scale in this country.

On 25 January I raised the issue with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the hon. Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder). I did not receive a meaningful reply. In his wind-up speech will the Minister confirm that the Government's serious fraud squad office is close to completing inquiries into two significant cases of agricultural fraud in Britain involving EC money amounting to many millions of pounds? Have there been any developments in the six weeks since I first raised the matter? What is the Minister's response to the comment made by Mr. John Wood, the director of the Government's serious fraud squad, who said:

"Our own domestic experience is that money obtained by fraud is being used to finance traffic in narcotics and is also being used to finance trade in arms and terrorism."

That is disturbing, and millions of people will be shocked to think that fraud occurs on such a scale in this country under the guise of support for agriculture.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Is my hon. Friend aware of the incidence of fraud among defence contractors? Public Accounts Committee reports have established that very often prosecutions are not brought. Is not the important question whether prosecutions are brought? If we tabled questions on all the cases identified by my hon. Friend which put us second in the European league, could the Minister tell us in which ones prosecutions were brought; or did the Director of Public Prosecutions once again handle the matter in a sloppy way?

**Dr. Clark:** My hon. Friend is knowledgeable on such matters and an assiduous member of the Public Accounts Committee. He knows as well as I that the Government are loud on words about tackling crime but soft on action. That is obvious in relation to prosecutions for contamination of rivers or of companies selling contaminated feed for the poultry flocks in this country. The Government give no answers and there are no prosecutions. The same is true of fraud in the CAP.

I find it damning to think that the average family in the United Kingdom pays between £1·50 and £2 a week because of fraud, some of which appears to go as direct donations to organisations such as the Mafia or the IRA. That is reprehensible and I deplore the fact that the Government do not appear to act on it. Time and time again, they try to play the matter down.

As the report of the National Audit Office of February 1988 made quite clear, concerted action is now needed. The Government have dragged their feet for far too long. Lord Cockfield, a former Commissioner, told the other place on 14 February, that he had put forward the proposal, as a Commissioner, to curb fraud in 1986 and the British Government had vetoed it.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Tell us why the Government did that.

**Dr. Clark:** The Minister will not tell us, so I shall turn to more detailed aspects of his price-fixing arrangements. Before doing so, I must point out that in a recent parliamentary answer, the Minister was embarrassed to have to tell me that he had met the National Farmers Union 37 times in the past 12 months and the National Consumer Council only twice. When pressed, he said that he met the farmers because the matter concerned them more, but as food prices will be greatly affected by the negotiations in Brussels he should tell us how often he has discussed these issues with consumer associations in the past month, and what their general advice was. There are two sides to this equation—producers and consumers. What have the Government been doing to advance the viewpoint of the consumers?

I mentioned the success of British agriculture since the war. Much of that success has been due to the industry's ability to adapt research and development to improving production, and such research and development here has won a high reputation overseas. How do the Government expect us to continue to reap the rewards of such work when they intend to decimate what is left of the R and D efforts in the United Kingdom? The Minister has already done infinite harm to those efforts; 2,000 jobs have already been lost from the Agricultural and Food Research Council in the the past four years. Scores of projects vital to food safety and agriculture have been lost.

The latest Government proposals to wield the axe even more fiercely are resisted in all quarters. The *Farmers Weekly* article on research and development makes depressing reading, with its revelation that another 2,000 scientists in ADAS and AFRC are likely to lose their jobs. It is also clear that alternative funds from the agricultural industry are unlikely to be forthcoming. This will result in an unacceptable decline in Britain's agricultural research and development, which will be detrimental to farmers and consumers and to the long-term interests of a successful industry.

When I raised the problem of bovine spongiform encephalopathy on a point of order, Mr. Speaker said that the Minister might deal with it in the course of his speech today, so it was sad to hear the Minister duck the issue. That has shown a lack of courtesy to the House——

**Mr. Ron Davies:** Uncharacteristic of him.

**Dr. Clark:** Indeed. The Minister has always shown the House of great deal of courtesy; he has always explained his views at great length and allowed himself to be cross-examined. I have not seen this important report yet, but I believe that it may show that up to 20,000 cases of BSE-infected cattle exist, and that there may be a link between the disease and the Creutzfeld-Jakob disease in humans. So the Minister should have taken wiser counsel and dealt with some of the questions that right hon. and hon. Members want to ask him.

Will the Minister assure the House that the research into the cattle disease BSE will not be held up, as it has been in the past, by the central veterinary laboratory, because of lack of funds? We feel offended that the Minister will not answer such questions——

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is aware of the answer to a question that I put down last Thursday which the Minister has given me today and which concerns the research consultative committee looking into BSE. Perhaps he has not yet seen a copy?

**Dr. Clark:** I thank the hon. Lady for intervening again; she always helps me and I appreciate that. She has underlined the point I was making. I know that she has tabled a number of questions about this subject, because her part of the country has been much affected by BSE, which was first discovered in the southern counties. She

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has been interested enough to table such questions—that one was on last Thursday's Order Paper, but there was no answer to it—which emphasises my point that there is great interest in this on both sides of the House, and that the Minister should have subjected himself to questions about it.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that there will be more research into this disease, as Sir Richard Southwood recommended. In view of the seriousness of the disease and its implication for human health, is it not time that the Minister banned the sale of sheep and cattle brains to the public? He knows that it was probably infected sheep brains which first caused BSE in cattle a number of years ago. That is Sir Richard's conclusion. He knows, too, that the brains of calves and sheep are used in the manufacture of brawn, meat pies and mock turtle soup. Yesterday's colour supplement of *The Observer* contained a recipe for a soup made of sheep's head, a traditional food for people in the north of England in the past. This disease is now endemic and remains latent in sheep and cattle for a long time, so the Minister should give us the benefit of the doubt and ban the sale of sheep heads. I am happy to give way to him now if he wants to announce that the Government are prepared to do that. Sad to say, he does not appear to want to.

Rather belatedly, 18 months after the event, the Minister made BSE a notifiable disease and announced compensation. But 50 per cent. compensation is not enough. Surely, to deal with a matter that is vital to human health, the Minister should propose 100 per cent. compensation for farmers; if he does not, temptation will remain—*[Interruption]*. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) denies that, but anyone who talks to farmers knows that when they are faced with the risk of losing £350 per beast, they may well send a cow to market even if they are in doubt and it should perhaps have gone for testing. Faced with such a loss, farmers will be tempted to do that. We suggest that it would not be very costly to double compensation to 100 per cent. In that way we would catch almost all cattle with the disease and start to eradicate it. We must go to the root cause of the problem, as we have done with other diseases of this nature.

I hope that the Minister will deal with the problem of feeding animal protein to other animals, an issue that was also outlined in the Southwood report. It would be courteous if the Minister intervened to answer these small points at this stage, before he goes off to the press conference to tell the world. By not doing so, he is failing to treat the House with the respect that it deserves——

**Mr. MacGregor:** From memory, I think I made at least four statements to the House about BSE last year—all in written form. That seemed acceptable to the House. The House and the public want the publication of the Southwood report in full and as quickly as possible after my receipt of it. That is what I have done today, and I have shown the action that the Government are taking in the light of the report. It is a detailed matter, and I hope that there will be many opportunities to return to it in the House.

On compensation, there is no evidence that farmers have evaded their responsibilities. But that is something that we monitor. The compensation relates to 50 per cent. of the full market value. Cows that are clearly showing symptoms of BSE will no longer be worth anything like the full market value, so it is a generous rate of compensation in all the circumstances. There is no evidence that the rate is causing farmers not to bring forward cattle for slaughter and compensation.

**Dr. Clark:** We are grateful for the fact that the Minister has published the document in full, as he said he would in last Tuesday's debate. But just as he is right to say that it was important to publish the report in full, he should have come to the House and allowed us to put questions to him. I am sorry that even at this stage he has not answered some of our points.

We accept that there is no evidence, except for strong anecdotal evidence from people in the industry. But the Minister fails to understand the free market economy if he says that cows which have the disease are worth only 50 per cent. of their market value. If farmers send animals about which they have doubts—we must remember that it is a creeping disease—the purchaser may not be aware of the condition, and the market value will be 100 per cent. The NFU will confirm that it has cost farmers an extra £350 or £400 per cow.

**Mr. Richard Livsey** (Brecon and Radnor): May I reinforce what the hon. Gentleman is saying? A farmer in my constituency suspected that an animal had BSE, but could not afford, and did not have the right transport, to take the animal on a 40-mile round trip to the veterinary investigation laboratory. The local vet wanted him to take at least the animal's head to the investigation centre, but in the end the animal did not get there. As far as I know, the animal got into the food chain. That is a serious state of affairs. Encouragement should be given to farmers to resolve the problems.

**Dr. Clark:** The hon. Gentleman makes a telling point. The Government have the Nelson approach of putting the telescope to the wrong eye. Just as they say that there is no evidence of fraud in Britain, so they say that there is no evidence of those problems. But we know that infected cattle are entering the food chain. It is time that the Minister answered that point and took action to eradicate this possibly terrible disease from the animal entering human food chains.

**Mrs. Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): Does my hon. Friend agree that if farmers had been given 100 per cent. compensation for every cow found to have BSE, it would have cost the Government only £1·25 million? That is a very small sum compared with the £18 million made available to egg producers.

**Dr. Clark:** My hon. Friend has made a good point. I hope that the Minister will listen to us and to some Conservative Members, among whom there is much sympathy for our argument: where there is a serious risk to public health, the benefit of the doubt—especially as this is a relatively small matter in financial terms—must be given to human health.

The Minister, having failed to achieve a fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy, was left with set-aside and stabilisers as the instruments to try to reduce surpluses. Only last Wednesday, he was explaining the success of his set-aside initiatives, expecting that about 1,820 farmers will take about 58,000 hectares out of production. Having seen the provisional effects of the scheme, may I ask the Minister whether he is still confident

that the initiative will be sufficient to take enough cereals out of production to stop the intervention stores being filled up again? It would be helpful if the Minister would give us an idea of his assessment of the position.

Is the Minister aware of a practice which, to many people, appeared to be an abuse of the scheme? We know of several examples where farmers opt for set-aside, receive money for doing little—I will not say for doing nothing—and then make their farmworkers redundant. One farmworker in Suffolk has already been made redundant after working on an estate for 21 years. That was because his boss, the Leader of the other House and a former Conservative Agriculture Minister, opted for the set-aside scheme. We also know of a case in Scotland, where three farmworkers were made redundant when their boss opted for the scheme and set aside almost all his farm. There is no justice in that farmer being paid about £200,000 of taxpayers' money for doing little while his employees are made redundant.

Set-aside is likely to fuel the loss of farmworkers' jobs, which have dropped by more than 7,000 in the past year and by a staggering 37,000 since 1983. We do not say that the scheme is completely useless, given the difficulties into which the Minister has painted himself, but we believe that he should introduce a complementary scheme to allow special redundancy payments to be made to farmworkers who lose their jobs because of the scheme. In the name of equity and justice, that would be a much fairer way of improving the efficacy of the system.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor** (Upminster): I cannot see the difference between a farmer who decides on the set-aside scheme making his staff redundant and a farmer who goes from one method of operation to another making his workers redundant. It is very sad, and I accept the hon. Gentleman's point about Government money, but I doubt whether it makes much difference to the farmworker who loses his job. How can we differentiate between the two?

**Dr. Clark:** It is a matter of degree. Of course there is always a risk that a farmer might diversify from labour-intensive to capital-intensive production. That is a commercial risk which he takes on his own judgment. The difference is that he has not been encouraged to do so by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. With set-aside the Minister has said to farmers, "If you will take out of cereal production more than 20 per cent. of your land, we shall pay you an amount annually for doing so." I do not disagree with the concept, but if no alternative work can be found for the farmworker, he should be given compensation for losing his job, just as compensation is paid to the farmer for taking his land out of production.

Before I leave the subject of set-aside, may I deal briefly with extensification—as the Minister said, a horrible word—or low-input farming. The Opposition want the Government to take a more positive approach to what we think would be another useful instrument in the Minister's battle to contain surpluses. The Minister will find that the concept strikes a chord not only with many farmers who would like to use the system but with many consumers, who would like food to be produced using less intensive methods.

Sir Richard Southwood has concluded that we should reconsider some of our techniques of animal feeding. I note that he says in his conclusion:

> "We question the wisdom of methods which may expose susceptible species of animals to pathogens, and ask for the general issue to be raised."

One has a great deal of sympathy for the German Agriculture Minister, Herr Kiechle, who complained of lack of enthusiasm for such voluntary production-curbing techniques.

Indeed, it is sad to note that the extensification programme has been delayed yet again. I know that the Minister is somewhat of a magician, and I thought that there was a sleight of hand in the way he presented to the House today the extensification discussion in the Council of Ministers. He said that it had been a great success. Of course, it was not a success; as he knows, it was a compromise put forward by the Spanish presidency. The sad thing is that it was a compromise for delay, and, saddest of all, the Minister was not able to support his German colleague, who was on his own in voting against the compromise proposal because he wanted the original extensification proposals to come into operation this year and not be postponed under two pilot schemes. As I have said, it is very sad that, again, the Minister wanted to play for delay. If he is trying to tackle the problem of surpluses, he should be using all the instruments at his disposal. We feel that extensification is one such instrument whose use he has delayed.

I was impressed by the Minister's statement today that—as I understood it—he is prepared to bring in this year a pilot scheme for beef. I think I am right in saying that that is obligatory in any case—he has got to bring in some pilot schemes. Can he advise us whether he has similar proposals for sheep? That is something which may also be of interest. Having mentioned sheep, perhaps I should refer to the whole question of the sheepmeat regime, which causes Members on both sides of the House a great deal of anguish because it has ramifications far wider than the production of lambs. I made the point—I think my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) had the same impression—that the Minister was actually admitting defeat.

**Mr. MacGregor** *indicated dissent.*

**Dr. Clark:** I am glad that the Minister denies it. Certainly he gave the very clear impression that he had thrown in the towel.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** He has done a Frank Bruno.

**Dr. Clark:** As my hon. Friend says, he has done a Frank Bruno. However, I am afraid that he did not last even five rounds—he seemed to throw in the towel almost before he had started.

Can the right hon. Gentleman give us a categorical assurance that he will fight to retain the variable premium, which, as he knows, has served the upland sheep farmer and the consumer very well over the years? Certainly it would be a retrogressive step if we were to lose that. The Minister admitted that the two-tier stabiliser regime already discriminates against the British producer. When pressed on the question of the income of the upland farmer—I think this was reported in *The Guardian* of last Friday or Saturday—he gave the rather dismissive reply that, if they had difficulty in making ends meet, they could simply go on social security. I find that offensive in the extreme. There is an avenue to help those upland farmers if the Minister chose to use it. He knows that the upland areas

*[Dr. Clark]*

of this country face immense problems in terms of farming viability. Many small hill farmers, especially in Wales, are on incomes of less than £5,000 a year.

This is a real problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who represents one of these constituencies in the Lake District national park, and my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), who represents a similar area in north Wales, know how difficult it is for the small upland farmer. The only animal that the farmers can rear is the sheep. If this is made uneconomic, the prospect is simply either insolvency or afforestation. I submit to the Minister and to the House that neither of those alternatives is the correct option for some of the most cherished landscapes in the United Kingdom. Those upland areas would simply remain unfarmed. They would go into a state of dereliction. They would become scrubland. Indeed, the tourist industry, which is so important as a provider in such areas, would lose its impetus, and many jobs would be lost.

I come back to a point that we have pressed on the Minister time and time again: why does he reject out of hand the direct income aids that are possible under the CAP rules? They have been agreed by the Council of Ministers, and he could bring them in. I submit to him that many farmers who look after our most attractive upland areas would accept direct income aids and would not find them as offensive as the Minister's suggestion that they could go on social security. The Minister may regret having made that statement—indeed, I think that, having thought about it, he realised that he had not meant it.

I will deal now with the issue of sugar—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may not be interested in sugar or the ACP countries—though, when they think about it, they probably are. The Minister spelled out his attitude in a little detail. Perhaps we can tease a little more from him about the 5 per cent. cut in prices. He knows that there is considerable concern that the Commission's proposal for a 5 per cent. cut in prices will have a dire effect on the economies of some of the producer countries.

The current sugar regime is widely acknowledged—the Minister himself acknowledges this—as one of the best forms of trade with some Third world countries. Indeed, it has been a cornerstone of the economic well-being of the ACP countries, and the very basis—and this is the irony of the situation—of their attempt to do what we keep telling them to do: diversify their activities into other economic spheres. We have calculated that the Commission's proposals would reduce the earnings of the ACP countries by £23 million a year. I know that compensation is mooted. Can the Minister say what level of compensation is being talked about?

Furthermore, bearing in mind that the whole of the European Commission obligations under the sugar protocol are carried out largely by Tate and Lyle at Greenock and at Silvertown, is he confident that that company will be able to discharge these important obligations if the price cuts go ahead? This is a very important point.

**Mr. MacGregor** *indicated assent.*

**Dr. Clark:** The Minister is nodding his head. I know that it is a matter that he will include in his brief when he goes back to Europe. I hope he will fight for this, because it is important that, whatever arrangement is reached in respect of the sugar regime, we honour our obligations —negotiated very hard in years gone by—to the ACP countries.

The Minister mentioned pigmeat. He said that it was his conclusion, and the conclusion of the Commission, that the difficulties experienced by the pig producers in recent years were due largely to the problems of too rapid expansion and over-supply. He had come to the conclusion that the only way to regulate this was by the free play of supply and demand. I must tell him that that view is not shared by many people involved not only in pig farming but in other branches of agriculture in this country.

The Minister knows that the pig producers have had a raw deal under the agrimonetary system of the CAP. They have not, in their terms, been allowed to play on a level playing field, in spite of the fact that the support system for pigmeat is minimal in the extreme. It seems illogical that the British pig farmer, even bearing in mind the point about expansion and over-supply, and bearing in mind the rumoured—and I think that, on occasions, the rumour has been well founded—subsidies given by the Dutch and Danish pig producers, does not feel that it is simply a question of over-supply and over-expansion, I thought it was a pity that the Minister, who, in the past I had thought, had understood the plight of the British pigmeat producers, now seems not to share that point of view.

During the past 10 years the Government have failed to give agriculture the necessary lead. It is amazing that, after 10 years, we are still awaiting a White Paper on its future. We do not know which way the industry is going. We know that the Government pay lip service to the National Farmers Union, but these days the Government are in the pockets not of the NFU but of agribusiness and the big chemical companies.

This Government have failed consumers and farmers. The differences between the world and EC prices are wide, as the Minister freely acknowledges. Subsidies are far too large. Why should the British consumer pay 58p for a 250 gm pack of butter when the world price is 25p? Similarly, why should the British consumer pay £1·18 for a pound of beef when the world price is 60p? The truth is that food in the EC is often twice as expensive as it should be, yet both consumers and farmers are losing, and much of that money disappears in fraud.

It is only under Labour that both consumers and farmers get a fair deal. As a farmer in the Minister's constituency recently said:

"Agriculture is doing infinitely worse now than at any time that I can remember. There had to come a backwash and this is it. A lot of farmers say they do better under Labour."

That is right.

5.31 pm

**Mr. Ralph Howell** (Norfolk, North): I must declare an interest, as I have been a farmer for 43 years. There is greater uncertainty in the industry now than I can remember in the whole of that 43 years.

I have listened to two Front Bench speeches. The speech of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) did nothing to reassure me. It is obvious that the Labour party has no answer to our problems. Neither am I satisfied with what I have heard from my right hon. Friend

the Minister. He and I are fellow Norfolk Members and once shared a common constituency boundary. I consider him to be a great friend. I realise the immense difficulties under which he is labouring. Not only have the Government got agriculture wrong, but so has the EEC and the United States. My right hon. Friend is facing tremendous difficulties, added to which he has had a little bit of sniping from another Ministry.

We must rethink the whole of our agriculture policy. I should like to begin by giving the House extracts from a speech which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made when she opened the Royal Show in 1981. She said:

"I wish to pay tribute to the remarkable contribution which British agriculture has made to our prosperity over many years. If only the whole of industry had performed as well as agriculture, the economy of this country would have been transformed. You now produce 64 per cent. more than you did 20 years ago; a performance that is twice as good as that of our manufacturing industries; labour productivity has increased by over 150 per cent.—virtually three times the increase in productivity generally."

The Prime Minister had more to say:

"Twenty five years ago, our farmers provided only 60 per cent. of the foods we need which can be produced here: today, the figure is 75 per cent.

This improvement alone is now saving some £1¼ billion per year on our food import bill, but there are still many foreign imports which we can replace."

She also said:

"In paying this tribute to British agriculture I am not being complacent—nor will you be. There is still plenty to be done. We can raise production still further."

British agriculture did exactly what it was asked to do. In 1981, we were producing 75 per cent. of the temperate foods we need and we increased it to 82·5 per cent. of self-sufficiency. It has been slipping back ever since, and it now stands at less than 73 per cent. That has created tremendous uncertainty and unprofitability within our industry and damaged the balance of payments considerably. We must find a way to restore confidence to agriculture soon.

What has brought about this great U-turn in agriculture? I can only conclude that the Treasury has swallowed, hook, line and sinker, all the false information put about by the Cheaper Food League, and particularly by my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). The time has come when we must recognise that the position has changed rapidly. If we carry on as we have been in the past two or three years, we shall endanger our agriculture and do grave harm to the environment as a whole.

Why on earth should we not be an exporter of grain? No other country can produce grain better than the eastern part of England. The Commission and the Americans are telling us that somehow we should not be in the exporting business. That is absolutely wrong. I wish that the Minister were listening. It is unfortunate that he is not, especially as he is my Member of Parliament. These matters need serious thought. We should be encouraged to produce grain to feed those parts of the world which have it in short supply. I cannot understand why, when the West has grain which the eastern bloc needs so vitally, we have to subsidise it to sell it to them. The whole approach to the export of grain has been wrong.

I recognise that the common agricultural policy is by no means perfect and is in need of reform, but the sort of reform that we are getting—of either depressing prices all round or freezing them while all other costs increase—is damaging. That is to put agriculture in this country and the wider advanced world—the United States and the rest of Europe—on a serious course which can only damage the economic health of the whole of the western world.

The question of sugar will be important, especially in Norfolk, which is the biggest sugar-producing county. There is no reason for the cut in the payment to growers. It is being done merely to bring the prices into line with the depressed prices which are being forced upon the cereal growers in some pretence that it will stop growers going into sugar production. Everyone knows that there is a quota system for sugar, so that cannot take place. I believe that Ministers will be in great difficulty if they go along with those proposals.

The scare about listeria in soft cheeses has done great damage to the whole of our cheese production industry. The French have gone quiet on this matter, so I can only conclude that the Minister has assured them that no harm will be done to them. However, it is well known that harm has been done not only to the producers of soft cheeses, but also to those of hard cheese in this country. That, coupled with the egg scare which has caused the killing of thousands of hens, will have one effect only—the consumers will have to pay higher prices than they would have had we not had so much nonsense from the scientists. I agree with the Minister that the time has come to put fewer resources into scientific research, because during the past few months scientists have caused a great deal of trouble in trying to justify their existence.

I believe that a fundamental reappraisal of our attitude to food is necessary. According to the latest set of figures —they have been rehashed this year so they are new to me —in 1984 we were spending 14·5 per cent. of our disposable domestic income on food, but we are now spending 12·2 per cent., while in 1979 it was 17·8 per cent. It has therefore been cut by one third.

In her speech in 1981, the Prime Minister made the point that the price of food had risen less than that of other goods which we purchased and, therefore, food is extremely cheap. I wonder, however, whether that is a good objective. One of our principal problems is that the Treasury believes that there is a lot of cheap food out in the wide world which would be a much better buy than supporting agriculture. Of course, if the 56 million people in this country depended on food from abroad, the Treasury would soon find out that there was no cheap food, and that we were at the mercy of the world for our food supplies.

How is it that the countries which have a different food policy—such as Japan, Switzerland and West Germany, which I include although it is part of the EEC, yet is always trying to defend its food production industry—are the countries which have the strongest economies? We must think again.

In my intervention in the Minister's speech I mentioned that the report of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations must be taken seriously. We know that our stocks of milk powder have gone down to virtually nil. I am not sure how those countries of the Third world, which we were able to help with skimmed milk powder, will fare. The fact that the world is consuming 100 million tonnes of grain more than last year's production is a very serious matter. There are reasons to believe that the weather problems in the United States may not be one-off, but could occur again.

The time has come for a thorough reappraisal of our agricultural policy and it should be appraised in such a

*[Mr. Ralph Howell]*

way that those engaged in the industry can understand what that policy is. I believe that it is fair to say that all the people involved in agriculture to whom I have spoken have not a clue what the Government's policy really is.

5.45 pm

**Mr. Richard Livsey** (Brecon and Radnor): I wish to make a number of points about the price proposals for 1989-90 and to respond to some of the Minister's points. I am especially pleased that the price proposals have been produced early this year, which is quite an achievement. As a former lecturer in farm management, I was often having to explain to students a week before their examinations that there had been many nights of negotiation at Brussels in the previous two months. However, we must look at the background against which the proposals were being discussed. It is a serious matter that farm incomes in the United Kingdom, in real terms, are the lowest since the second world war. I believe that that was partially responsible for the National Farmers Union, at its annual general meeting earlier this month, giving in effect a vote of no confidence in the Government's agriculture policy.

In 1988, there was a 25 per cent. drop in farm income, which is a 28 per cent. drop in real terms. According to a farm management survey in my country of Wales, small dairy farmers are trying to exist on net incomes of £4,992 per annum. It is an extremely tall order to expect them to survive in that situation, but one way or another they do. Over the past few years there has been a fall of 9 per cent. per annum in farm incomes.

The problems in the livestock sector are becoming more acute, although I fully realise that in 1988 the weather badly affected the arable sector too. Much money has been borrowed by farmers—in fact, £6·5 billion—and the annual interest rate bill is £700 million. As we know, the Chancellor's present policy of high interest rates is hitting agriculture hard.

I believe that macro policies of the kind which the Chancellor is using to tackle credit card spending power in the high street are inappropriate, because that problem bears no relationship to those of farm incomes and long-term investment, which is what concerns farming. At the same time, the Government have failed to join the European monetary system, which undoubtedly would stabilise interest rates. Farm accounts, especially those of farmers who have joined the industry in the past 10 years, show that one of their highest costs is interest rates. The Chancellor must deal with that problem, not only for farmers, but for other small businesses which are also being hit hard.

The situation in the less-favoured areas must be protected and supported. There is still scope for more support, certainly for suckler cows and for hill ewes.

The loss of the beef variable premium as a result of an agreement struck in the new year will mean a considerable loss of income to beef farmers. The introduction of the beef premium scheme for steers and male animals—heifers do not receive the premium—means that there will be an overall loss of income. The new scheme is equivalent to 3·3p per kg, whereas, when the variable premium operated, 10p per kg was paid out in certain circumstances. Those figures illustrate the substantial loss caused by the new scheme.

I am pleased that the Minister has addressed the problem of the sheepmeat regime. Britain is in the driving seat when it comes to sheep because 70 per cent. of the EEC's sheep population are found in the United Kingdom. Sheep are crucial to upland Britain, especially when one considers that half the ewes of Britain reside in Wales and Scotland and that those countries are dependent on them. The north of England, the south-west and other areas, mostly in the west midlands, are also dependent upon sheep. Sheep are crucial in the less-favoured areas where farm incomes are low—in fact, in terms of disposable income, the income of the general populace of the rural areas is low.

The Commission's proposals to tackle some of the problems appear inappropriate, especially in relation to variable premiums on sheep, which have encouraged quality lamb production; this has been an extremely good thing. If the Commission wants to abandon the open-ended variable premium, that should be discussed, rather than it taking a decision to cut off the variable premium completely. I am sure that there is room for negotiation on that matter.

**Mr. Christopher Gill** (Ludlow): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, my neighbour, for giving way. Does he consider that the support mechanism that we have experienced for the past 10 years has worked against the producers of livestock, because, for obvious commercial reasons, they have produced meat for the intervention stores and against the seasonal price scale, rather than for the end user, the housewife feeding her family? In a perverse way, the support mechanism has had a bad long-term effect upon farming. We should all exhort the industry to get back on to a basis where it is producing food that will be consumed. In that way, we shall be encouraging the industry to become a much healthier and profitable one. I know that it is debatable, but I should be interested to know the hon. Gentleman's views.

**Mr. Livsey:** I entirely agree that the intervention system has not been appropriate and has been wasteful in terms of expenditure, but that applies to the beef and cereal sectors, not to the sheep sector that I am discussing. The danger is that, if we abandon variable premiums, we may well end up putting sheepmeat into intervention stores, and I do not want to go down that road.

**Mr. Gill:** I submit that sheepmeat is a prime example of the divergence of opinion between what the consumer wants to eat and what the producer is producing. Now the producer has an incentive to produce lamb into the new year, when the seasonal price scales are at their highest. By that time, the quality of the lamb is less than it would have been in the autumn of the previous year and, in strict parlance, it is no longer lamb. Traditionally, the consumer is not in the habit of seeking to buy and eat lamb in the new year.

**Mr Livsey:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the variable premium system could be manipulated in such a way as to accommodate such marketing.

The Commission has proposed headage payments only, and I believe that great ewe premiums will encourage too much expansion of sheep production. Currently production is held at a level which means that we are 20 per cent. short of self-sufficiency. I was pleased that the Minister

said that there was a possibility of easing the stabiliser system for sheep in Britain. The Commission has some curious ideas about the stabiliser system and the payment of ewe premiums on headages—payment will be made for 1,000 ewes on hills and 500 ewes on lowlands. I do not believe that those proposals are acceptable. I have heard Eurocrats talk as though everyone has a flock of 10,000 ewes, but in this country the average ewe flock is well below 400. The Europeans must recognise that.

The Minister's statement was not half strong enough. I felt that he was talking about the demise of the variable premiums, when I believe that they should be fought for tooth and nail. We should not accept the current unsatisfactory situation regarding the freezing of sheepmeat prices. The Minister intends to have negotiations about the European sheepmeat regime. I believe that the current regime is satisfactory and, although we might have to adjust the variable premiums to some extent, we should not abandon them. The alternative is a vast expansion of the sheep flock with a subsequent kickback to the less-favoured areas and the only enterprise that those areas can successfully run at the moment. Such a kickback is an appalling prospect.

When the Minister is negotiating with the Council of Ministers on the sheepmeat regime, he should abandon those talks and walk out if he cannot get satisfactory proposals from the Commission. So many livestock farmers depend for the living on sheep in Britain and, largely, they reside in the poorer areas. The Minister must take this matter extremely seriously, because there is an awful lot at stake.

The proposed price freezes represent a reduction in price because, currently, the stabiliser system is biting. As a result, the sheepmeat market has been rather depressed. Obviously, there is scope for green pound stabilisation, although that is now minimal, but in the long term it is hoped that we can abandon the green pound. That policy is absolutely right. Because of the rise in value of sterling, there is almost parity between that and the green pound, so there is little scope for reducing the green pound. As a result, the full brunt of the price reductions will be felt by our livestock industry and the small and medium-sized farm businesses will be undermined, especially as they are finding life extremely difficult now.

An alternative is available to the Government, although they have not decided to take it up, and that is direct income support. The Under-Secretary should state why the Government are not prepared to consider that option especially when one considers the plight of the small and medium-sized farmer. Wales is heavily dependent on the livestock industry. The Farmers Union of Wales has calculated that farm incomes have dropped by £15 million in real terms in comparison with 10 years ago. That represents an awful lot of money. Now that the retail prices index is more than 7 per cent., it is clear that input costs will rise. However, the Minister has said that prices are frozen. I hope that I have shown that they are reducing. The European price proposals for 1989-90 do not hold out good prospects.

Falling prices will hit our smaller producers. If the Government are not prepared to look at income support, what will they do? We cannot continue with a base interest rate of 13 per cent. which results in a further squeeze on farm incomes. As a result, less food will eventually be produced in certain areas, and that could lead to higher consumer prices and more rural depopulation.

The Government should accept that they cannot wholly rely on the market place to solve their problems. Why do they not accept that most advanced nations support agriculture and intervention? I mean that in the broadest possible sense, and not in the narrow EEC sense. Many countries use Government intervention to support agriculture. The Government should implement policies that are commensurate with that. It is important for farm incomes to be maintained and our rural populations must be kept in the countryside. Failure to do so is a negation of good government.

6.1 pm

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): For many years, I supported the importation of butter and sheepmeat from New Zealand, and I did so because of the contribution of the New Zealand forces in the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars. When New Zealand ceased to make a full contribution to the defence of freedom by refusing to allow British warships to enter its ports for any purpose, including repairs, unless they publicly declared that they were non-nuclear, my support ended. We should look after our own farmers, especially now that their incomes have been much reduced. The sole criteria should be the interests of our farmers and consumers and the interests of New Zealand should be set entirely on one side.

Before the Minister spoke, I was worried about the unfairness of having a separate stabiliser for United Kingdom sheepmeat production. I was almost reassured when the Minister referred to the ending of this unfair stabiliser which applies only to the United Kingdom. My anxiety was half reawakened by his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). I hope that the separate Great Britain stabiliser is on its way out, because that is where it jolly well deserves to be.

In terms of beef, I regret that a ceiling is to be imposed on herd numbers. I appreciate the Minister's efforts in getting the limit raised to 90. However, I wish that a way could be found, without encouraging fraud in other countries, to enable support to be extended to clean heifers which are an important part of the United Kingdom's farming pattern. Since we are losing our beloved beef variable premium, which everybody in Britain liked, it is important to ensure that the special premium is available on the maximum number of cattle and that the suckler cow premium is paid at the maximum allowable rate.

In all previous agriculture debates, my hon. Friends and I have urged the Minister to devalue the green pound. The strength of the pound makes that unnecessary today, but if it should weaken, I hope that the Minister will take immediate action to prevent our farmers being placed at a disadvantage. The Minister rightly put much emphasis on eliminating fraud. As he recognised, nothing does more to damage the Community image throughout the EEC than the feeling that taxpayers are being milked by fraud. We police our agriculture and, indeed, our other industries much better than other countries; that means that, in Britain, the scope for fraud is limited. That makes it all the more galling when we see fraud running riot in other countries.

There has been a great deal of fraud in the production of olive oil. It is pointless to try to monitor olive oil production by aerial photographs, because an irrigated olive tree produces 10 times as much oil as an unirrigated one, and no aerial photograph will reveal that. It would be

*[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]*

far more sensible to tie the receipt of Community money for olive oil to tax returns. That would mean that, if income were under-reported, subsidy receipt would be reduced pari passu.

I agree that it would undoubtedly be in the interests of farmers for the CAP to be reformed, but being done good to can be a painful process. I hope that the Minister will not administer such large doses of reform that farmers will disappear and everybody will go hungry.

6.5 pm

**Ms. Joyce Quin** (Gateshead, East): Many issues are being covered in the debate. Like many hon. Members, I went to the Vote Office to collect the documents relevant to the debate and was filled with great alarm when I saw how many policy areas we were supposed to consider. The main aspect of the debate, however, is the agriculture price review and the eventual settlement that will be decided by the EEC. On the whole I welcome the Commission's proposals and hope that their main thrust will not be weakened in the coming weeks when some member states will have to take rather difficult political decisions at a time when the European elections are not far off.

Like many hon. Members, I believe that agriculture is vital and important for the health of our economy and that of the EEC. However, the interests of agriculture have to be balanced against other considerations. In the past, although it is less true today, the interests of large-scale agricultural producers semed to outweigh other considerations.

I am interested to see that the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) is in the Chamber, because he and I are members of the European Parliament and are on the Agriculture Committee. When I first joined that Committee I was astonished to see the strength of the farming interests among its members. If my memory serves me right, on the Committee there were beef farmers, pig producers, dairy farmers, olive oil growers, wine growers and on one occasion a buffalo farmer. That became apparent when we considered the importation of frozen buffalo meat from Australia. We realised that that would run counter to the interests of one member of the Committee who was a buffalo farmer from Italy.

Nowadays there is a better balance and other interests are being fully considered. I support the work of the newly appointed European Commissioner for consumer affairs who seeks to make sure that in all issues affecting the running of the EEC the voice of the consumer is heard. More such reform would be useful. For example, does the Minister agree that consumers and agricultural processors should be given a bigger say in some of the agricultural advisory committees in the Commission? Other current suggestions include the creation of an EEC food and drugs agency. That would be a useful initiative. Are the Government also prepared to support the idea put forward by consumer groups for an EEC food hygiene directive?

Within the better balance that I am talking about we need to make sure that we have effective and well targeted help for agriculture. I particularly support help for the less well-off areas—the upland areas that are difficult to farm but which provide many benefits for our society, not least in terms of advantages for the environment and for industries such as tourism.

Within the EEC, there are several schemes that will change the pattern of farming—for example, the set-aside scheme, which has already been mentioned. While this can make a contribution, I share the reservations expressed about it by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), particularly those concerning farmworkers, who may find that their livelihood is dramatically affected by this move. Extensification is a valuable measure, but I am concerned about the slowness with which it is being implemented. I hope that we shall be prepared to learn from countries that want to move faster down that road, and, at least within the EEC, there can be a useful sharing of experience.

I strongly support the measures that are being suggested to develop agriculture in an environmentally friendly manner. This will be particularly important in the years ahead. However, I regret that severe cuts in funding for some of the useful agricultural research, and for research into the effect of modern agriculture on the environment that the Government have been prepared to allow.

It is important for farmers, in Britain and in the rest of the EEC, to move away from the products that have traditionally caused the largest surpluses, but we have to be careful about how this process takes place. There is always a danger that, in response to the latest move in Brussels, farmers respond in a particular way. A few years ago we were all amazed, and not particularly pleased, by the enormous areas that were suddenly cultivated with oilseed rape, and the dazzling yellow fields of spring. While it is necessary to give incentives to farmers to move out of surplus production sectors, the effect on different parts of the EEC and different countries needs to be carefully monitored.

For example, I should not like to see farmers move over to forestry to such a huge extent that many of our upland areas become afforested. I am glad that we have turned away from some of the harmful coniferous plantations that have disfigured our uplands. We seem to be making further advances down the right road in England, but I wish that the Government would take on board the need to reduce the amount of coniferous plantations in Scotland and Wales, about which many environmentally minded people are rightly concerned. I would not like to see the natural diversity of the countryside and the rural areas in the EEC eliminated by the latest directive or proposal to move into the production of certain products.

It is important to help the poorer agricultural areas and I am glad that, under the EEC structural funds regulations, some progress is being made towards that. I know that the Government have agreed with Brussels that three areas in the United Kingdom should be helped by the structural funds—the Highlands and Islands, parts of rural Wales and parts of Devon and Cornwall. However, how did the Government decide on these areas? What were the criteria by which suitability for these funds was decided? Do those criteria apply equally to other areas that might be in need of special support, such as the north Pennines? I do not think that objective criteria were used in determining the areas to be helped. While I would not like to detract from the help that those areas will receive, I should like to know whether other areas fit the criteria and might be considered at future meetings between the Government and their EEC partners.

Several hon. Members have spoken about fraud, and, when EEC money is being allocated we want to be sure

that it is wisely and sensibly used. I do not think that I shall be alone in being confused about the extent of fraud in the European Community. Over the past few weeks in the press I have seen figures ranging from £2 billion through to £8 billion a year and I should like to know whether the Government have any real idea of how extensive the fraud has been, whether in this country or other European countries.

We are anxious to help farmers, but we should be aware that there is a danger, as a result of the EEC system, of giving help to people who may not be full-time farmers. Are the Government urging their European colleagues to come up with a more satisfactory definition of "farmer"? Who is a farmer and who is a full-time farmer, and how should we define this? Should it be on the basis of what proportion of a person's income comes from farming activities? I should be interested to hear the Government's comments on that.

**Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop:** I hope that the hon. Lady is not implying that if, as a result of falling farm incomes, some small farmers are forced to take part-time jobs as well, they should lose financial support from the Government.

**Ms. Quin:** Indeed not. The force of my argument is that we should be helping those who need it and I am sure that the category described by the hon. Gentleman includes people who are deserving of EEC support. Many of us are worried that the recipients of EEC agricultural funds may already be wealthy people in their own right, and it is not clear how much of their income is derived from farming and how much from other sources. If we want to get value for money in EEC agriculture, we need to consider that. I accept many of the points made about the dramatically deteriorating incomes of many poorer farmers in some of the least well-off areas in Britain and the rest of the Community.

What we have been discussing has an effect on countries outside the EEC. I strongly disagree with the points made by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), about New Zealand. New Zealand suffered many problems as a result of the fact that, in the 1970s, the EEC countries were thoughtlessly expanding production and causing enormous surpluses. New Zealand is a friendly, independent country. It arrives at its Government policies on the basis of democratic votes, so we should not take exception to those policies being pursued by a friendly country, and try to deny it access to the EEC market as a result.

We should think strongly about the effects of these policies on the Third world. In all our negotiations with the EEC, we should be looking not just at the effects on us but at the effects on countries outside, which are often a great deal poorer than we are. In short, we want a fairer system of agriculture within the EEC that helps those who need it, without harming the interests of friendly and poor countries who are outside the EEC organisation. It will be a huge task to achieve this, but it is one on which we should determinedly set our sights.

6.19 pm

**Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop** (Tiverton): I noticed an apparent divergence in concern about public health which would be bizarre if its effects were not so harmful. Children often have to inhale tobacco smoke because they are in a home where one or other parents smokes. The damage that they can sustain from that is now known. Hundreds of thousands of people die each year from smoking, and a huge number die each year as a result of passive smoking. No one is proposing to make the sale of tobacco illegal, yet we hear rumours that green top milk is to be made an illegal substance to sell. It seems that unpasteurised cream may also become illegal to sell, as may cheese made from unpasteurised milk.

**Mr. Home-Robertson:** I am provoked to intervene by the hon. Gentleman's argument about cigarettes. I introduced a private Member's Bill in 1986, which is now the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986. That measure is supposed to ban the sale of all forms of tobacco from youngsters under the age of 16 years, but it is a dead letter because the Government cannot be bothered to enforce it. Appropriate legislation exists, but it is not being enforced very well, if indeed it is enforced at all.

**Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman failed to listen to what I was saying. I was drawing attention to the bizarre disjunction between allowing tobacco to be sold when passive smokers—those who have not elected to smoke—will probably suffer irreversible damage to their health, but suggesting that those who exercise an informed judgment to buy green top milk or unpasteurised cream should be denied the right to do so. To promote the second course in an alleged attempt to protect the consuming public while offering no protection to those who have not exercised any choice to inhale tobacco is such a bizarre disjunction of priorities that no Government could sanely embrace it.

I could have wished that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whose recovery from illness I greatly welcome, had so arranged his programme as to have been present throughout one of our rare debates on agriculture. I do not commend his decision not to do so. Ministers control their own programmes, and I do not commend the decision of my right hon. Friend to be absent from the House since the speech of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) from the Opposition Front Bench.

I am extremely worried about a number of issues that I wish to share with the House. One is the fact that the health inspection of imported food depends on inspectors paid by the local authority at the port of entry when it should be a national inspection service and financed nationally. How can we expect ratepayers in an area where there is a port to provide adequate percentage of examinations for the benefit of the public throughout the rest of the country? That is another disjunction. I have complained about that arrangement in earlier debates.

We read in the reputable press yesterday of huge quantities of French flood-damaged food entering the United Kingdom, being relabelled and then being sold to an unsuspecting British public. It seems that the local inspectors were unaware of that. I do not blame them for that because it is not their fault that they are too thin on the ground, but it demonstrates more strongly than anything else the need for the food inspection service at the port of entry to be nationally financed and for central Government to be responsible for manning levels. It is consumers in the entire country, not just those who live within the local authority area around the port of entry, who are protected or not protected from heinously dangerous imports by too light a degree of inspection.

*[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop]*

What of the state veterinary service? It is of such a size now that it can be overwhelmed if it has to deal with more than one problem at a time. Those of us who represent constituencies with an agriculture interest know that the system of control of bovine tuberculosis is slipping back because the state veterinary service is having to focus its attention on bovine spongiform encephalopathy instead. That is not to underrate the importance of focusing veterinary effort on BSE. It is already known that scrapie can jump from sheep to human beings. Anyone who read the letters in the *British Medical Journal* last year from veterinary officers or doctors—I think it was doctors—who had been in practice in tropical Africa, where exactly that had happened, would be aware of that fact. If that can happen, we have every reason to believe that it will happen at some stage from infected cattle, unless there is a 100 per cent. grant to withdraw such cattle from actual or potential consumption at the first suspicion of symptoms.

I learned as recently as 48 hours ago from an experienced veterinary surgeon that there is as yet no clinical way of anticipating behavioural symptoms as the sole means of detecting the disease in living animals. The presence of the disease is confirmed only after the beasts' heads have been cut off and their brains examined by qualified personnel. If these animals are to be removed at the first opportunity so as to avoid any possibility of their entering the food chain, only a 100 per cent. grant will suffice. We all know that. Ministers must know that. After all, they are not fools. If we are serious about preventing avoidable disease of an extremely serious sort, that is the action that the Government must take. It is within their power to take it.

I wish to compare the fate of the sheep variable premium with that of the beef variable premium because I believe that there is an important lesson to be learned from the comparison. When milk quotas were introduced, the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food justified southern Ireland having an increased quota when Britain's quota was cut on the ground that we were allowed to keep the beef variable premium. Having spent that coin, the beef variable premium was negotiated away while Southern Ireland kept its extra milk quota. We did not catch up with southern Ireland, having lost what the then Minister pleaded as the justification for Britain's quota being reduced while Southern Ireland's was increased.

What will happen if the sheep variable premium is negotiated away? We agreed only to a "standard quantity", which for some reason is now described as a "stabiliser". when I first knew it in this place, it was called a "standard quantity", and that term is much more descriptive of what it is. I hope that the House will forgive me if I continue to call it a standard quantity, although I do not do that because my memory has gone from scrapie. If we are to lose sheep variable premium, which I trust we shall not, there must be no question whatever of our still having a standard quantity or stabiliser, the only justification for which was the fact that we had a sheep variable premium when other EEC countries did not. If one goes, so must the other. There must be no compromise whatever about that.

I do not know what is in the report that is now the subject of the press conference for which my right hon. Friend the Minister left the House some considerable time ago. We shall know that later. I can only say that this debate is the poorer for none of us knowing what is in that report before the debate started. That was avoidable, and it should have been avoided. I do not like to see the Government manage affairs in this way when it is clearly avoidable.

Lastly, I refer to the alleged lack of change in agricultural support in certain spheres. It is obvious to those in the industry that if it is the same in pounds sterling as it was last year, it must be worth 7 per cent. less. That is not no change—it is 7 per cent. less. If, as my right hon. Friend the Minister indicated, the effect of the relationship with the green pound and the other things that he has negotiated is a plus of 1·6 per cent.—I have no reason to doubt that figure—according to my calculation that leaves a net drop in expendable income of 5·4 per cent. if the amount is the same in terms of sterling as it was a year ago. Let us face the reality of that and not pretend that incomes are unchanged. We do not claim to have increased old age pensions when they are changed only by the cost of living index—we say that they have been valorised by the change in the cost of living index—so let us not pretend that paying the same rate in sterling as last year means that the recipients will have the same purchasing power, because they will not.

The industry is going through a period of dramatic financial contraction, the effect of which is not and cannot be confined to it. It is to be seen in falling employment in the sectors which supply agricultural machinery, not just agricultural chemicals. It is to be seen in the fall in incomes of sub-post offices and shops in rural areas, which need the income from local agriculture to sustain their own livelihoods. No part of rural Britain is isolated from income levels in agriculture. We should remember that fact as we debate agricultural problems in a House which I note remains as wholly bereft of Scottish and Welsh nationalists now as it was when the opening Front Bench speeches were made.

6.33 pm

**Mr. Martyn Jones** (Clwyd, South-West): It is pure coincidence that the Minister's report to this House of more cuts, which will undoubtedly reduce the income of hill farmers, has been delayed until today. I am sure that it has nothing to do with the large number of such farmers in Richmond.

Many hill farmers in my area, and many more in Wales, are already struggling, like the rest of industry, with the Government's huge increases in interest rates and inflation. Specifically, the reduction in payment for the production of beef and sheepmeat will have disastrous consequences for hill and marginal farmers who have no alternative to livestock farming. The exclusion of heifer beef from subsidy will mean a loss of £50 a head for my producers. That will be especially detrimental for small producers who finish store beef for market. The exclusion of heifer beef is almost certainly due to the fact that the rest of Europe does not produce the same quality of heifer beef.

As I have said, Wales is traditionally a livestock-producing area. It is extremely likely that, if we get rid of our lamb variable premium under pressure from the EEC and substitute a headage payment on ewes, restricted perhaps to 500 head on lowland and 1,000 on upland

areas, that would be woefully inadequate and would lead to upland areas becoming yet another industrial wasteland —and we have seen many of those in Wales.

Most of the sheep production subsidy comes to the United Kingdom, but I must stress that evening out the subsidy by 1992 or 1993 on citrus production, wine, olive oil and tobacco will hardly have a beneficial effect on the incomes of United Kingdom farmers.

My farmers noted with great displeasure the fact that the Government's figures show that agricultural incomes in the United Kingdom were down 25 per cent. and they were extremely disappointed with the Minister when he stated at the recent Oxford conference that only 50 per cent. of farmers rely on their agricultural income for their main income. The fact that many wealthy people buy country property with a few acres on which they graze the odd sheep more as a lawn mower or a hobby than as a living, makes a nonsense of the figures that the Government are using to decide policy.

Farmers acknowledge the need for the reduction of basic foods within the intervention system, but some stock must be retained and a great many farmers have expressed concern that the Government's current thinking seems to them to tend towards the suggestion that agricultural production can be changed overnight. Farmers are painfully aware, however, that there must be careful planning and consideration. A calf canot be produced at a moment's notice, nor can a lamb or a crop of wheat.

Farmers have always had a responsible attitude to food production and they have always responded to the demands of successive Governments. However, they are concerned that this Government's policy is undermining the industry. Their policy towards bovine spongiform encephalopathy is just one example. I agree with the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), and I am sure that all my farmers would also agree, that the only answer is for 100 per cent. grants to be paid on the value of the cow, whatever its state. We must stem the tide of 100 new cases of BSE a week. My farmers feel completely let down by the Government, and I am sure that consumers feel the same.

6.38 pm

**Mr. Alan Amos** (Hexham): I am glad that we are having this debate this afternoon because I am becoming a little worried about the farmer-bashing which seems to be so fashionable in certain quarters. We owe our farmers a great debt. They are the most efficient farmers in Europe and they have never let us down in providing the nation with good and wholesome food. I for one do not pay too much attention to the nut-cutlet-eating, seaweed-juice-drinking, *Guardian* readers about these matters. Farmers actively embrace the latest technology and employ good working practices. They make a large contribution to our balance of payments and food prices have risen less quickly than the RPI in general. Apart from anything else, farmers are kind and generous people.

I notice that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) is in the Chamber. I am glad about that, because he is one of my constituents and he can confirm what I am saying. We have an obligation to help the farming community during this period of major transition.

The Government have generously given millions of pounds to manufacturing industry to help it adapt to the new technological era of the 1990s. Unlike those of all other sectors, incomes in agriculture are falling. Hill farmers in my constituency are in difficulties, and I am afraid that such farmers do not have alternative forms of employment. If they cannot be helped to stay in farming, livelihoods and whole communities will be destroyed.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** The same can be said of the steel industry.

**Mr. Amos:** The steel industry has done very well because of the Government's generous support. I hope that farming will end up as stable and as prosperous as the steel industry.

Agriculture is of strategic importance, and before any right hon. or hon. Member refers to the level of expenditure on the common agricultural policy, I must point out that a little less than two thirds of that expenditure goes not to farmers but towards the costs of storage, disposal, export subsidies, and so on. Farmers themselves do not receive that money direct. There is need for reform.

It is a pity to see one of our great industries in a state of uncertainty. Farmers can handle the vagaries of the weather but find it difficult to deal with the inability of 12 sovereign European countries, with varying and frequent elections, to agree on overdue but essential reform. Some years ago, I was involved in agriculture, and it seems to me that milk quotas could have been avoided if our EEC partners had faced up to the problems of dairy surpluses earlier. Instead, they ignored the impending crisis and were forced into taking dramatic action—with all the attendant injustices of implementing and operating the quota system. Paradoxically, I suspect that most dairy farmers are happy to retain milk quotas for the certainty and stability that they now offer.

Matters cannot and will not remain as they are, for the reason that, quite properly, limits have been imposed on the Community budget and on the CAP's proportion of it, together with the existence of real and potential market imbalances in most products due to technological progress —which is something that we cannot and should not try to halt.

Unfortunately, an area that needs a clear sense of direction and stability—agriculture—happens to be the only policy area that is controlled by the EEC, which is too often an institute known for inertia and pettifogging regulations. In the case of an industry that, in a very real sense, is a victim of its own success, politicians owe it a prosperous, albeit, generally, a non-expanding future. As manufacturing has almost undergone the fundamental transformation of restructuring, so too is agriculture about to embark on a similar exercise. That is not surprising. Farming is a cyclical business, as is the nature of economic development.

Northumberland, in which lies my constituency, has seen a dramatic change. Agricultural employment there between 1976 and 1986 fell by 14 per cent. Over the same period, the number of cattle fell by 22 per cent. Agriculture is extremely important in a county where three quarters of the land area is given over to its use. The county is vulnerable, because nearly 40 per cent. of that land is rough grazing. There is more land in that category in Northumberland than in any other in England or Wales. Northumberland has about 13 per cent. of the nation's total rough grazing.

*[Mr. Amos]*

In looking for solutions, careful consideration must be given to the structure of the particular sector of farming involved. In Northumberland, 60 per cent. of its farm area is rented—nearly half the farmers in my constituency are tenant farmers. It is gratifying to see that about one third of applications for the set-aside scheme have been submitted by tenant farmers.

The underlying reason for agriculture's present situation appears to be lack of demand. In manufacturing, poor competitiveness forced British consumers to look to foreign imports. In agriculture, the demand for basic foods in a high income economy has reached a plateau. Even the United Kingdom's remarkable status as a major food exporter is fragile and is propped up by the very subsidies that have helped bankrupt the Community budget. If the Soviet Union succeeds with its programme of reforms, the situation will only worsen as that market dries up.

The solution does not lie in finding more money, and allowing matters to carry on as they are. What is the point of increasing the CAP budget to allow farmers to produce more food that can neither be eaten nor exported? Nor should such a thing be allowed in respect of cars, shipbuilding, steel or coal. The solution lies in allowing agricultural restructuring, rather than pretend that such restructuring is not needed.

If we can make the Common Market truly a common market, and allow market forces to operate more freely, countries will specialise in those products in which they have a comparative advantage. That would be in the United Kingdom's best interests, for our efficiency and structural advantages would allow us to dominate in the production of cereals, sheep, milk, beef, pigs and poultry. I have that confidence in British agriculture. A freer market should be seen as a golden opportunity for British agriculture to prosper, not as a danger to be avoided at all costs.

The second aspect of a long-term strategy must be diversification, both in agriculture itself and in the rural economy generally. Any industry that wants to survive into the 1990s must be flexible and able to meet rapidly changing demands. That involves retraining, the acquisition of new skills, and—more importantly—a willingness to do so. The Agricultural Training Board is already doing much good work, and I congratulate the Government on introducing grants for diversification into tourism, craft industries, and so on, and on the establishment of the farm woodlands scheme. Few people can be given any guarantee about the permanency of their occupations. Right hon. and hon. Members do not expect such a guarantee—though my right hon. and hon. Friends may, more so than others.

Such adjustments can be painful, or they can be relatively easy if there is Government assistance. The ALURE strategy is one of the most significant statements in post-war agricultural policy.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you tell the House whether you have been informed by the Leader of the House whether there is to be a statement on the arrest of four former and existing Marconi employees and on the further inquiries into that company that are to take place? Will there be a statement on that matter tonight or tomorrow?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** Mr. Speaker has received no such request from any Minister.

**Mr. Amos:** The ALURE strategy is one of the most significant statements in post-war agricultural policy. While accepting that agriculture will remain the dominant user of land in rural areas, it makes a brave and radical attempt to face the future.

Another part of the strategy must be acceptance both by central and local Government of the need to preserve the livelihood of hill sheep farmers and cattle farmers—especially the smaller among them. We are talking about the future of whole rural communities. It must be realised that any decline of agriculture in areas such as Northumberland will mean the decline of whole economies. If the major employer contracts, so will the need for schools, shops and transport. That must elicit a national commitment, as any EEC policy to aid small farmers, while costing the British taxpayers a lot of money, will not, because of the European definition of a small farmer, help our own farmers. That is a case of agricultural and social policy becoming undistinguishable.

Real and vital assistance can be given through a fair and reasonable level of HLCAs for breeding cattle and ewes and through the grants policy on LFAs generally, together with paying the maximum allowable nationally funded element of the suckler cow premium under the new EEC arrangements for beef. Hill farmers in my constituency would certainly prefer the proposed special premium to be paid to the breeder.

A fourth aspect is encouraging farmers to extend their traditional individualism into taking even greater responsibility for their own industry. They have a duty to find better ways of marketing their produce, to identify market trends, an to become market leaders in supplying more quickly the demands of a rapidly changing market. They must grow for the market, meeting and anticipating change in the market place and in consumer preference.

If there is scepticism, as there is, about the more extreme claims of the health food lobby, where are the counter-arguments? The farmers must make them. "Food from Britain" should be viewed not with suspicion but as an invaluable ally in diversification into growth areas. Why do the French, for example, have such a hold on our market for high value-added dairy products? Equally, it is not unreasonable for a partnership to develop between the private and the public sectors in research and development. If, however, the agricultural community is to be asked to make larger contributions, it is only right that it should be given more say in how the resources are used.

When there is change—which, in principle, farmers accept must come about: they are realists—let us provide enough time for that change to be carried out properly: for instance, charges for ADAS services and research and development. I recently visited some of my horticulture farmers. They accepted the new policy on near-market research, but, quite reasonably, they wanted a fair period in which to adjust to the new circumstances. The amounts involved are not large for the Government, but they are large for farmers. Agriculture is not like manufacturing; its output cannot be increased or decreased by the market. It is a long-term business, and we must give it time to adapt. That is only fair.

In the short and medium term, a number of measures should be taken, but I shall mention only two. Given that a certain amount of agricultural land will become surplus

to requirements, particularly for cereals, the voluntary set-aside scheme now established should commend itself as one that all sides of the industry can at least agree to accept. Such an idea, however, is not easy for the Government to sell to the general urban population, so it would be in farmers' interests not to pitch their demands unreasonably high.

The price mechanism must also be given a bigger role to play in establishing a larger element of market realism in most sectors. Mention of the price mechanism need not produce shudders of fear. The ability and potential of the farming community to achieve ever higher rates of productivity should be part of any consideration of future agricultural policy. Talk of nitrogen quotas for cereals, for example, I consider misconceived. Apart from the impossibility of enforcement, we should be encouraging the use of technology to improve yields to maintain our competitive advantage, thereby raising demand for our produce. If we spurn modern techniques, hon. Members may rest assured that our competitors will not, and they will soon overtake us.

Although the demand for organically produced food will continue to represent a tiny fraction of the market, there will be some expansion as incomes rise, providing an opportunity for diversification. I should like at this point to pay tribute to one of my farmers, John Whaley, who is doing a great deal in that regard.

Other short-term but essential measures must include further devaluations of the green pound if the pound falls back from its current high level. That raises the central and perhaps dominant question of free and fair competition. Too many of us feel that the British always play by the rules and lose out as a result. I believe firmly that as long as United Kingdom Ministers fight our corner doggedly in EEC negotiations the British farmer is better off inside the Common Market than outside it. Our Ministers are doing exactly that.

For example, the FEOGA-funded element of the suckler cow premium was increased by 60 per cent., the headage limit on beef was raised to 90 per cent. and a larger than expected devaluation of the green pound took place recently. Our message is getting over in the EEC, but the message to our EEC colleagues must always be: "If you do not follow the rules, don't expect us to do so."

Equally, we must be ever vigilant over European discrimination against British interests—in headage limits for beef or sheep to replace the variable premium schemes, and the exclusion of heifers from any new beef arrangements. I know that those have been more or less decided, but none the less we must constantly fight against them, as they affect Britian in particular. Such measures are not only anti-United Kingdom, but anti the most efficient producer, which makes no sense from anyone's point of view.

All things being equal—although they never are—my guesstimate is that, by the end of the century, about 90 per cent. of British agriculture will be carrying on as before. Provided that the inevitable changes are phased in gradually and with Government support and help, our agriculture will be highly efficient, more balanced and prosperous. It will continue to make a tremendous contribution to the United Kingdom balance of payments, and will be well able to face the challenges of the future.

6.54 pm

**Mr. Elliot Morley** (Clanford and Scunthorpe): There is no doubt that farmers face real problems related to their income and the pressures imposed on them. Those pressures are caused not merely by the CAP, but by external factors such as high interest rates and the cuts in research and development—a major concern to farmers in my constituency. During election campaigns, however, when I see the colour of the posters in farmers' fields, I sometimes wonder whether they really want the policies that the Government whom they presumably support are bringing in. Farmers seem to suffer from split personalities: what they want and the way in which they vote do not always coincide.

The farm price proposals do not deal with farmers' falling incomes, or with their other problems. I am concerned about farmers' incomes, because I know that many farmers are caught on the treadmill of borrowing money and then trying to repay it by increasing their income from crops, using more and more fertilisers to make up the shortfall, with undesirable environmental consequences.

It is also clear that the common agricultural policy is a Frankenstein's monster out of control—a monster with an insatiable appetite for milk and wine lakes and cereal mountains. According to figures from the Consumers Association, costs that are protected are kept artificially high in the Community compared with world prices. The figures show that the price of butter in the EEC is 132 per cent. higher than the world price, the price of skim milk powder 37·9 per cent. higher, the sugar price 100 per cent. higher and the beef price 96·6 per cent higher.

I am afraid that I have not noticed the Government's measures to deal with the excesses of the CAP having much effect. There is a good deal of sabre-rattling when various Ministers—even the Prime Minister—go across to Brussels, but there has not been much change. Although there has been a reduction in structural payments, there are still more increases in subsidies.

There is no doubt that some industries could survive and be competitive without such support. All that the pig farmers in my constituency ask is parity of treatment in the European Community. They do not ask for any subsidies or special help; they just want to be treated in the same way as pig farmers in Belgium, Holland, Germany or Denmark—and I am sure that the same applies to many other farmers. For example, it is no use bringing in new controls on pesticide levels if, in 1992, produce is to be imported into this country which does not comply with the standards that we would rightly expect from our farmers.

The proposals contain a 5 per cent. reduction in price support for the sugar industry. I concede that, according to the Consumers Association, sugar is very over-priced in world market terms, but I nevertheless believe that there is scope for new markets for sugar beet, especially in this country. In particular, sugar products can provide the chemical industry with biodegradable plastics. Part of the problem with developing that industry is caused by the quotas currently imposed on sugar beet growers in this country. Those need to be looked at if we are to ensure that there is a viable market. It is worth pointing out that the planting of sugar beet is environmentally advantageous, contributing to nitrogen levels in the soil. I also believe that the green pound should be abolished in due course and MCAs as soon as possible, even before 1992.

*[Mr. Elliot Morley]*

Although, on the face of it, the reduction in structural support, which has declined from £392 million in 1983-84 to £209 million in 1988-89, may seem desirable, some changes could be beneficial, in particular the move towards environmentally sensitive areas. Similar structural changes such as grants for drainage have been damaging, so I am pleased that there will now be controls on them.

There could be greater scope for controlling food output and caring for the environment by extending the use of the environmentally sensitive areas scheme. At the moment, such schemes account for only 0·5 per cent. of MAFF's budget, so there is considerable scope for increasing that. There is also scope for extending low-input farming instead of using set-aside. I have never been in favour of set-aside, because it is a negative use of public money. It is not constructive in terms of reducing surpluses. Evidence shows that the set-aside scheme has not made any great impact on surpluses, especially on cereals. I should prefer the emphasis to be placed on low-input farming and on giving financial support to farmers who farm in environmentally sensitive ways.

Cuts in research and development also pose problems. As the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) pointed out, if we are to succeed and survive in Europe, we must use modern farming techniques. That being the case, there is no justification for the recent announcement of the £30 million cut in research and development over the next 3 years.

One environmentally sensitive project, aimed at controlling pests in soil by the use of nematode worms instead of chemical pesticides—which would not only be advantageous to farmers in reducing the cost of chemical inputs, but to the advantage of all of us as it would be a natural rather than a chemical method of pest control—has had its funding cut by one quarter. I see no justification for cuts on that scale.

There has been a dramatic reduction in support over recent years. We need careful planning. I am not saying —I do not believe that any of my hon. Friends would say —that farmers should be cut off from any kind of suport. In fact, that would be disastrous, because if it happened as part of a unstructured plan, farmers would try to make up that lack of support in higher outputs from their farms and would farm in far more environmentally damaging ways. Therefore, there must be a structure. Support should be given in a planned and structured way, but it should be linked to environmentally sensitive methods of farming, rather than to set-aside and other schemes.

We must consider our overall strategy of what we grow in this country and what we import. It may well be to the advantage of the consumer that we import more cereals from the Third world, rather than grow them in our inclement climate with the use of high chemical inputs. That would benefit the economy of the Third world and free our farmers to grow other crops, perhaps those attracting a higher premium because of rarity value or the way in which they have been grown.

We must also bear in mind New Zealand's traditional role in the supply of cheese and butter. I believe that we should support the New Zealanders and that their products should be to our market. However, it seems strange that New Zealand can export its products halfway round the world and still sell them at a lower price than some of our producers. Surely that raises questions about the efficiency of some of our producers.

I want to take issue with the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), who is no longer in her place, and who made some remarkable comments about New Zealand and its policy of being a non-nuclear zone. There is no justification for victimising a country such as New Zealand simply because it has such a policy. We could extend the logic of that to the Americans, who have taken steps to penalise our computer manufacturers for exporting computer parts to Russia and the Soviet bloc, and take steps against US imports.

Our farmers can meet the modern challenge of diversification. I believe that they can operate so that direct support can be reduced. Green consumerism will force changes on farmers and producers, because people will use the power of their pockets when buying consumer goods that have been raised or produced in a way that they regard as environmentally unacceptable. That will apply to intensive animal products. There has been a great deal of comment recently about intensive methods of animal rearing. There is scope for de-intensifying that, which may lead initially to a rise in the cost of those consumer products. However, I believe that many people will be prepared to pay a premium for not having the present methods of animal rearing.

In conclusion, the solution to the problems of price support and the CAP lies in a carefully structured package. The free market will simply lead to a return to the situation of the 1930s and force farmers off the land. Farmland and fields will return to the derelict state that they were then. It is important to keep farmers on the land. They are not only producers in an industry, but people who can protect our common heritage. Many farmers have been forced, often against their will, to operate in ways that they know are damaging, because of circumstances beyond their control—especially interest rates and financing packages. There is now an opportunity to reduce surpluses and to support farmers to the advantage of all—consumers, the countryside and farmers.

7.5 pm

**Mr. Andrew Hunter** (Basingstoke): I shall be brief. I intend to concentrate exclusively on the Commission's price proposals. In so doing, I welcome the fact that the debate is so early this year and that negotiations are advancing so rapidly, because no one benefits from delays such as we have experienced in the past.

I shall make just one general point and seek to illustrate it from the first volume of the Commission's proposals. The general observation that I wish to make has become common ground in the debate. All hon. Members who have spoken have acknowledged that the gravest problem facing British agriculture at the moment is the pressure on farm incomes. This issue must be kept in proportion. It is not a problem that is consistently or uniformly experienced. It varies from one sector of agriculture to another and, by definition, from one region to another. However, the essential point is that there is now pressure on farm incomes such as has not been experienced for many years.

It is absolutely right that production should be controlled, but we must be wary of the situation that we

have created, whereby in controlling and limiting production we put pressure on farm incomes and replace one set of problems with another.

The proposals as a whole worsen the position rather than improve it. That can be seen clearly from three sections in the proposals. The first concerns sheepmeat —a subject which has featured prominently in the debate. There is clearly some good news on that front. The EC is now advancing steadily towards self-sufficiency—the figure is now about 81 per cent.—so there is scope for more improvements. There have been improvements in recent years, with an increase in total headage of about 5 per cent. two years ago and nearly 4 per cent. last year. It is good to note that the United Kingdom has had more than its fair share of that increase—with an increase last year of about 8 per cent. It is also good to note that consumption is increasing within the Common Market, albeit fractionally, by about 1 per cent. per year. It is likewise good to note the fractional drop in imports from about 259,000 tonnes in 1987 to 250,000 tonnes in 1988.

However, now comes the bad news, which has already featured in the debate. There are to be no institutional price changes in the sheepmeat regime. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) said, that is something of a non-event. The impact of inflation means that sheep farmers are suffering a 7 per cent. loss in support in addition to a 10 per cent. drop in market prices in the past year.

It is clear that sheep farmers are far less well off than they were even two years ago. The basic reason for that has been the operation of the Great Britain stabiliser mechanism, which has been far too harsh. Perhaps I misunderstood the observation made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman). The argument is not that we alone have a stabilising mechanism, because such mechanisms exist throughout the Common Market. The argument is that it is too harsh in this country and that a softer regime operates elsewhere.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** There is a separate stabiliser mechanism here. We would not mind having the same structure as other countries, but it is unfair that we should have a different one.

**Mr. Hunter:** I now understand more fully the point made by my hon. Friend, and she is correct. That brings me to my next observation, which concerns the variable premium.

The ceiling on breeding ewes has been acceptable so long as the variable premium has existed. I emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton: that if there is a concession on one, we must be doubly on our guard—if we lose the variable premium, we can also lose the ceiling on breeding ewes; conversely, if we keep the variable premium we must be prepared to accept a ceiling of some sort.

If I heard him correctly, the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) gave a statistic of which I was unaware. I believe he said that we account for 70 per cent. of sheep farming in the Common Market. Did I mishear him?

**Mr. Livsey:** I said that 70 per cent. of EC sheep were in the British Isles.

**Mr. Hunter:** I thought that that was what the hon. Gentleman said. The significant point at the moment is that, under the existing regimes we receive only 30 per cent. of total EC sheep support. Given the total support that we obtain, the hon. Gentleman's figure shows that even now the situation is far from acceptable.

**Mr. Livsey:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that support for sheep in the European Community represents only 2·5 per cent. of the total budget, so it is a relatively small element in the CAP budget?

**Mr. Hunter:** I entirely accept that.

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the existing regime is under review and we can expect substantial reforms in the near future. I am sure that the key words here must be "caution" and "vigilance".

For all the reasons given in this debate, sheep farming is vital to many parts of the country and I urge the Minister to pay great attention to ensuring that sheep farming, particularly in the uplands, remains economically viable, because there is no alternative.

In the beef sector, again, there is a combination of good and bad news. Perhaps there is a moral to be learned from this with regard to reforming the sheep regime. The current beef regime is substantially harsher than the previous one. Intervention remains unchanged, but that is only a small part of the problem facing beef farmers. The annual limit of intervention to 220,000 tonnes, the arguably too low trigger for intervention buying, the inadequacy of the special premium compared with the variable beef premium, the limitation of the premium to 90 head instead of the variable premium, and the absence of a heifer premium all without doubt place a heavy burden on the British beef farmer.

All this is taking place against a favourable backcloth. The position as regards beef and intervention in the Common Market during 1988 was not so bad as in previous years. Under the old regime, there was a reduction in production. Almost 5 per cent. less beef was produced in 1988, which brought us back to about 96 per cent. self-sufficiency.

In 1988, too, public intervention and private storage were appreciably down on the 1987 figures. A drop in buying and an increase in sales resulted in the most significant decrease in the stocks in intervention. The warning to which one must pay heed is that, arguably, the change in the beef regime has proved to be an over reaction. Consequently, the British farmer is at a greater disadvantage than he need otherwise have been. I sincerely hope that that lesson will be learned when we reform the sheep regime.

Finally, with regard to cereals, pages 31 to 35 of the Commission's proposals do not make happy reading. Clearly, stabilisers did not work last year. Salient quotations can be drawn from page 31 of the Commission's report, perhaps the most depressing of which is the acknowledgment that there is a

"risk of ongoing imbalance between supply and demand over the next few years."

So far, stabilisers have not achieved the required and hoped-for decrease in production, but they have increased the financial pressure on cereal growers.

Intervention prices remain the same but conceal a greatly increased burden on the cereal farmer. The latest green pound devaluation goes no way towards compensating for that. In effect, intervention has been reduced by an additional 3 per cent. because the supplementary levy was

*[Mr. Hunter]*

invoked last year. Target price has been reduced by 1 per cent. The co-responsibility levy has remained the same and the monthly increases have been reduced by 25 per cent.

These facts show that, without any doubt, pressure on farm incomes will continue and we are facing a serious problem. The full seriousness of the situation will reach different sectors at different times. For many farmers, alarmingly, the writing is on the wall. We urge them to become rural entrepreneurs, and circumstances force them to do so. We also expect them to be the custodians of the environment. Increasingly, we also expect them to contribute to the financing of research. The farmer has an excellent record as a custodian of the environment and has often responded to the needs of research. The worry is that, unless the increasing pressure on farming incomes is put into reverse, the farmer will be unable to perform the tasks that the Government expect of him.

7.18 pm

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): I wish to support what the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) said, particularly about the role of the farmer as custodian of the environment. Certainly, in the Lake District, which forms a great part of my constituency, the hill farmer plays a very important part in that task.

I join the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) in his condemnation of Ministers' failure to make a statement on bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a point mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). Many hon. Members would have liked to question the Minister on whatever proposals he might have, if only because they are under pressure from their own constituents.

The county of Cumbria has experienced severe difficulties in the disposal of carcasses and confusion has been sown in the minds of councillors which, I understand, is entirely due to the conflicting information given by departmental officials. Councillors pressed me on such matters and hoped that, at some stage, Ministers would make a statement—not merely give a written answer—to Parliament, which would give us the opportunity to debate these matters at greater length.

I wish to refer more specifically to hill farm incomes and the problems of hill farmers in various parts of the country, particularly in the Lake District.

Since my earliest years, I have been a passionate supporter of the European Community; I campaigned for entry to it as a teenager, and in the 1970s when it was an important political issue. I believed then that, although my party suggested that the EC might hold back the social reforms that Labour advocated in the 1970s, the EC would inevitably lead the way with such reforms. The Labour party is now relatively pro-European, and that derives from the fact that the Community is at the forefront of social change. The Government, by contrast, take a reactionary position on these matters, as is evident from their attitude to farming.

A proposal was put to the Council of Ministers on direct support for hill farmers. It would have changed the incomes of hill farmers in my constituency, and I cannot understand why the Government rejected it. The EC is taking the initiative in these matters, and I hope the Minister will tell us why the Government rejected this positive initiative, which would have helped many people in Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire and the south-west.

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder):** I shall deal with that in my wind-up speech.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I am glad to hear that.

Fraud has already been mentioned. I intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields when he was discussing an article that he had found in the French newspaper *Libération* which dealt specifically with remarks made by the Prime Minister at a summit, when she estimated fraud in the Community at 63 billion francs, which is 20 per cent. of the budget of the European Community. She referred to 93 cases of fraud in the United Kingdom in 1987, a figure somewhat at variance, by extrapolation, with information given to members of the Public Accounts Committee for its 30th report of the Session 1987-88 on external trade measures for agricultural products. At that time, we were provided with details of the outcome of action taken by the Department

"on the 130 irregularities reported by the United Kingdom in the period 1980 to 85".

That was an average of about 26 cases a year, which does not seem to square with the Prime Minister's figures for 1987.

During my earlier intervention, I commented on the incidence of prosecutions. According to our report,

"Fifteen cases resulted in prosecutions with fines totalling £161,120 being imposed in 14 cases and one resulting in a 3 year prison sentence. 20 other cases were settled by compounding".

Compounding is an interesting term, which means no more than doing a deal with the Revenue. It means that a person commits fraud and, in general, if the fraud does not exceed £70,000, he does a deal with the authorities, who let him off with a slapped wrist, telling him not to do it again. The person also pays back the money. That is not the sort of approach that will help to solve the problem. Compounding is not the answer to fraud—prosecution is. In the cases I have referred to, compounding drew only £85,155 from the people who were responsible.

"Goods were seized in 13 cases and restored on payment of an appropriate sum. Full recovery was obtained in 33 of the remaining 73 cases and is being pursued or has been partially successful in another 33 cases. In seven cases proceedings had been discontinued."

Paragraph 30 of the report continues:

"Looking at the extent of the improper use of EC funds, we found it impossible to believe that the figures of irregularities reported by member states to the Commission should be regarded as realistic. We consider that either the basis of reporting is incorrect or there is under-reporting; in any event, there is clearly no common system of reporting."

The Committee went on to recommend that MAFF press

"vigorously for the introduction of a reliable and uniform basis for reporting CAP irregularities so that member states can assess the extent that CAP funds are misused."

We continued:

"We agree with the C & A G's conclusion that, despite promptings from the EC-appointed Cheysson Committee, and the various reports of the ECA and the European Parliament, only very limited reforms to reduce the complexity of the CAP have taken place. We are disturbed to find that so few changes to improve and simplify regluations and reduce irregularity have occurred since the Committee examined CAP frauds, irregularities and exploitation in

Session 1977-88. We are particularly concerned that the United Kingdom as a net contributor to the EC is meeting the cost of error and fraud in other member states."

A couple of years after I was elected to the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) made a speech from the Dispatch Box late one night in a debate on fraud in the EC based on the report of the European Court of Auditors. This must have been in about 1981. I remember that what was said then was little different from the problems that have been identified today—one wonders what has happened in the past eight years. Have the Government turned a blind eye?

As the Prime Minister increasingly recognises that she cannot extract from her European partners the money that is necessary to fund the reductions that she wants in our contribution, has she instead turned to hyping up fraud by exaggerating and drawing the Community's attention to it? Action, not shouting, is needed. What action is being taken? If the Italians, the French, the Brits and the Belgians are breaching the rules, what is being done to stop them? Is a framework powerful enough to bring fraud rapidly to an end being put in place? It seems to me that little apart from shouting has happened in the past few years.

I want to draw to the attention of the House the problems of security of tenure that face hill farmers in various parts of the United Kingdom, with particular reference to sheep farmers. I had hoped that the European Community would have introduced a directive to give them greater protection in areas in which domestic legislation has failed. Certainly, every effort should be made to implement the directive on direct payments to hill farmers that I have already mentioned. A particular farm in my constituency sets a precedent and should be the subject of discussion in the Community. It may be only a small farm, but in many ways it shows how we are slipping back towards feudal values.

Mr. J. A. Gaskell, a farmer in my constituency, is famous in the north for what has happened to him in the past few weeks. He lives and works in Thirlspot farm in Thirlmere near Keswick in the heart of my constituency. This gentleman has a farm with outbuildings. Next door is the King's Head hotel. My constituent, Mr. Gaskell, is a tenant of the water authority. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) may have heard of this case. The owners of the hotel are Mr. Eugene Morgan and Mr. E. W. Hayles, one of Dobson road, Bolton, Lancashire, and the other of 142 Hulme Hall road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire. They have taken it upon themselves to make a planning application, not for property or premises that they own on the King's Head site, but for Mr. Gaskell's farm buildings which have been rented from the water board for the past 40 years. His father was the first tenant, and his son will be the tenant in the future—or would have been were it not for this appalling affair. At the end of the day, we do not know what will happen.

As the law stands, the owners of the hotel are entitled to make that planning application and in the event that they secure planning permission from the Lake District planning board and the appropriate district authorities, the water authority will be required under section 31 of the Agriculture Act 1948, as modified by the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986, to serve a notice to quit on my constituent, taking away his buildings and causing him to lose his livelihood. Those farm buildings are vital to the development of his business. If the planning permission is successful, that man will be put out of business by the callous actions of the two hotel owners. That is appalling.

It may be of interest to the House to hear what is happening in that case. I would expect matters to be very different should the EC take initiatives in this area. The farm buildings which are the subject of the planning application are essential to the viability of the farm. They are used for the storage of winter fodder, for livestock, the housing of cows, the fattening of wedder lambs and the storage of machinery and implements. Mr. Gaskell's sheep-selecting and dipping pens are situated on Thirlspot farm. The farm includes 100 acres of inside land, of which 59 acres are rough grazing, and the fell sheep run on the land up to Helvellyn. My constituent's father first became a tenant of the North West water authority in March 1949. The farm comprises 600 ewes and shearling ewes, and 170 ewe hogs, including 140 of The landlord's—the water authority's—stock. More than half the flock are pure herdwicks and the rest are herdwicks cross Swaledales. Of the 350 lambs born each year, the gimmer lambs are all kept to replace the draught ewes and about 170 wedder lambs are kept and fattened in one of the farm buildings.

Mr. Gaskell also keeps 20 suckler cows, and their calves are sold as stores at approximately 12 to 18 months of age. Over the years, Mr. Gaskell had followed Government and European guidelines and diversified with his caravan, camp site and farmhouse bed-and-breakfast enterprises, which supplement his income from the farm. He has to do that while the Government persist in blocking in the Community direct support initiatives for hill farmers. One of the buildings has been converted to a toilet and shower block for the camping and caravan business. Mr. Gaskell has established use rights for six permanent static caravans, limited camping places and three caravans for 28 days annually. If the proposed scheme were to proceed, it would not only remove the farm buildings and toilet block, but would deny Mr. Gaskell access through the farmyard to his caravans and camp site.

This is a very important matter. We have law on the statute book which enables a large enterprise, in the form of a hotelier, who has nothing to do with the Lake District and who lives in Bolton, but who happens to have bought a hotel in the Lake District, to come in and close down a farmer who has been in operation for the past 40 years. In effect, it would wipe him out.

Had it not been for the fact that two or three weeks ago I attended one of my bi-annual meetings with the NFU in my constituency, no one would have known of this case. The matter came up during discussion of the European initiatives and the package that the Government have recently announced to the House. The person to whom I was talking became quite agitated and told me the story. A feudal system operates in Cumbria and throughout the United Kingdom which can allow an enterprise to wipe out the income of a farmer who makes a contribution not only in working the land but in the maintenance and upkeep of environmentally important areas. Thirlmere is one of the most beautiful parts of western Europe.

**Dr. David Clark:** I am shocked by what my hon. Friend has said. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must be concerned that those two people, who have no ownership rights, can force that farmer out of business. Does my hon. Friend know whether the Government approve of that project under the alternative land use in

*[Dr. David Clark]*

rural areas package that was announced about 18 months ago? It would seem to fit with the Conservative philosophy that the free market should determine what use is made of agricultural land.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I remember when that statement was made in the House. Unfortunately, I was unable to catch Mr. Speaker's eye on that occasion—although I have been fortunate many other times, so I do not complain. When that announcement was made, there were many worried people, not only in the national park where I live and part of which I represent, but in every national park in the United Kingdom. Farmers were most concerned that they might be manipulated by outside interests. Every initiative taken by the Government in this area during the past few years only serves to confirm their intention as set out by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields.

I never interfere in planning matters. In the eight years that I have been Member of Parliament for Workington, when approached about planning permission and planning applications I have always refused to interfere, on the basis that they are matters for local authorities to determine. Parliament has clearly laid down for local authorities a responsibility that Members of Parliament should not usurp.

I intend to break with tradition tonight. I appeal to every authority in the county of Cumbria that is involved in this affair to stop what is happening, not for planning reasons but for moral reasons. If we cannot get an initiative from the Government, and if the European Community is unable to draw up a directive or rules to resolve such difficulties, it is left to people like me to appeal to the authorities concerned to make sure that such applications are rejected because they are not in the public interest. We certainly have not met the objectives set by the Labour party for the protection of the countryside and national parks. If I am to believe the rhetoric of the Government, and certainly the rhetoric of the Prime Minister in her most recent "Green Goddess" position, she should be on our side.

I await the formal response of Ministers to my statement tonight. The Minister might like to write to me on this matter, and he might also like to make representations to the water authority about it not exercising the right that it has under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986.

**Mr. Ryder:** I should very much like to take the hon. Gentleman up on his offer. I shall certainly look into the case that he has outlined in considerable detail. Any further information that he could provide would be greatly welcomed. Of course, I shall write to him as soon as possible and, if need be, we could set up a meeting between ourselves.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I appreciate the Minister's positive response. I can assure him that tomorrow the media in the north of England will give extensive coverage to what he has said in so far as this matter has become a cause celebre in the border area of the United Kingdom.

I want now to move on to another area of concern to me—the whole question of the linkage between food production and food preparation, which must, to some extent, affect the judgments and views of hon. Members and, certainly, of the general public. The crisis is not only in food production. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor referred repeatedly to the crisis in food production and the problems of hill farmers. There is a major problem developing for the whole of agriculture public relations in this country. It derives from the recent adverse publicity in the area of food preparation. Unless rapid action is taken, this country could witness the total collapse of confidence in agriculture and in food production, with its consequences for farmers.

That is why it was so important for the Minister to make a statement today on BSE. The accusation that my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields has made repeatedly at the Dispatch Box is that the Government could have made a much clearer statement last July about salmonella. If they had been far more forthcoming in June or July, and if there had been full parliamentary accountability in debate, action then could have avoided much of the public reaction that has taken place over the last few months. But the Government failed to be open and to allow questioning in Parliament. We see that again today.

The hon. Member for Tiverton expressed concern about the fact that we are not allowed to ask questions in Parliament on these matters and to get full responses here. Questions are limited when we have to submit them in written form to the Table Office. Questions on the Floor of the House are not limited in that sense. We needed those replies, if only to avoid the same kind of agricultural scandal—if I may use that term—later this year, when perhaps more information on BSE may surface.

The other day a very important report was produced by the boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow and Spelthorne. For some reason that I do not understand, it managed to attract the attention only of a journalist on *The Guardian*, who managed to write a few column inches on it. Yet the findings in that report were of major national consequence and should have been across the front page of every newspaper in Britain. I want to draw attention to that report because it shows how, if things are hidden under the carpet, and if suddenly, an allegation comes out at some stage in the future, public hysteria can be whipped up, whereas if debate had taken place in Parliament, this might well have been avoided.

The Hillingdon, Hounslow and the Spelthorne borough councils surveyed the microbiological quality of airline meals. When someone flies British Airways, wherever in the world he may be, he presumes—at least, I presume that he presumes—that the food comes from Britain. If he were to see this report he would find some very frightening information. It says:

> "The tightening-up of the standards for producing pre-cooked, chilled airline meals is recommended in a report issued by the three environmental health authorities covering Heathrow airport. Environmental health officers say that in future airline caterers, enforcing authorities and other organisations directly associated with the aviation catering industry should adopt a common standard for producing such meals—the guidelines on pre-cooked chilled food laid down by the Department of Health in 1980. The Institution of Environmental Health Officers supports the argument for legislation to achieve this."

I ask hon. Members to follow very closely what I am saying; they may well have listened to the media, but they should hear it in Parliament.

"The move comes after the results of a two-year survey by the councils and the public health laboratory service into the microbiological quality of airline meals produced by 10 catering companies serving London Heathrow."

The names of those 10 companies are not revealed.

"Of 1,013 samples examined, 24 per cent. contained levels of bacteria considered excessive for this type of catering, while salmonella was found in 0·4 per cent. of the samples. The samples ranged from 349 starter dishes, such as canapes and prawn cocktails, which are served without reheating, 375 main courses, mainly served hot, 235 cold desserts, 53 snack dishes, and two sauces. Those most frequently containing high levels of bacteria were starters, containing 38 per cent., salami 40 per cent., poultry 30 per cent., and additional snacks 44 per cent.

One in 240 starter and main course meals contains salmonella contamination. If that is extrapolated to 55 million meals produced by the 2,200 catering workers in that area, the 55 million meals identified in this report, it means—and I checked the figures today with the borough of Hillingdon—that as many as 110,000 airline meals may have been contaminated by salmonella enteritides.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. What the hon. Gentleman is saying is very interesting indeed, but I think that it is more appropriate to the debate we had last week. Perhaps I could refer him to the scope of this debate and to the documents that are relevant to it.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I anticipated your intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker some hours ago, when I was considering these matters and took the advice of my hon. Friends. The issue here——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must take the advice of the Chair on these matters.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, in these matters I always defer to the Chair. However, I should like to point out how what I am saying is in order. We are debating extensification of agriculture. Extensification is the reverse of intensification. It moves us away from the food manufacturing process, which is very much at the heart of, and indeed is responsible for, the development of these diseases and conditions in animal carcases.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman might be persuasive at other times, but he is not persuading me tonight that he is correct. This debate covers specifically the

"proposed revised voluntary restraint agreement with New Zealand and the implications for other such exporters of the future Community trading in agricultural products with third countries."

It relates also to the documents that are listed in the Order Paper. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now refer to those.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** You helped me, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you referred to trade with third countries. As you will know, we supply to other countries the food that is manufactured by the 2,200 people who work for those 11 catering companies at Hounslow.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I have no intention of getting into a debate with an hon. Gentleman. His argument is very convoluted, and I insist that he now refer to the documents. There are other hon. Ladies and Gentleman who wish to speak in the debate.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** In the light of your intervention, Madame Deputy Speaker, perhaps I can curtail my remarks. The figures produced by those boroughs are frightening and Parliament should note them. If the other two strains of salmonella are added to the 110,000 cases of salmonella enteritidis extrapolated from those figures, the total comes to nearly 200,000 salmonella cases.

Hon. Members may wish to speak, and I intend to conclude. Never before have I managed to catch your eye, Madame Deputy Speaker, or that of any occupant of the Chair during an agriculture debate while I have been in Parliament. I hope that in future I will be called, although on this occasion I veered slightly out of order.

7.50 pm

**Mr. Robert Boscawen** (Somerton and Frome): Our primary producers have come to expect little real joy from the annual negotiation quadrille in Brussels in recent years. This year they are worried that their position could worsen. The uncertainty surrounding the short and medium-term future of our producers is haunting them. Their stalwart and phlegmatic character is being tested to the full by the uncertainties in which they find themselves. Their achievements have been tremendous and they have helped British consumers and our exports considerably. My right hon. Friend the Minister has spelt out that there can be no turning back towards the Community's proposals and we fully understand that. I welcome a few of the proposals—sadly, not many, but I will begin by welcoming the few.

I am pleased by the move to end the green pound differential and the fact that it is to be phased out over the next two years—and the sooner the better. Our farmers must be able to compete on equal terms with other competitors. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend is making a great attempt to end the fraud in certain parts of the Community. What worries our producers more than fraud is that some of our Community partners connive to ensure that Community regulations are ignored in a way that is to their advantage and seldom to ours. Perhaps our Ministers should look carefully at last year's example concerning the Dutch Government and our pig producers in case it occurs again.

I am worried, as are many hon. Members, about drastic changes in the variable sheep regime. I urge my right hon. Friend to move slowly and cautiously with any changes that it is intended to bring about. The sheep regime is becoming increasingly expensive and more of our producers—perhaps too many—are going into sheep farming in areas which have not had sheep before. That affects an important part of our countryside and, at least in the short term, there must not be drastic changes in the regime.

Our farmers have genuine problems with their income and they realise that European Community support will not bring a great improvement—certainly not if it is support for an increase in surplus production which is ultimately paid for by our taxpayers and consumers. That message has come strongly from our Front Bench today and strongly from the Commission in the past year or so.

Our producers cannot increase their income by cutting their costs still further or by increasing their production. They will not get other than short-term bonuses from such artificial measures as selling dairy quotas or taking advantage of planning consent and the housing boom in

*[Mr. Robert Boscawen]*

the countryside. They will not get a great deal of change from their non-farming sources of income. Some have had to have other sources of income for many years, particularly west country small farmers, but that does not necessarily increase the prosperity of the countryside, although it may help prosperity in other areas.

Although extensification and diversification have their part to play in improving the prosperity of the countryside, as my right hon. Friend the Minister said, they have only a part to play. The set-aside scheme, environmentally sensitive areas, woodland grants, and so on, all help to some extent, but they will not reverse the position overnight. Above all, the primary producer wants to stick to his last—his basic business is food production and it is from that that the prosperity of the countryside for years to come must derive.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister said at the Oxford conference, the best rewards and the premium prices will go to those who look to their markets and tailor their production accordingly. That is true for some of the industry. It must watch the markets and go for good prices for high quality, specialised goods. But the whole industry must turn its attention much more to how it can maximise the return from the market. I welcome the new thinking, for example of the Milk Marketing Board, in terms of whether higher prices can be attained for produce without necessarily increasing the price to the housewife. The producer's share of the return in the complete food chain could and should be improved. It is far too low a proportion at present. Consumers, too, do not want to see a green, neglected, impoverished countryside. If they squeeze producers too hard by always demanding cheaper cuts and bottom quality food, they will get an impoverished countryside.

The EEC price proposals point the way in which the industry is going. It is a landmark and a warning. Over the years, farmers have shown themselves to be adaptable. Many of the younger farmers, who are now investing in new developments and producing new, high-quality produce, are showing the way. Many more farmers must do the same if they are to survive.

My right hon. Friend's Ministry has, of course, a most important part to play. First, as we fully understand, the quality of food and food hygiene are of the utmost importance to the future of our primary producers. Ministers are giving this matter the maximum prominence, and no doubt will continue to do so.

Secondly, there is the question of the near-market research changes. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that he does not push too far too fast along that road. The Minister should not drop out of the picture until he is sure that the industry and the marketing side are prepared to pick up the ball and run with it.

I am concerned to see that it is proposed—not by my right hon. Friend's Department, because the responsibility does not lie there—to close two of our veterinary colleges. I hope that my right hon. Friend will use as much influence as he can to save those two colleges. We need as many veterinary surgeons as we can train. We are only too well aware of that in the present difficult situation in food hygiene.

This is a difficult time for the primary producers whom I represent. They look to us in this House to do what we can to ensure that we retain a prosperous countryside. We must do that, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister, too, will do all that he can to ensure that it is done.

8.2 pm

**Mrs. Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): This is an interesting debate. It is the second occasion that I have participated in an agricultural debate in this Parliament. I was previously a member of the European Parliament for quite a large farming constituency, but I am sorry to say that I have only one farm in my constituency at present.

I would like to refer to EEC document 8502/88 on the management and control of public storage of agricultural products. This is an important document to consider, especially in view of the many comments made by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the importance of food hygiene and storage. I am reminded that the World Health Organisation said recently that the primary means of transmission of food poisoning to humans is through foodstuffs contaminated during storage, production and processing. Therefore, the management and control of public storage of agricultural products is pertinent in that respect.

My hon. Friend for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) referred to an interesting report that was highlighted in *The Guardian* at the weekend. It appears to have had very little coverage in the national press, but it is especially important to the safety of hundreds of thousands of airline passengers each year. I am especially concerned about the Minister, who must make frequent overseas visits to various Community countries and hon. Members on both sides of the House—and Members of the European Parliament—who, again, must make frequent visits and use air transport for that purpose.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** When travelling to Scotland too.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** Indeed, not only external flights: they must make internal flights within the United Kingdom. Of course, we must not forget the civil servants who also make frequent visits to the Council of Ministers, to the European Commission and to the Parliament. Their health is just as important as that of Ministers or hon. Members.

Excessive levels of potentially dangerous bacteria have been found in nearly a quarter of all airline meals tested at Heathrow airport. More than 1,000 separate foods were sampled by environmental health officers, who found some of the worst contamination in paté appetisers, main courses of beef, and rice pudding. One wonders whether the quality control of stocks of some of these products, which may have been in intervention stores, is adequately supervised.

The tests were conducted on freshly made meals which had not even left the ground. Therefore, they had not been contaminated while they were in flight and, by the time the meals reached the passengers, bacteria levels would often have been higher because of poor temperature control.

I am concerned about the health of Ministers who no doubt must eat frequently on these flights when they attend meetings in the European Community which are often called at short notice. Ministers are often kept up all night in the Council of Ministers arguing their cases and are forced to partake of airline meals because they have

not had time during their busy meetings to eat the no doubt sumptuous meals that could be put before them in the Council of Ministers.

A particular concern is whether the public storage of some of the products in in-flight meals is adequately supervised. It is important that the best possible food is used for in-flight catering, because it is a vast and highly specialised growth area. Outbreaks of foodborne infections—involving a wide range of organisms, including salmonella—have been reported in association with in-flight meals. When those surveys were made by Hillingdon borough council and the other councils concerned, they were not looking for listeria poisoning, because at that time listeria was not an in word. No doubt, if they had examined some of that food for listeria poisoning, high quantities of contamination would have been found.

The survey was an interesting and comprehensive one of the microbiology and hygiene of food products in airline catering and it involved 10 in-flight caterers serving London Heathrow Airport. It took representative samples of all types of food produced. It analysed the results to identify shortfalls in the system. It has now made constructive recommendations to improve the microbiological quality of airline meals. I would be interested to know what action the Minister proposes to ensure that those recommendations are effected.

Because of the kinds of food that are contained in intervention stores, perhaps it would be useful if I mentioned some of the outbreaks of foodborne infections associated with airline meals. I know that the Minister does not travel from London to Sydney via Bahrain, but had he done so he might have been one of the 47 people affected when they ate the hors d'oeuvres on that flight. Of course we all know that an hors d'oeuvre contains eggs.

If the Minister had gone on another London to Sydney flight via Bahrain he may have been one of the 64 people infected after eating chopped egg garnish. If he had gone on the Tokyo to Paris flight via Anchorage and Copenhagen he might have been one of the 197 people infected after eating the ham in omelette. If the Minister had gone on the charter flight to Las Palmas he might have been one of the 550 infected after they had eaten egg salad. As a result of several flights to Paris, 290 people were infected after they had eaten a variety of cold dishes. In 1984, after several flights from London, 766 people were infected after eating something covered in aspic glaze. If the Minister had been travelling on the Faro to Gatwick flight, he might have been one of the 30 people infected after they had eaten mousse with cream.

It is quite possible that some of the stocks held in intervention stores were responsible for some of those outbreaks of food poisoning. Unfortunately, I was not present for the debate on 21 February because I was consolidating our wonderful victory at Pontypridd, but I am conscious that the Minister said:

"Let me start by stressing that we see it as our responsibility, first to ensure the safety of all food supplies, regardless of their source"—

it is quite possible that some of those food supplies come from intervention stores—

"secondly, to ensure that the interests of consumers and of the industry are taken fully into account; and thirdly, to ensure that, throughout the food chain"—

this is particularly pertinent when we are talking about proper storage in intervention stores, as mentioned in EEC document 8502/88—

"there is effective monitoring and a framework of fully adequate regulations and the right framework to enforce them."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1989; Vol.147, c. 931.]

Those are particularly significant words in the context of this debate.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor:** After the hon. Lady's fascinating description of the problems of airline flight meals, I wonder whether she could tell us which of the foodstuffs that she has mentioned as contaminated might have come from intervention stores, because I can see no relevance in what she has said to our debate?

**Mrs. Clwyd:** Obviously the hon. Gentleman does not know about the vast amounts of milk powder or butter that are kept in intervention stores, both of which can be used in the preparation of airline meals.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor** *rose*——

**Mrs. Clwyd:** No, I shall not give way a second time.

With regard to the physical control of intervention stores, the Community believes that the system is self-controlling. The theory is that the Community's financial interest in the stocks is adequately safeguarded as to quantity and quality by the fact that the prices at which transactions take place are determined by the opposed interests that exist at points of entry and release between storekeeper, seller and buyer respectively. The member states are financially responsible to the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund for

"any quality or quantity losses that exceed natural tolerances"

However, that reasoning does not adequately take into account the risks inherent in public storage operations. I do not need to spell out the main risks to the Minister, because he knows them only too well.

The quality of a product accepted into intervention storage may be overstated and may even be substandard. That point is clearly made in the Hillingdon council report. The report also states that deterioration of the quality of a product as a result of inadequate care taken during storage is possible. It also speaks of

"the substitution of the product accepted into intervention which may be brought to the market with a similar product of a lower quality at some stage during storage".

The report also describes

"manipulative discrepancies between ingoing and outgoing qualities, which can pass unnoticed because even for an important deterioration of quality it is difficult to distinguish the effects of time and weather from other factors which lead to the deterioration of a product being stored".

The report underlines that the risks

"are accentuated in any one or more of the following situations; a combination or an association of interest on the intake side".

The obvious case is an intervention centre run by a producers' co-operative, but it can also be a matter of local business structures and relationships that render the storekeeper more or less dependent and perhaps impair his objectivity.

It is also clear from the report that food aid deliveries and free food distribution schemes provide outlets for the direct human consumption of such products. We know only too well that

"recipients are not of course in a position to compare the quality of the product received with the quality shown in theory in the records of the intervention agency. In practice they are unlikely to complain".

No action is taken by the Commission services in respect of quality control unless member states report

*[Mrs. Clwyd]*

"abnormal quality deterioration or complaints are received from dissatisfied buyers of intervention commodities"

As to the member states' arrangements for quality control of intervention stocks:

"Important differences in nature and intensity exist between member states and between products. Quality control at entry, for example, sample-taking and physical chemical analysis, is in practice carried out by the intervention agency's own technical staff, officers of specialised technical Government services, including state laboratories, experts of specialised commercial firms, including private laboratories or the storekeeper's technical and laboratory staff"

Obviously we are discussing the systems of surveillance of storage conditions that are put into practice by member states and it is clear that storage conditions for the same product vary from one member state to another and cover important technical differences. That point is clearly made in the report from Hillingdon council, which concludes:

"The great variety in technical instructions issued by the intervention agency to the storekeepers in respect of the quality surveillance of some of the intervention stocks . . . differences in the minimum freezing temperature for butter prescribed by national regulations as opposed to the case of beef meat . . . the Community regulations give no standard of freezing temperature storages for butter. While in most member states minus 16 deg. C is the norm, there are countries which allow less—one country even up to minus 10 deg. C."

Obviously there are great differences in the quality control of storage. The report continues:

"Sample-taking procedures on butter in some countries is surrounded by more professional ritual than others."

It is clear from the report that the quality rating systems are more elaborate in some countries than in others and that, in general, quality testing differs by definition, because no common definition exists for the storage of butter even within the Community.

It is not surprising that all sorts of problems have been shown up in the Hillingdon reports. For instance, it states that the surface colony counts of bacteria are in excess of limits in certain airline meals:

"High counts in certain foods could be attributed in part to one of the following reasons"—

I am sure that the Minister will want to respond to this—

"The presence of ingredients which naturally contain large numbers of organisms due to production methods used for that food, for example, fermented food such as salami, parma ham or yoghurt, or the presence of raw garnishes or vegetables which may contain large numbers of organisms.

In this survey each dish was examined as a single composite sample and not as individual ingredients. The requirement of airlines for meats to be served pink and vegetable crisp on the aircraft requires the flight caterers to part cook the foods with the remaining cooking regeneration taking place on the aircraft. Thus, at the point of sampling the main course dishes were undercooked."

A frightening disclosure is that many of the foods were prepared by the cook-chill method, which has been implicated in many of the recent cases of listeria food poisoning to which I had to draw the attention of the Minister by way of a Standing Order No. 20 application at the beginning of January. The report continued:

"Twenty-four per cent. of the foods tested harboured 1 million bacteria per gramme, 100 times more than the maximum recommended by the Department of Health for cook-chill food used by hospitals and schools. Salmonella was found in four dishes, which included a chicken appetiser, and an excessive level of E. coli, the bacteria associated with faecal contamination, was found in 209 separate dishes. Those most often contaminated were sandwich snacks, salads, patés, beef dinners and rice desserts."

It is incredible that foods were contaminated with a bacteria that is associated with faeces. I am sure that the Minister will be worried about that and will want to do something about it very quickly. I hope that he will tell us precisely what he will do.

**Mr. Michael Jack** (Fylde): Could the hon. Lady reassure the House about the statistical information she has given on food contamination in airline meals? Does any of her evidence refer specifically to meals originating in the United Kingdom?

**Mrs. Clwyd:** I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not hear the beginning of my speech. We are talking about catering outlets serving Heathrow. That means that the origin of the contamination was this country.

Flight catering uses a cook-chill system and a minor element of cook-freeze. All the environmental health officers involved in this important survey found that the caterers were reluctant to adopt a formalised system of cook-chill as specified by the guidelines laid down by the DHSS. The environmental health officers concluded:

"The problems identified in this report would be greatly reduced if caterers would adopt the procedures laid down in the guidelines for pre-cooked"——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** Order. I am finding it a little difficult to relate the hon. Lady's speech to the European Community matters that we are discussing. The debate is on various European documents and I think that the hon. Lady is straying into other matters.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** I am coming to the end of my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have talked about the common agricultural policy, and the European Community, intervention stores and many other matters related to the EEC documents. It is of great concern to the Opposition that those who have to argue for reform in the common agricultural policy and who have to travel regularly by air to Luxembourg, Brussels and Strasbourg are at their fittest when they are arguing into the small hours of the night the case for reform of the common agricultural policy and for other changes in the Community.

**Mr. Geraint Howells** (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I have been listening to the hon. Lady with interest for a long time. She knows the state of Welsh agriculture because of family connections. Does she attribute any of the blame to Welsh producers? If she does, I should like her to clarify the position at once.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** The hon. Gentleman is a client of my brother-in-law who, as the hon. Gentleman knows, has a great interest in agricultural problems. I am certainly not attributing any of the blame to Welsh producers, who work to the highest standards.

Last week, the Minister said that food safety was an international problem. It is an international problem on airlines and it is important for Ministers to remain in good health. As the Minister is partially responsible for food safety, may I ask him to tell us what he intends to do about the worrying problem that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Workington have brought to his attention?

8.26 pm

**Mr. David Curry** (Skipton and Ripon): I hope that I shall not be regarded as idiosyncratic if I attempt to talk about agriculture. Parts of the debate have shown an

underlying concern about agriculture and the changes that it faces, and there has been a tendency to defend the status quo. I should like to break with that consensus and suggest that it is not necessarily in our interests to defend the existing system. I shall be the devil's advocate on the sheepmeat regime and firmly suggest to my right hon. Friend the Minister that I do not want him to go to Brussels and bat to maintain the variable premium in its present form.

I recognise that there are problems with the alternative suggested by the Commission, and I do not suggest that the Minister should buy that off the shelf, but there are cogent arguments for suggesting that the variable premium has now achieved the purpose that it set out to achieve and that it is now becoming a problem rather than an asset for British producers. The first reason for that is the operation of the standard quantity as it applies to Great Britain, which means that, as the numbers of ewes increase, the revenue earned by the producers declines. There is no benefit to the producer in simply persisting with the present system, because there will be a continuing decline in his returns. I am especially concerned about farmers in the breeding business because I have many of them in my constituency. Hill breeders can only benefit from being part of the Communitywide standard quantity system rather than the British quota.

The present system of marketing is nonsense. The upper limit to qualify for variable premium is 26·5 kg. The market asks for lambs with a weight of 17 to 19 kg, yet hundreds of marts across the United Kingdom must have lambs of 25 kg that receive variable premium. Those lambs are not wanted by the export trade or by the domestic trade. We cannot blame the farmer, who will obviously rear to the weight that will maximise his return. If the politicians are fools enough to allow him to do that, it is to his credit that he takes advantage of the system. It cannot be maintained that the variable premium is serving the interests of the consumer either, because it encourages the farmer to produce something other than what the market wants.

**Mr. Livsey:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although the parameters are not correct, the policy could be amended to allow variable premiums to concentrate on the weight limits demanded by the market?

**Mr. Curry:** The hon. Gentleman would be right, but for my next three points, which I believe will meet that argument. First, we face a problem with the clawback. Barely a molecule of British lamb gets to France because the clawback operates as an effective barrier to imports, and the French have perfectly good access to alternative supplies from Ireland and Spain where the clawback does not operate. The United Kingdom therefore has insuperable problems in getting lamb into that market, and it is on that export market that the fate of our lamb-rearing industry depends. Domestic consumption is declining and the variable premium may have arrested it. We cannot prove statistically that that is so, but the growth market is on the continent and, above all, in France.

The second reason is the competitive position of lamb in relation to other meats. I have a great deal of sympathy with the pig producer, who gets little support from the Community and does not want it. The situation is increasingly hard for those sectors which get little support, or where the regime has already been reformed, as is the case for beef, and the new regime will apply from 3 April. Although many producers are not sure how it will apply, there is still a level of support of £840 per tonne. In other words, the equilibrium in the meat sector is being distorted by the existence of both reformed and unreformed regimes.

Thirdly, the regime is now an extremely expensive affair. In 1988, the estimate of expenditure was 1 billion ecu and it was necessary to add 300 million ecu to that. This year, the allocation is 1·45 billion ecu and my information is that at least 220 million ecu will have to be allocated to meet the commitment. There are reasons for that. In 1988, that budget had to cover advance payments which would otherwise have been made in 1987 because of the crisis in the budget. The number of uses for which application has been made has also increased significantly, partly because the system on the continent uses the French premium as its market premium. That premium, of £15 or £16, is of great assistance to Mediterranean producers in particular and gives them a greater incentive both to claim and to rear.

We must also remember that the goat element in the system is becoming more important. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) said that we were now taking only 35 or 30 per cent. of the revenue from the sheepmeat regime. A few years ago, we were taking about 90 per cent. of the revenue from the system. The change is the result of the Iberian accession to the Community, which has diluted the share that the United Kingdom had. It has also reinforced those who might be able to live with the status quo.

The variable premium in its present form is difficult to support either in budgetary terms or in terms of consumer interest, and it is no longer an infallible support for the producer. There is a good case for saying that the British interest, which lies in access to the continental market place, is no longer served by a system that has become a barrier to access to that market. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will say that all the cards are still to play and that most countries do not know quite what they want from the new system, and I accept that that is the case. However, I would not wish him to leave the debate with the impression that there is a unanimous belief that we should defend the variable premium to the last. I for one no longer believe that its maintenance is in the interests of the United Kingdom.

I urge my right hon. Friend to press on with the policy of stabilisers, with those additional ancillary measures such as set-aside and the woodland scheme which are designed to soften its impact and provide relief for farmers with particular difficulties. The reason for this is to do with the international situation, the background being the GATT talks with the United States. The United States has made a major error of negotiating policy in putting forward the zero-zero option, which has let Europeans off the hook. Nobody will negotiate seriously from that starting point. Even the Australians say that it is an untenable negotiating position.

At some stage, the American negotiator will agree to abandon that objective because it is no longer obtainable, and many people, including some hon. Members, will applaud that magnificent gesture. But he will then say to the Community, "We want to remove your trade-distorting measures." That is where the Community must get into the real negotiations. The trade-distorting

*[Mr. Curry]*

measure, in the American definition, is the double pricing system that lies at the heart of the CAP. The Community will not negotiate that away. It is inconceivable that a majority in the Council of Ministers will agree to give the Commission such a negotiating mandate. If we cannot negotiate on that, we must prove that we shall continue the process of gradual reform, or we shall find ourselves in a major clash with the United States.

One can illustrate this by the demands made, particularly by the German Minister, for cereals. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take the opportunity to say what a ludicrous idea that would be. The philosophy behind the quota is that, if one limits the quantity, the price can rise, but if the price of cereals rises we shall become more vulnerable to the cereal substitutes which enter the Community without any restraint on quantity and with a relatively small tariff that is bound by GATT.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor** (Upminster): My hon. Friend is right in that, but does he agree that one of the problems is that no farmer can control his cereal ouput? He cannot know what it is until after the harvest is brought in, so any attempt to control that by way of quota is doomed to failure because all that it will do is to put the cereal farmer in a still worse position.

**Mr. Curry:** I am grateful for that intervention. My hon. Friend has made an additional point that I shall add to my list of arguments against the imposition of a quota. I am sure that he will be aware that there are people on the continent, and in the United Kingdom, who want the security of the quota system. That is not compatible with liberal world trading arrangements, for the reasons that I have already set out. If we limit quantity and seek to raise prices, we shall become more and more uncompetitive in comparison with the substitutes coming into the Community. As a result, we would have either to cut the quota progressively or limit imports. If we limit imports, who will pick up the bill for the 55 million tonnes of substitutes that come into the Community? That is when we would really get into a shooting war with the Americans.

The international situation determines the nature of the reforms that the Community is able to undertake. However, there are other reasons to pursue the policy on which we have embarked. The first is the fragility of the world market. Hon. Members have referred to the Soviet Union as the principal importer of grains from world market places. On average, the USSR loses 12 per cent. of its grain crop between the field and the silo every year. That is roughly 24 million tonnes of grain, which is about what the Community exports in a year. In other words, the equivalent to the total Community export perishes because of inefficiency in the Soviet agricultural system. If Mr. Gorbachev ever gets his agricultural reforms, that is one major sector of the world market that will slip away from everybody, including the European Community.

Another reason to continue the policy is that underlying technical improvements are still feasible. Leaving aside the average 2 per cent. per year increase in grain yields, without doing one extra jot of research the potential for increase in yield by the end of the century is between 5 and 10 per cent.—equivalent to about 15 million hectares' worth of production. That is why turning down the wick, going a little more carefully and taking the pressure off is not a valid long-term option in the interests of agriculture.

The final reason is the demography in the sector. Half the Community's farmers are over 55, and half of them have no natural successor. That means that there will be a process of consolidation of farms and the building of more efficient units. It also means that moving towards a more market-oriented policy becomes more acceptable in social as well as agricultural terms.

It is worth applauding the fact that this farm price proposal falls within the financial guidelines set a year ago at 28·62 billion ecu. The actual forecast is 26·74, and that is on the hypothesis of a dollar worth 0·81 ecu. Over the past six months—the year runs from August to July for the purpose of the calculation—the average value of the dollar has been 0·88 ecu, so there is a potential saving of 800 million ecu on the purely monetary factor by the summer of this year.

The importance of that, the importance of the reforms that were instituted a year ago, and the importance of the system of stabilisers, which at the time were derided as being almost nominal in effect and of no significance—stabilisers plus the Almighty in the form of weather have had a much sharper effect than many realise—is that for the first time Community policy is predictable. It means that there is a chance for premeditated change. It means that the improvised, botched and budget-dominated changes which have been seen over a number of years need no longer be the norm in the Community.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will bear one or two issues in mind during his negotiations in Brussels. I hope that he will reaffirm his opposition to the co-responsibility levy, including that on milk. I know that the regime is expensive, but a quota system plus co-responsibility is a logical nonsense. Many farmers would prefer a quota reduction to the present bizarre way of penalising farmers without benefiting consumption. It would be preferable to have a price reduction than the mechanism of a co-responsibility levy.

The same applies also to cereals. I know that the Minister has fought gamely on our behalf and I know that he will continue to do so. I hope that he will give what reassurances he can on the continuation of the quota system after 1992. Farmers contemplating the purchase of quota cannot afford to see assets disappear within a few years. I hope that my right hon. Friend will reaffirm his determination, in so far as he is able, to have zero monetary compensatory amounts when we arrive at 1992. That is especially important. I hope, too, that my right hon. Friend will do his best to ensure an increase in the suckler premium when we reach the time of year when he would normally decide at what level payments are to be made for the following period.

We are now quite a long way through the period of extremely difficult change. Now that we are on the threshold of a sensible, premeditated reform, it should be understood that a diversified range of policies will enable only some farmers to find new sources of incomes while remaining true to their main purpose as producers of foodstuffs. We have this opportunity, but I hope that we shall go for the last push and ensure that there is sensible reform rather than accept the process that we have seen develop over so many years until recently. That process has made it clear that the task has been undertaken with

reluctance. It was pursued with hesitation and abandoned before it was complete; simple multiplication of the policies then ensued.

8.42 pm

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): The debate takes place against an ever blackening background for farmers in the United Kingdom and, indeed, for farmers in many countries across the Community. The farming community in the United Kingdom finds that inflation is running at over 7 per cent., with the likelihood that it will increase during the year. Interest rates are high and are likely to go higher. At the same time, farm incomes are dropping. It is undeniable that it is necessary to maintain control of spending on agriculture. Given the various forms of support that now exist, farmers in Britain cannot look forward to brighter times.

However good the demolition by the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) of the variable premium with the sheepmeat regime, and irrespective of his comments about the number of farmers aged 55 in the Community, the hon. Gentleman's observations were aimed at 15 or 20 years hence, instead of being directed at the problems with which farmers have to grapple now. The problems for farmers with relatively small holdings are even more acute and desperate than those which face those with larger farms. Farmers with more substantial holdings have the option of being able to switch from crop to crop, or from livestock to arable and back again. They have many more options than those which are available to farmers with 50, 100 or 150 acres, which are the sort of farms that might typically be found in many parts of Wales.

Stabilisers have been reasonably successful in helping to remove the peaks and troughs from agricultural spending, but they do not augur well for farmers in future. They will not guarantee farm incomes. Instead, they will tend to put the squeeze on farmers. Given the development within the sheepmeat regime, farmers in the hill country will experience greater and greater difficulties. I note that some Conservative Members are shaking their heads in disagreement, and in response I can only say that it might be possible to return to this issue in a year's time, when it will be easier to make a judgment.

There is a need, inevitably, to control spending under the CAP. Farmers' incomes will be damaged, and we must consider how we can help those with smaller farms. The difficulties will become greater on the hillsides and there will not be a welcome in the valleys for across-the-board policies to control expenditure. As we have grappled with the existing systems and advanced reasons why they must be changed, there has not been evident a great deal of long-term thinking about what we should put in their place.

Conservative Members have been extolling modern technological developments in the countryside. They have emphasised how important these were in increasing food production during the years when that increased production was needed. There is no doubt, however, that the intensification of modern farming methods is inflicting severe and untold damage on to the countryside. We are witnessing wholesale pollution, especially with nitrates running off the land into water courses. The expression of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) suggests that that is not a problem, but in Wales more and more rivers are being polluted, and that is the position throughout the United Kingdom. Water authorities everywhere are expressing concern about nitrate pollution in particular.

We are aware of the intensive methods of factory farming. There is the raging spread of salmonella. There was a television programme yesterday—it appeared on the screen shortly before my lunch, unfortunately—on bovine brain disease and how it is spreading. In the pursuit of higher production, we are putting at risk the health of the people.

Many of us are aware of the way in which systemic pesticides are used. There is good evidence that pesticides remain in crops after they have been harvested, and that they are a potential danger to the consumer. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to state that factory farming at the moment is producing a festering cauldron of potential fever, plague and food poisoning in the countryside.

The ever-increasing demand for higher yields on a given acreage is threatening the health of the general public. There is no doubt that, as the days go by more and more dangers are being exposed. The CAP should now be trying to ensure that there are reasonable levels of production without using methods which are potentially harmful to consumers' health. I know that the Minister has immense problems in grappling with the CAP to keep spending under control. However, it would be nice to hear that the Commission is looking at major alternatives to current agricultural support, so that we can look forward to a safer future in terms of the food that we eat.

On the programme yesterday to which I have referred there were some pitiful scenes of farming in the countryside. I saw a cow reeling about helplessly. At times it was waddling along or sliding on its stomach because it no longer had any control over its muscles. We must take these problems seriously and not try to push them to one side or say that this or that cannot be proved. Undoubtedly there are problems, and I hope that the Minister will tell us today what, apart from the steps that are being taken to bring the immediate problems under control, in the long term the Government and other Community Governments intend to do about the system of agricultural support. I hope that he can tell us what they will do to end this headlong rush into making continually higher yields from the land, so that we are not placing our lives in danger by eating farm produced food.

In his scintillating demolition of the variable sheep premium, I waited in vain for the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon to offer us an alternative which would make sense to the British farmer and in particular to the Welsh farmer who relies on that premium. I do not deny that there are obvous needs for change in the variable sheep premium. It is obvious that a new problem is being created when we watch the flocks coming down from the hillsides into the valleys in areas where it is not traditional for sheep to be farmed. Perhaps the Minister can tell us whether the Ministry has any thoughts about a better system of support. I am sure that farmers in Wales look forward to his comments on that.

8.53 pm

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor** (Upminster): With one exception, this has been an extremely useful debate, and one in which the House has largely been agreed. I declare an interest, in

*[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]*

that I am a farmer. In the light of some of the contributions from Opposition Members, perhaps I should also declare that I am chairman of a food hygiene and advisory service. I do not believe that that should be strictly relevant to this debate, but it is relevant to some of the contributions that have been made.

I will confine my contribution to farming and to its future. I would be extremely grateful if the Minister will consider several areas of concern; if he cannot deal with them today, perhaps he would write to me later.

My first concern relates to the method of control which my right hon. Friend the Minister and the Government appear to favour, particularly in terms of cereal farming, which is the price mechanism. I cannot understand how the price mechanism will solve the problem of the European Community surplus without ruining the country's cereal farmers. I was worried that the Minister made no mention of the cost of production or the way in which the price control mechanism can be kept at a level which will be above that which it has cost the farmer to produce the product.

Mr. Micawber would be more than a little worried at the state of British farming. It is costing 20s 6d to produce 20s-worth of goods in most areas. That applies to cereals, most livestock and throughout the farming community generally. However, it is particularly and increasingly true of cereals.

I want to consider whether cereals can be controlled by quota. As I tried to make clear in my brief intervention during the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), I do not see how quotas will work. A quota on cereals might be introduced in one or two ways: it could be introduced to limit the amount that a farmer can produce and receive full pay for or we could limit the amount of land which he was allowed to sow to achieve his output. As my right hon. Friend the Minister is aware, there is no way in which we can assess what a farmer will produce until after he has produced it, by which time it is too late to solve the problem. If the quota level is set wrongly, it will either be extraordinarily expensive or ruinous for the farmer. Either way, we are losers.

My next area of concern relates to fair competition with our European partners. I have culled a few brief examples from my experience about ways in which we are currently at a disadvantage compared with our European partners. First, we are at a disadvantage with regard to the MCAs. My right hon. Friend the Minister has said that he hopes to bring that under control to achieve parity by the end of 1992. To be perfectly honest, I think that it is most unlikely that he can achieve that. If he can, I will be the first to welcome it.

Cheap loans are available to farmers in France, but there is no system of subsidised loans in this country. It is impossible, particularly for smaller farmers and those who wish to start up in the business, to compete effectively against French farmers while that disparity remains. The French also have access to a much cheaper supply of fertilisers than is available in this country, largely because of the quantities which can be ordered by the vast farms in northern France. That gives the French a completely uneven advantage in comparison with their British competitors.

As my right hon. Friend is aware, Germany can buy livestock feeds from East Germany, because it has an exception from the general rules for buying animal feedstuffs from outside the European Community at world prices. West Germany has access to East Germany and by exemption is therefore able to buy animal feed through East Germany at world prices, and it can then undercut other member states.

The subsidies enjoyed by states in southern Europe—Portugal, Spain and Greece—clearly come from the more prosperous states in northern Europe. It is extremely hard to understand how Britain can benefit by putting far more into the subsidy system than we shall ever be able to take out of it. I am not sure how my right hon. Friend will deal with that problem, but I hope that he will bear it in mind in his negotiations.

As my right hon. Friend knows, West Germany is heavily funding research into all forms of agricultural activity—in terms not only of hygiene, but of productivity and efficiency. If Germany continues subsidising that aspect of its activities, it will have a substantial advantage over Britain. It is extremely unfortunate that the Government are cutting agricultural research at this moment. I hope that my right hon. Friend will review the Government's proposals and will give more support to research than is intended. ADAS has given invaluable service and its research capacity has been second to none. I do not believe that the agricultural community, in its present state, is in a position to provide the business backing for research that the Government clearly wish it to do.

Finally, I do not believe that the farm woodlands and set-aside schemes and so on can do more than scratch at the problems facing the future of British agriculture. Unless we can find a way in which the support level for the production of our goods remains above the cost of producing them, in the next few years, we shall have no proper agricultural business left.

9 pm

**Mr. Calum Macdonald** (Western Isles): I apologise for not being present to hear the opening speeches in the debate. This morning, I travelled to Inverness on a train that broke down and left me stranded in Kingussie for one hour and 40 minutes, thereby causing me to miss my plane to London.

In that connection, I was interested to hear the remarks of the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), when he said that 12 per cent. of Russia's grain production spoiled before it reached its market. I understand that one of the major reasons for that is the terrible state of Russian roads. They are so badly pot-holed that much of the grain falls off the back of the trucks and rots at the roadside. It appears that infrastructure is a major obstacle to the development of Russian agriculture. After my experiences this morning, I fear that it is also a major obstacle to developing the agriculture of the Highlands and Islands.

I shall concentrate on the sheepmeat regime. It is a subject that I broached in previous debates, and I return to it without apology because it is one of major importance to my constituents in particular, and to the economy of the Highlands and Islands as a whole.

Sheepmeat production in the Highlands and Islands is worth £52 million annually, excluding all Government support and EEC grants. It is important not only in terms

of its sheer monetary value but because the terrain and land of the Highlands and Islands are such that there are few viable alternatives there to lamb farming. The land is unsuited to most other types of use. Crofters in particular face a change in the sheepmeat regime with considerable concern, not only because of the industry's value to them but because of their fear that recent changes in other areas of agriculture—particularly in the lowlands—will cause their incomes to suffer as a result of increased lamb production. Because of the nature of the terrain in the Highlands and Islands, crofters have no viable alternatives in the face of increased competition for lamb production from areas that enjoy better soil and climate—in simple practical terms, better lambing percentages.

The latest figures I have from the Scottish Crofters Union suggest that, if lamb flocks in the lowlands continue to increase to the extent that they have in recent times, crofters will suffer a cut in the value of the support they receive from the sheepmeat regime of as much as 12 per cent. over the next four years. That is clearly very worrying.

One solution suggested by the Scottish branch of the National Farmers Union is to introduce two stabilisers, one for the less-favoured areas and another for the more-favoured low-ground areas. The Scottish Crofters Union, while not necessarily opposed to such a solution, feels that, so great is the difference between the terrain in the Highlands and Islands and that in even the worst of the less-favoured areas in the rest of the United Kingdom that a third stabiliser for the Highlands and Islands alone might almost be justified. Such a solution, however, would cut across the grain of current developments in the Community and the CAP: there is a wish for increased simplicity rather than increased complexity.

I feel some sympathy with the attacks by the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon on the variable premium, and his support for the principle of a single European stabiliser. Crofters in the Highlands and Islands would, I think, accept the loss of the variable premium, although they can see that it has led in recent years to improved quality and efficiency in their sheepmeat industry, feeling that perhaps the time has come to adopt a single European stabiliser. They would accept it, however, only with a caveat. First, they would demand an enhanced ewe premium in the less-favoured areas; secondly, they would like the Government to put much more thrust behind the marketing of sheepmeat in the Continent—a point also made by the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon.

Let me return to the point with which I began. The inadequacy of transport, communications and infrastructure between the Highlands and Islands and the continent suggests that, unless a determined effort is made to boost Scottish lamb products in the Common Market—and those from the Highlands and Islands in particular—we will be the losers.

I understand that the EEC has suggested restricting eligibility for the ewe premium to a certain number of ewes per farm—500, I believe. The Scottish Crofters Union has made a suggestion that I find very interesting: that, as well as the restriction on numbers—which would be altered according to whether the farm was in a less favoured area or on low ground—a device should be built into the premium to reward, encourage amd promote increased employment. Farms that employed more shepherds would also receive a higher premium. That would provide a bonus not only for less-favoured areas but for farms, sheep stock clubs and other kinds of sheep breeding practice that led to the creation of more jobs, thus keeping more people in rural areas. That is important if such areas are to flourish.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have pointed out that the CAP needs to be changed because of its costs, but that cost must be seen in perspective. Although it eats up the lion's share of the Community budget, it is only a tiny percentage of Community GDP.

The real problem about the CAP is not so much the amount of money involved as how it is spent. Hon. Members of all parties have suggested that we need to get away from spending that amount of money on increasing production while retaining the objective of income stability and trying to achieve parity of income for all farmers. Rather than trying to increase production, we should direct the same amount of money to projects on farming practices and on increasing employment in rural areas. If we used that principle when approaching the changes to the sheepmeat regime, farmers in my constituency would be a lot happier, and the operation of the regime would be a lot more satisfactory all round.

9.10 pm

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard** (Norfolk, South-West): I am delighted to be able to contribute to the debate, although I do not have a personal interest to declare, save to say that agriculture is of vital importance to my constituency of Norfolk, South-West. The debate is of particular significance, given that 1988 saw a 25 per cent. drop in farm incomes. We all know that that figure conceals a wide diversity of farm incomes across the country and that that diversity is recognised by the industry. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said in Oxford, it matters when farm incomes fall as they did in 1988. It matters especially in Norfolk, South-West, where one sixth of our jobs depend directly on agriculture because the prosperity of agriculture underpins our whole rural economy.

Today's debate was given particular point for me because of three meetings that I had at the weekend. The first was with directors of Barclays bank who began by expressing their deep disquiet about farm incomes locally, especially in the light of cereal prices and last year's bad harvest. They said that their accountants had no record of any previous year in which no farmer had made a profit on a cereal harvest, but that 1988 was such a year.

The second meeting was with a grain merchant, who not only corroborated the concerns of the first, but said that, because of bad European harvests and droughts in North and South America and in China, the world currently has stocks of grain for up to 100 days. That point was also made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell).

The third meeting was with a smallholder, who works a holding of 55 acres on which he was born and which his father had before him. That man, who is in good health, has seven or eight years before he reaches retirement, and is waiting to see whether there will be the threatened cut of 5 per cent. in the price of sugar before he decides whether to give up his holding next Michaelmas.

Those three meetings illustrate the practicalities of what we are discussing. There has been great concern about the

*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]*

technicalities of this issue, but I remind the House that we are not talking academically or technically; we are talking about real people, real anxieties and a real industry.

One unfortunate thing about agriculture is that many of those who pronounce on it believe that eggs come out of boxes. They are stuck in the attitudinal time warp of the 1950s and believe that farmers are still feather-bedded. To all those people I say that during the past five years agriculture has absorbed as much change as any industry could be expected to absorb. As my right hon. Friend the Minister said in Oxford, agriculture faces

"the challenge of the speed of change today, in technology, production processes, ever higher quality, new ways of presenting products and so on".

Responsible farmers have long accepted that change. They have long accepted the fact that CAP policies encourage costly surpluses and that that policy needs to be changed. One result would inevitably be a drop in farm incomes—that is the pain that was mentioned earlier by my right hon. Friend.

Moreover, these same responsible farmers have taken advantage of the many useful measures introduced by the Government, such as diversification, environmentally sensitive areas—one of them is largely in my constituency—and set-aside. I have been a little disappointed by the extent of set-aside take-up in East Anglia. Obviously, it is easier to set aside land from larger holdings, but it is a pity that good land should be taken out of production. I would have hoped that more would have been taken out of production from marginal land.

It is in this atmosphere of change that I would like to plead for the retention of two areas of stability so that we might, in my right hon. Friend the Minister's words, ease the process of change for farmers. The two crops involved are sugar and potatoes. Norfolk produces 32 per cent. of all beet sugar in the United Kingdom. The Wissington sugar factory in my constituency employs 450 people. Sugar is vitally important because as a crop it helps to cushion farmers against price falls and bad harvests in other crops.

The Commission proposes a 5 per cent. price cut. I understand that its reasons are, first, that this will make sugar more competitive with artificial sweeteners. That seems a curious argument because I thought that competition would be on calorific value not on price. Secondly, the Commission said that a price cut would discourage over-production. Again, that seems curious, given that the crop is subject to quota. Thirdly, it said that a price cut would save the EC money. That cannot be so, because the EC price cannot be reduced without reducing the ACP price, and to compensate the ACP countries would be in breach of the Chirac-Godberg compromise agreed by the Council of Ministers. There is unusual unanimity between British Sugar, Tate and Lyle and the ACP countries, which speak with one voice on the matter, as do the producers, who rightly point out that there has been a six-year price freeze.

Beet production brings stability for untold numbers of farmers. I listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend the Minister said in his opening remarks, which were, perhaps, a little delphic. However, I believe that they hold a glimmer of hope because my right hon. Friend continues to consider the position. He may wish to refer to my plea and that made by other hon. Members during the debate.

The second area of stability that I should like to mention is potatoes. As my right hon. Friend will be aware, they are the second highest value crop in the country, after cereals. They, too, are of great importance in underpinning agricultural incomes for both large and small farms. They are not included in the commodities covered by the price proposals, but I have no hesitation in mentioning them, since in this debate we have been taken on airline tours and a number of other diversions.

There can be no doubt that the future of the potato crop is looming large in producers' minds. As my right hon. Friend knows, that is because the future of the Potato Marketing Board is under discussion. As hon. Members will understand, that board is always criticised when it refuses quotas, but I think that its response to the consultative document issued by the Government has been thorough and serious.

I also believe that the consumers in the United Kingdom enjoy a far wider variety of quality potatoes than that enjoyed by their European counterparts. That variety and quality, coupled with good marketing methods, has increased our national consumption of potatoes—despite the best efforts of the media recently to prove that if one ate a tonne of green potatoes at one sitting one might be poisoned.

In my constituency potatoes are extremely important and growers there—and, I believe, throughout the country—are unanimous in their support for option 3 in the consultative document, which will retain area and quality control in a self-financing way. I hope that, during the consultation, my right hon. Friend will consider that unanimous response carefully.

Finally, I want to comment briefly on the need for my right hon. Friend, while of course protecting the consumer by ensuring the safety of our food, to encourage our important agriculture to be proud of its products, which have taken an unprecedented knock—almost without ceasing—during the past couple of months. I believe in British foods; the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) believes only in the quality of Welsh food, but I believe in the quality of British food. Our farmers should have the confidence to pursue successful and aggressive marketing policies.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), spelt out that need recently when he described the keystone of success as a careful and solid approach to marketing. Of course, he would admire anything that was careful and solid, but I hope that Food and Farming Year will be given wholehearted support by all hon. Members, by all at MAFF, by my right hon. Friend and by the industry. It needs a boost.

9.21 pm

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): I am happy to join the hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) in her comments about the future of the Potato Marketing Board. I am glad that all hon. Members who wanted to take part in the debate have been able to do so. We have heard thoughtful and considered speeches from all sides. The cliché about these debates is that they are wide-ranging, and this one must have been the widest of the wide—not least because we are debating 3·8 kilos of

European Community documents. I defy the Minister to tell us that he has read every word of them; I have not, but I did get around to weighing them in the post office.

I flicked through the documents and discovered that we could have debated the minimum price for sweet lupins, the intervention price for paddy rice—possibly a reference to the leader of the Liberals—the aid that is available from the European Community to support silkworm eggs, and the buying in price for satsumas. In spite of all that, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) managed to have a wee debate on the shipbuilding industry. Later we had the wonderful experience of hearing the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) explaining what a key industry agriculture is and how communities that depend on it must be defended at all costs. How much I agree, and how I wish that he and other Conservative Members and people in the farming industry had said the same thing when the axe was hanging over mining, shipbuilding and various other industries. Never mind: the hon. Gentleman has the point now and I hope it will stick.

In his fleeting visit to the House this afternoon, the Minister mentioned a wide range of subjects in the documents, some of which I hope to touch on. He dwelt at length on fraud in the CAP, a subject that must have been discovered recently by the Prime Minister and which seems to merit a great deal of attention. Advocates of the sleazier aspects of the enterprise culture are not at their most convincing when they are being holier than thou on the subject of fraud. The Government's position on it was fatally wounded by their erstwhile colleague Lord Cockfield, who explained to the House of Lords not long ago that, when he put forward proposals as a European Commissioner that would have dealt with the problem of fraud in the CAP, it was the United Kingdom Government who vetoed his proposal.

The role of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food must surely be to be the guardian of the nation's food and to provide agriculture with leadership. One of his functions should be to tell the industry what he wants it to do. The industry requires leadership and needs to understand what policies the Government intend to implement. I have no doubt that it would respond—as it often has in the past—to a lead if ever it got one.

More than 10 years have passed since the last White Paper on agriculture made clear the Government's ideas for the future of agricultural policy. Sadly, the industry is adrift in many ways and lacking leadership. If the Minister will not take that from me, perhaps he will take it from his constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), who made that point very clear.

Is the Minister taking a responsible overview of food and farming policy, and is he playing a constructive part in United Kingdom and European Community decision-making on agricultural policy? I fear that on both counts the answer must be no. In concluding his speech he asked what our policy is. He will recall that at the general election the Labour party made it clear that it wanted to fight for the repatriation of decision-making on the common agricultural policy and to pursue the policy of quotas which his Government pioneered. He will have to wait and see what policy will come out of our current policy review. That will be coming soon, and I assure him that it will be a great success.

May I go round the various commodities that were covered in the debate, starting with beef. The price package that we are debating comes immediately after the settlement of a new beef support regime, which we debated not long ago. There was unanimity in the House on how we wanted the Minister to approach negotiations on the new beef support regime, but he failed to get what he wanted, and said lamely that he voted against it in the Council of Ministers. He failed to take his colleagues with him there, and unfortunately that will give rise to severe difficulties for our industry and for the beef market in Britain. I wonder whether the Minister is aware that Lord Sanderson, the Minister of State, Scottish Office, said that one aspect of the beef package would discriminate against efficient specialist beef herds in Scotland. There is no doubt that that is true. We have been saddled with a problem and the industry will have to cope with it.

During our previous debate on beef, I pointed to the potential for increasing beef consumption in the European Community and in the United Kingdom, where consumption is comparatively low. Policies that could lead to such increased consumption of beef and red meat would not only be a bonus for consumers but would be conducive to more extensive grazing on farms. That policy would be worth achieving, but we are not getting there. We welcome the thrust of any policy leading to extensification on farms: that point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

The Minister knows that he had the House behind him when he was negotiating to continue the beef variable premium. It is a great pity that he failed, not only from our point of view, but from that of other people in the European Community. There is proof of the success and efficiency of the beef variable premium in the figures for beef production and beef intervention in the European Community. Great Britain produces 10·7 per cent. of the beef of the European Community, but we contribute only 1·8 per cent. of the volume of beef that goes into intervention. That must show that the beef market was functioning comparatively efficiently in Great Britain, and that the variable premium which made that possible was a useful mechanism. Sadly, it has been lost.

Now we have the new special rearing premium, which will be introduced from 5 March. It will be payable at the rate of £28·42 a head for 90 male animals from each herd. That is just one month away, and it would be useful if the Minister would take the opportunity of this debate to tell us a little about how it will be administered. Will it be paid on the farm, at the market or at the slaughterhouse? How will the Government ensure that the cut-off point of 90 male animals per herd is observed if the scheme is administered at the slaughterhouse?

It is time the industry was given some indication how this new scheme will operate. Certainly we require an assurance that the Minister will take steps to ensure that British producers will be able to take maximum advantage of the new machinery and also of the hill livestock compensatory allowances and the suckler cow premium.

At the same time, it might be useful if the hon. Gentleman could say something about the question of harmonisation in the European Community. We have been on the brink of a trade war with the United States of America because of the EC ban on hormones in beef. There is a lot of legitimate doubt about how efficiently the

*[Mr. John Home Robertson]*

ban is being applied and enforced in parts of Europe. It would be useful if the Minister could say a word or two about that.

Let me turn from the ditching of the beef variable premium to the other extensive livestock sector—sheep. There seem to be very clear indications that the sheep regime will be the next casualty in the overhaul of the CAP. Indeed, the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) seemed to suggest that that was quite a good idea. I do not know whether he is in cahoots with Mr. Peter Pooley of the European Commission, who used some rather extravagant language about Britain milking the system and about it being a racket. He is quoted as having said:

"I have not been discriminating against lamb producers up to the present, but, by God, I think I may have been neglecting my duty."

I think he was giving notice that it is the intention of the European Commission to put the boot into the British sheep sector. I hope that, whatever the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon may have said, the British Minister will be fighting for British interests on this occasion.

I was a little worried when I heard the assurance from the Minister that he would oppose the kind of headage limit on sheep subsidies that might be applied in future. This is the self-same Minister who sold out on the question of headage limits in relation to the beef subsidy. Clearly there will be a drastic review of the support machinery for sheep, and it appears that Mr. Pooley and others intend to give the United Kingdom producers no quarter. This really is a matter of the gravest concern in the hills and uplands of this country. My hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) was quite right to point out how important it is that producers in the hills and uplands of Britain be protected against the cuts that the European Community seems to have in mind.

I want to move now to the dairy sector, which has certainly benefited from being a regulated and efficiently managed market because of the imposition of quotas. We supported the principle of quotas, though we may not have supported every detail of their application. We would have applied them in a different way—perhaps more like the manner in which they have been applied in Denmark—but we certainly support the principle. With those quotas, the future for the milk sector should be reasonably secure, provided that our milk marketing boards can be retained.

I am pleased that the Minister took the opportunity to reiterate his distaste for the co-responsibility levy for milk. That is certainly an absurd imposition on small dairy farmers—a point made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). What the Minister did not mention were certain other points that are of acute importance to the dairy sector.

First, there is the question of public confidence in the product and, in particular, public confidence that milk is free from artificial contamination. We are still waiting for the Government to give us some indication that they will rule out the use of bovine somatropin in milk. The producers do not want it—in fact, nobody wants it—but the Government refuse to take any action to ban it. In connection with health standards in relation to milk, we have heard also about listeria and about BSE. Indeed, BSE has been the great unmentioned point in this debate from the Government's point of view.

The Minister has been away for much of the debate. He did not mention BSE in his opening remarks, but he put out a press statement and a reply to two planted written questions on controls for BSE, which were tabled last week. At the beginning of the debate, on a point of order, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said that the Minister must give a statement to the House on this matter, which is causing such legitimate public alarm. If the Minister will not take it from my side of the House, perhaps he will listen to his hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who used equally strong language in saying that it was an abuse of the House for the Minister to brief the press on BSE instead of telling the House of the Government's response to it.

The Minister did not mention BSE in his speech. He spent much of the day talking to the press about it and his written replies to his hon. Friends the Members for Torridge and Devon, West and for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), which had been embargoed rather conveniently for 3.30 pm today to make it particularly difficult for hon. Members interested in these matters to deal with it.

I have referred to the Library and I understand that the Minister proposes to set up a research consultative committee on BSE. I hope that it does its work efficiently and quickly. I understand that no offal may be used in baby food. Whether it is at present must be a matter of some doubt. The Government have not said whether they will increase the level of compensation to farmers whose stocks must be slaughtered. *[Interruption.]* They are not. There is no question of 100 per cent. compensation, so there must be a risk that farmers with infected stock will not notify the authorities. The Government are failing to deal with the most fundamental aspect of the problem.

The intensive livestock sector is under severe pressure following the salmonella shambles. The Minister said that over-production in the pig sector, for example, can best be regulated by market forces. That is the roughest possible form of justice. The Minister has wider obligations for those who work in these industries. It would be useful if he would say something about the health implications of the abolition of frontier controls in 1992. Several hon. Members have referred to 1992. What about the controls that will apply to imports of pigs which may be infected with Aujesky's disease?

The cereals and arable sector is carrying its share of the general gloom and depression. We all know that changes are inevitable, but stabilisers are a crude mechanism. They are a method of restructuring by redundancy or bankruptcy. The hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West made that point as a result of discussions with local bank managers on the impact of the Government's policies on this sector. These policies should go hand in hand with incentives for restructuring, change and development. The continuing problem of monetary compensatory amounts arises from the imbalances in green currencies. I agree with hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who feel that British industry should be able to compete on a fair basis, not just in 1992 but as soon as possible.

The only gesture towards restructuring in the arable sector is the business of set-aside. Farmers can collect £80 an acre for setting aside a minimum of 20 per cent. of their arable land. That is supposedly to reduce intervention buying, but it is a form of intervention itself. It is an intervention in the land market. It takes a percentage of land out of circulation. It is a sort of rental intervention to

prevent a fall in market rents for farms. It is inevitably a haphazard affair. The public are paying farmers to do nothing, which is difficult to understand, and in some cases people are paid off. People are losing their jobs as a result of the scheme. Will the Government make any provision for workers who are made redundant or lose their standard of living because of set-aside? No, we are getting nothing for those workers.

Even the Leader of the other place has caused people to be made redundant and has not made any compensation available to them in connection with this scheme, which is grossly unsatisfactory. I gather that his explanation was that he wanted to set an example to other farmers to take advantage of the set-aside scheme.

We must press the Minister to explain the position of the United Kingdom Government on the income aid element of the European Community agricultural programme. That would be an eminently sensible way in which funds can be obtained to pay people to help them to adjust to policy changes and to protect employment. Why can that not be done in connection with set-aside? Why are the British Government alone in refusing to take advantage of that aspect of the package? That does not make sense.

The Minister appears to be dismissing the evidence of the collapse in farming incomes in recent months and years. He says that everyone has many other sources of income, which is not accurate or fair. The Minister knows that the vast majority of people in the agriculture industry mostly earn their livings from working directly in agriculture, and he should make policy decisions to cater for those people.

I have not time to mention the further deplorable cuts in research and development. The reports last week in the *Farmers Weekly* were extremely alarming. As has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House, that was an outrageous Government decision that will do great damage to the industry and to the public interest. The Minister must reconsider that decision. I hope that those reports will turn out to be rumours, but I suspect that they are well founded.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food came to his post widely tipped as a future Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I am afraid that his reputation has slipped a little in recent months. Where there was research, he has brought ignorance; where there was a rural economy, he has brought rural bankruptcy; and where there was despondency, the has brought alarm. He has even managed to be the second Tory Minister of Agriculture on the trot to earn himself a vote of no confidence from the National Farmers Union—not to mention the vote of no confidence that he received last week from the voters of Richmond.

Agriculture is in a sad condition, and the Minister knows. The Labour party has a proud record of partnership with agriculture. I do not believe that this Government could do any worse than they are doing now, and I suspect that the industry will be much happier when we can return to a Labour Government.

9.42 pm

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder):** I was going to say that this has been a wide-ranging debate, but after what the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said at the beginning of his speech, I shall refrain from doing so. I would describe it as a well-informed debate, and I shall endeavour to deal with as many of the points as I possibly can. If I do not answer every question—probably well over 100—I promise to write to the hon. Members concerned.

It is important not to forget that the CAP is being radically refashioned. The House may argue about the nature of the reforms, but no one can seriously deny that the wheel of the supertanker has been put hard over and that a change of course is already taking place. Budgetary discipline is working. Stabilisers—though some are tougher than others—have triggered support cuts across the board. The mechanism is in place and will continue to operate automatically. We must all hope that the GATT meeting in April will also enable progress to be made outside the Community.

I join the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) in applauding the assiduous efforts of the Spanish presidency to reach an early conclusion to this round of price fixing, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for his limited support of a few parts of the Government's general strategy. I concur strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) in stressing that it is incumbent on the Opposition to formulate firm proposals of their own. Alas, the hon. Member for South Shields told the House in great detail what he objected to, but for all his sincerity, he failed to outline his alternatives. Is this because he backs our general approach, or is it because the Labour party simply has not devised viable alternative policies? Last week we saw designed Socialism without a food label—today we saw designer Socialism without a farming label.

The hon. Member for South Shields had the audacity —I commend his bravery—to draw attention to food prices, but this Government have always taken their responsibilities to consumers far more seriously than the Labour Government did. Since we took office 10 years ago, food prices have increased on average by 5·6 per cent. per annum, which is nearly 2 per cent. per annum below inflation. Prices are now 17 per cent. lower in real terms than they were in May 1979 when we took office.

When the hon. Member for South Shields referred to farm incomes, one of my hon. Friends murmured about the effect of the weather. The scale of the drop in farm incomes last year was due to problems in the cereal sector. If last year's yields had been at 1984 levels, for example, farm incomes would have shown an increase.

The hon. Gentleman alluded to the fact that the aggregate income from agriculture has declined by 25 per cent. in 1988 compared with 1987. That single figure, however, masks a complex position. Despite what the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) have said, for all parts of the United Kingdom, incomes on hill, dairy, less-favoured area and upland livestock farms show marked increases.

The less-favoured areas, which account for half the United Kingdom's agricultural area, one third of United Kingdom farm holdings and 15 per cent. of farm production, received substantial assistance and have appreciably benefited from the sheepmeat regime. Incomes in the dairy sector—there are 50,000 holdings in all—have gone up every year in the past five years. Certainly, as I have already observed, arable sector incomes have been adversely affected by poor weather and low prices, and the intensive sector is still prone to production and price

*[Mr. Richard Ryder]*

cycles, but it is not defensible to play up the areas where income is poor without noting the substantial areas where that income has improved.

The hon. Member for South Shields, the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and many others have mentioned fraud. From 1984 to 1988 inclusive, there were 41 cases of detected fraud under the market support section of the CAP. As the hon. Member for South Shields has already said, 22 were settled out of court and 19 were prosecuted, leading to nine prison sentences and fines up to £40,000. In 1986, the Commission made several anti-fraud proposals, including one at the suggestion of the European Parliament for direct investigations by Commission officials into Customs matters in member states. That proposal was withdrawn following unanimous opposition from member states. Since then, the Commission has made various proposals particularly for strengthening controls over export refunds, and has brought forward new suggestions in this year's price package.

The European Court of Auditors has pointed to serious weaknesses in the intervention and export refund systems and has recommended changes. The Government are urging the Council of Ministers to act on the proposals already before it and have urged the Commission to make further proposals where the need has now been demonstrated. My right hon. Friend the Minister stressed this point again at the last Council meeting a fortnight ago. I should like to quote briefly from a press release that he put out as a result of the intervention that he made at the Council meeting. On 13 February he said:

> "I make no apology for returning to the subject of fraud which I have raised in the Council on several occasions before."

My right hon. Friend is constantly pressing the Council to reach conclusions on this matter. He went on to say:

> "In the nature of fraud there are no firm figures. But it is clear that the problem is very large indeed—not as large perhaps as some recent reports have suggested, but large enough to be of the most serious concern to us all. It simply cannot be right in any way that large amounts of Community money are being wasted. It is for us—the Council and the Commission—to tackle the problem and to show that we are doing so."

After my right hon. Friend's intervention at the Council meeting a fortnight ago, the presidency emphasised the importance that it attaches to sorting out this problem as soon as possible.

Contrary to the assertion by the hon. Member for South Shields, we take full account of consumer interests across the whole range of our activities. Ministers and officials have always been ready to meet representatives of consumer organisations. Ministers had seven major meetings with consumer organisations last year and I am not aware of Ministers refusing any requests for further meetings during that time. Last year, officials had 31 meetings with consumer organisations such as the National Consumer Council, with which I had a meeting on Friday, the Consumers Association and the Coronary Prevention Group. In 1988, we consulted 40 consumer organisations on no fewer than 225 occasions on 35 different issues. On the proposed new food Bill, we have consulted 28 consumer organisations and 14 health organisations.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), I can tell the House that, as part of the recently agreed reform of the beef regime, the suckler cow premium paid from Community funds will increase to £28 per head. As my hon. Friend may know, there is also the possibility of a national top-up. The Government will take a decision on that in the normal way before the start of the next annual scheme on 15 June.

Hon. Members have said a great deal about sheepmeat. My right hon. Friend and I have noted those views and the importance that the House attaches to the subject. I can well understand the anxiety about this matter at a time when radical change is proposed and when the future shape of the regime is uncertain. The United Kingdom sheep sector has every reason to be confident. As all hon. Members would acknowledge, it is a success story. Since 1985 the United Kingdom breeding flock has increased by 15 per cent., production has gone up by 10 per cent., and exports have increased by 56 per cent. We intend to ensure that our producers can continue to build on their natural advantages. A genuinely free market in lamb must be good for British producers, who are efficient and competitive. We may face a time of change and uncertainty, but it is also a time of opportunity.

Hon. Members asked about the sheepmeat regime and about the future of the variable premium. We shall look for a solution that takes full account of the needs of our sheepmeat sector. This may involve continuation of the variable premium which is well suited to our stratified sheep sector. We continue vigorously to oppose headage limits, as we have done in previous negotiations about sheepmeat. They are not in the best interests of the British sheepmeat sector and they are particularly damaging in areas where there are few, if any, alternatives to sheep. Hill producers are the backbone of our sheepmeat industry and the future regime must enable them to remain so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster asked about the separate GB stabiliser. We had to accept a separate stabiliser because it is only in Great Britain that this applies to the variable premium. We must ensure that future stabiliser arrangements are equitable. With a strong pound, exporting is not so easy, and levels of clawback are high, but this is an inevitable result of applying the variable premium. The cost of the sheepmeat regime is rising quickly and is expected to double between 1987 and 1989. The stabiliser system is not sufficiently effective. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) that the United Kingdom share of EEC expenditure is in line with our number of ewes.

The hon. Members for South Shields and for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) expressed misgivings about set-aside. My right hon. Friend the Minister has never claimed that set-aside is intended, in itself, to bring about a full reduction in surplus. It is complementary to a prices policy.

Several hon. Members were concerned about extensification. The Government have pressed for the provision of pilot schemes, particularly for beef, because of the major problems of effective enforcement of such a scheme in this sector. It makes sense to test out the problems on the ground on an experimental basis before applying the scheme nationwide. In view of the concern of the hon. Member for South Shields to prevent fraud, I should have expected him to support this approach wholeheartedly.

The hon. Members for East Lothian, for Brecon and Radnor and for Workington suggested that we should consider introducing income aids for small farms. The House will know that an EC income aid scheme was agreed as part of a package at the January Council. It is optional for member states, and my right hon. Friend the Minister has always made it clear that we do not find it attractive. We do not think that it is helpful to the necessary process of the CAP reform to make expensive FEOGA payments to producers to shield them for a few more years from the need to come to terms with the market. In the United Kingdom we have a social security system designed to cater for the whole population. To have a preferential system for farmers alone is unnecessary and potentially divisive. Moreover, as I have already shown, the level of farm incomes varies markedly from sector to sector and from year to year. That means that any blanket income aid scheme is inappropriate.

The hon. Member for South Shields and my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), who is not in his place, queried our position on sugar. I can understand the concern that has been expressed about the Commission's proposal to reduce prices for sugar and sugar beet by 5 per cent., but the Commission's arguments for it merit respect. In world terms, the Community sugar price is extremely high—more than three times the price in the open world market—although I recognise that the largely self-financing nature of the sugar regime distinguishes it from other CAP commodities, where cuts in support have been necessary for budgetary reasons.

Cutting the Community price would also have implications for imports of preferential ACP sugar. The Commission has referred to the possibility of compensation, but it is not clear what form this might take. This is the important aspect which remained to be clarified. I assure hon. Members, and in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North, that the Government will bear the views expressed in this debate very much in mind during the forthcoming negotiations.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East asked about the criteria for the selection of rural areas. The reform of the Community's structural funds includes the objective of developing selected rural areas. The arrangements are laid down in the Community regulations adopted at the end of 1988. The regulations contain a list of objective criteria —such as unemployment, level of incomes or remoteness —which have to be met. As the hon. Lady may know, discussions with the Commission about an initial selection of United Kingdom areas which appear to be eligible are in progress. Applications have been made on behalf of several other areas, and each of these is being carefully considered.

I have tried to answer as many of the points raised in the debate as I can. I have also committed myself to writing to those hon. Members whose points I have not yet answered. This has been a well-informed debate, during which it has become clear that the Opposition lack any policies for farming. Only the Conservative Government are standing up for Britain's agriculture at this time of change. I ask the House to support the measures.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House takes note of European Community Documents COM(89)40 on the 1989 Common Agricultural Policy price fixing proposals, Nos. 4536/89 on agricultural markets in 1988, 8960/88 on the sheepmeat regime, 10083/88 and COR 1 on imports of sheepmeat from New Zealand, and 9629/88 on cereals incorporation in animal feed and of the Government's intention to negotiate an outcome on all these measures which takes account of the interests of United Kingdom producers and consumers and of the need to keep Common Agricultural Policy expenditure for 1989 within the Budget figure and for future years within the budgetary guideline.

# Forestry

10 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton):** I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8415/88 on forestry; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that action in this field takes full account of United Kingdom interests.

This motion concerns proposals that have been made by the European Commission for a Community strategy and supporting measures for forestry. I should make it clear from the outset that the Community does not have a common forestry policy, nor is it the intention that there should be such a policy. We have been given this assurance and we shall be guarding against any move in that direction.

The proposed measures are not wholly new ones as such, but are largely extensions and enhancements of existing measures aimed at providing a more positive role for forestry within the context, in particular, of the reform of the common agricultural policy and moves to implement the rural economy. This Community initiative —commonly known as the forestry action programme— follows swiftly on from recent negotiations on the reform of the structural funds, now increased, in which specific enabling provision was made for forestry measures to be supported under the guidance section of FEOGA.

As hon. Members will have noticed, the package is somewhat complex, consisting of a strategy paper and no fewer than six draft regulations and a draft decision. The aims of the programme, stated in the rather grandoise terms often used in Commission papers are set out in pages 7 and 8 of the document. Before the Government can endorse these proposals, however, we shall wish to have a clear understanding of how the forestry action programme will be implemented and controlled and to what extent the United Kingdom is likely to be affected.

Perhaps the most important draft proposal from the United Kingdom's standpoint is proposal A, which is designed to amend regulation 797/85. It is aimed at the afforestation of agricultural land as a means of reducing surpluses, which is in line with current United Kingdom policy and practice. The Commission now proposes that aid for afforestation, with reimbursement from the Community, should be given not just to full-time farmers as in the past, but to others who wish to afforest agricultural land. It would therefore apply equally to individual landowners, forestry associations, co-operatives, or indeed to anyone wishing to plant on agricultural land. It has been proposed by the Commission that this could apply to public authorities and even to afforestation of former agricultural land carried out by member states themselves. This is, however, an aspect which we will have to look at very carefully.

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): The Minister has referred to proposal A, and before doing so he said that there will be no Community common forestry policy. Does he mean that there will be no programme for self-sufficiency in timber products if the forestry action project is accepted in full?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We have a long way to go to self-sufficiency. Each member state faces different circumstances from the others. The member states in southern Europe are in a different position from member states in the north. I shall give the hon. Gentleman a picture of the line that will be taken by the negotiators —I speak of the line that will be taken on each document. We shall need to be satisfied that the legal basis of the regulations is correct and we are continuing to press for more financial information. We are seeking to satisfy ourselves that the proposals will be cost-effective. We do not accept that annual payments to farmers who undertake afforestation should be mandatory. We are a long way from achieving self-sufficiency.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** Is that the objective?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Negotiations are still going on, but the objective of self-sufficiency as such has not been stated quite in those terms. The difference between what we are doing and the proposals in the documents and a common forestry policy is that such a policy would not completely be within the discretion of the country concerned. That is the best answer that I can give the hon. Gentleman.

The proposal would also require member states to provide for the payments of annual premiums to farmers who plant trees on agricultural land. In United Kingdom terms, we already have in place the woodland grant scheme and the farm woodland scheme, so the main effect would be that our schemes would become eligible for FEOGA reimbursement. Since we are, in a sense, already ahead of other member states in this, there would be no other major implications. What has yet to be decided is whether there will be a limit in the scale of planting to qualify for Community reimbursement—expressed at present as an investment ceiling.

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): The Minister referred to the payments that are already being made under existing schemes. Is the implication that there will be no additional money for farmers?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** That question was raised during the previous debate and was fully answered by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I have nothing to add to his reply.

**Mr. Geraint Howells** (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Will the Minister give way?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I want to develop my point and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is welcome to speak later.

Proposal B certainly involves the most money. It is designed to support integrated forestry programmes contributing to the development of rural areas. It is envisaged that such programmes would cover a wide range of forestry and associated activities, including the development and exploitation of existing woodland, and new planting. Unlike proposal A—which would apply throughout the Community—this measure is tied in with the reform of the structural funds and targeted on those disadvantaged areas of the Community comprising objective 1 regions as defined in Council regulation 2052/88 adopted last December, and objective 5(b) areas yet to be defined according to the criteria laid down in the regulation.

It is important to recognise, therefore, that the term "rural areas" does not refer to the countryside in general.

The areas which are likely to benefit under that proposal will be defined according to the criteria and agreed between member states and the Commission. The possible rural areas in the United Kingdom have not yet been settled, but are not expected to be extensive, although Northern Ireland is an objective 1 region. The main beneficiaries will be the less developed regions of the Community, such as those covered by the existing integrated mediterranean programmes.

Proposal C is intended to amend regulation 355/77 concerned with the marketing and processing of agricultural products. Basically, the scope of the existing regulation would be widened to include cork and timber products. The timing of this proposal is rather odd, in that regulation 355/77 is currently under review and the intention is to replace it. None the less, we have to consider the proposal as it has been presented, and we are considering carefully the extension of this regulation to cover the marketing and processing of forestry products —we certainly do not want any measure that would distort timber markets, nor would we necessarily want to see the extension of coverage beyond the marketing of agricultural products to non-annex II products such as timber.

Proposal D is about the setting up of a Standing Foresty Committee which is intended to replace both the present heads of forest services group and the Forest Protection Committee. This would be an advisory committee made up of forestry experts from member states who would be able to consider and advise on any actions taken pursuant to these proposals.

**Mr. Elliot Morley** (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Proposal D in relation to the forestry action programme, seems light in terms of conservation aspects for forests not only in this country but in terms of rare and endangered European forest types. Will the British Government be pressing for the conservation element in that review to be given the emphasis that it requires?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Note will be taken of the hon. Gentleman's comments. Negotiations will take place tomorrow and I will discuss his point with the negotiators then.

Proposals E and F are concerned with forestry protection. The former deals with improving understanding of the effects of atmospheric pollution on forests, while the latter is aimed at improved methods of protecting forests against fire. Again, these measures build on existing regulations. As far as atmospheric pollution is concerned, we accept that more research is needed into the nature of the relationship between atmospheric pollution and health of forests in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the Community. Therefore, we consider the existing programme to be a sensible one and the extension that is proposed is modest.

On fire, the present regulation and its proposed extension will principally benefit the southern member states which suffer greatly from devastating forest fires each year. The amendment would widen the present regulation to provide support for measures to encourage projects aimed at forest protection, taking account of new methods and technologies. It would not extend to support for actual fire-fighting. The protection of European forests is obviously important and we certainly do not oppose those measures in principle, although we are still looking at the details.

Finally, proposal G is intended to help decision-making in the forestry sector by setting up a database on forestry in the Community. Much of that information is already held by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, and it would be important to ensure that no unnecessary duplication takes place.

The European Commission proposed basing all the proposals solely on article 43 of the treaty of Rome, which is the one concerned with the CAP. That has been questioned by legal experts, including our own lawyers, and we have just received a written legal opinion from the EC Council legal services broadly supporting our view that, in most cases, the legal basis will have to be amended or extended. This is something for the legal experts to sort out.

We have called for a report from the Commission on the effectiveness of some of the previous Community forestry measures, such as those under the integrated Mediterranean programmes. That would help us to judge whether the present proposals, and particularly regulation B, are likely to work as intended. The report has just been received and will be carefully studied to see whether any lessons should be learnt.

The Commission has agreed that the estimated financial effects of the proposals, which are not inconsiderable, should be examined by the financial questions working group to see how the likely costs would fit in to the overall structural funds budget. This, as right hon. and hon. Members may know, was increased substantially following last year's summit agreement. All the proposals would be funded from the FEOGA guidance section and we wish to clarify whether there would be any implications for other expenditure under that heading.

**Mr. Geraint Howells:** Will the Minister clarify what he means by the planting of agricultural land? Does he mean that the Government will try to persuade British farmers to plant trees on the best productive land?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The hon. Gentleman knows very well what is meant by extensification and by set-aside, and the scheme will be along those lines. The important point is that proposal B is within the discretion of the countries concerned, so the hon. Gentleman's remarks should be addressed to them.

The package of measures is complex, and the Government welcome the opportunity provided by the debate to seek the views of the House. We have a vigorous and successful forestry policy, which has seen a substantial increase in forest and woodland area in recent years together with the establishment of major timber-using industries that are at the forefront of technology and fully competitive in world terms.

The United Kingdom is in the lead in many ways, including our provisions for protecting the environment, and that claim is borne out by the steady stream of forestry experts coming to this country to find out how we do things. However, we should now consider the role of forestry in the European context, while ensuring that national forestry policies continue to recognise the widely varying conditions under which forestry is practised as between member states. As my right hon. and learned

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland indicated in his statement to the House on 16 March last year, the Government recognise that

"Forestry has an important role to play in the well being of this country."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. *587*.]

That is true of the European Community as a whole. I commend the motion to the House.

10.14 pm

**Mr. Brian Wilson** (Cunninghame, North): The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was right in at least one respect. A stream of people do indeed arrive from all over the world to study the expertise and learn at the feet of those in Britain who have built up a tremendous knowledge of forestry. The tragedy is that, as in every other aspect of rural affairs and agriculture, that pool of knowledge is being dissipated, wasted and thrown away through the doctrinaire measures of Government.

Rural Britain is crying out for a coherent forestry policy, which would in turn have a beneficial effect on our economic performance and our balance of payments. Instead, under the present Government, forestry policy has become confused, directionless and subordinate to get-rich-quick interests. Evidence of environmental recklessness in pursuit of profit can be seen in many parts of rural Britain. In too many places, the wrong trees were planted by the wrong people for the wrong reasons. Future generations will have to live with a legacy of beautiful glens and valleys despoiled by ill-conceived private forestry developments. In some areas, notably the flow country, there will be precious little timber to show for the environmental damage done and the public money spent.

Within the European Community there is at least intelligent debate about forestry policy and its environmental impact. In the United Kingdom we have a stultifying pattern of lethargy with ideological meddling around the edges. Whether the forestry action programme becomes a reality remains to be seen. We can see both good and bad in the documents. The emphasis must be on maximising the national interest in a policy which evolves particularly in terms of environment and conservation. We support extensive forestry development to improve the remarkable trade imbalance in wood and wood products, but we insist that any policy must avoid the trend towards intensively managed forests of a single species where short-term exploitation produces long-term environmental damage. In the vast acreages potentially available to forestry in the United Kingdom, it need not be like that.

The European Commission has produced an admirable eight-point code of objectives for forestry policy. References to land use planning, development of rural life, supply of renewable raw materials, environmental improvement, natural setting for relaxation, recreation and culture and other such phrases occur in the document. Nothing could be further from the reality of forestry policy and practice in the United Kingdom under the present Government.

Doubtless because of the closeness of landed interests to the Government, forestry has been the vehicle for a mixed bag of damaging and exploitive policies which have left the British forestry industry in its current state of uncertainty and disarray. The Forestry Commission, which has lived under an ideological cloud virtually since the Government came to office, has been chipped away at through piecemeal privatisation and, in effect, a veto on its ability to acquire additional land for planting.

The ideologically based switch of tree planting towards the private sector has been an unmitigated disaster both for the economy and for the environment. The Government's undignified retreat from these breathtaking tax breaks for investors in private forestry has created new problems while failing to challenge the basic flaw in the philosophy, which ridiculously suggests that the only criterion for tree planting—the ultimate investment in the future—should be the potential for maximising profit.

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that under the Labour Government a 98 per cent. top tax rate led to a far greater tax shelter for higher rate taxpayers than the progressive reductions in tax under the present Government, supported by the change to a grant system which has taken away the tax shelter altogether?

**Mr. Wilson:** We must consider the circumstances of the time. We have supported the removal of forestry from the tax shelter. Only during the 1980s was that tax shelter fully appreciated and exploited by those who chose to exploit it.

**Mr. Michael Lord** (Suffolk, Central): I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully. He said earlier that we should not have the sort of planting that has taken place recently, but given the need for timber to make the industry viable, what species should we now be planting?

**Mr Wilson:** We support a much broader range of planting within the United Kingdom and would especially encourage more hardwood planting. There has been far too much concentration on single species planting.

With regard to the sale of mature timber and the role of the Forestry Commission, I have described how the Forestry Commission has been chipped away through piecemeal privatisation. Members of all parties know that the Forestry Commission has been forced to sell mature timber against the advice of people who have spent their lives in the forestry industry. In many cases the only beneficiaries of such sales were the local landed interests who made short-term bonanzas. The sale of Loch Hourn forest in Invernessshire to Eileanreach estate, owned by the Wills tobacco family, is one example of such a public scandal. It is within my knowledge that influence was exerted at the highest levels and in the teeth of bitter opposition from Forestry Commission officials, who knew all too well that the public purse was being ripped off yet again.

All over Britain, under pressure from the Government, the Forestry Commission has been forced into sales that it did not wish to make. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), Pressminnin woods near Stenton, which I believe is not far from where the Minister lives, was sold by the Forestry Commission under pressure to contribute to the revenue that the Government insisted must be raised. Local people have had to mount an appeal to raise the money to try to buy back and protect public access to that local beauty spot. Those have been the policies pursued by the Government on forestry—in every instance, the motive has been profit and privatisation against the public interest.

I refer briefly to planning in order to state our full support for the concept of planning permission and consent for forestry development being in the hands of local authorities. The decision to cover a beautiful area of countryside with a forest is one of the biggest planning changes that could be imposed on any area of our country. It is absurd that there is no democratic process to determine whether that should be allowed.

In a press release dated 20 February, the Secretary of State for Scotland replied to such criticisms and to reports commissioned by the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, both of which urged the transfer of planning controls to local authorities. I found the Secretary of State's conclusion that there is no justification to place tree planting within the planning system utterly unsatisfactory. The Secretary of State then stated:

"we can see considerable advantages to foresters and others interested in tree planting in a forestry strategy that indicates those areas in which further forestry would be welcome".

That is a far cry from exercising any meaningful controls over those engaged in speculative tree planting without any concern for the environmental impact.

The reality is that in many parts of Britain, including many places in Scotland that I know, it is a standing disgrace that places which are totally unsuitable for the planting of trees are now covered in young trees purely because of commercial interests with gross disregard for the environmental interests and the legacy to future generations.

As regards compensation for transferring land to forestry, the Minister suggested that proposal A is opposed by the Government because it extends the principle of compensation beyond what exists under the farm woodland scheme to other circumstances proposed by the European Commission, which apparently believes that compensation should be paid not just to agricultural land users but to others who give agricultural land over to forestry. I find it difficult to see what is wrong with accepting FEOGA reimbursement for the farm woodland scheme as it now exists, but I understand that the Government oppose proposal A because it would broaden the existing scheme to other landowners who wish to take advantage of it. I hope that the Minister will explain why the Government find that offensive.

Another aspect, which is particularly close to the heart of my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), is the potential for expansion of farm woodland to tenanted land. That is certainly a major problem in Scotland where it is estimated that up to 40 per cent. of land, much of which, by definition, is the most suitable land for forestry plantation, is effectively removed from the possibility of participation in forestry because of a peculiar anomaly. Any trees planted by a tenant, whether crofter or farmer, remain the property of the landowner.

In those circumstances, it would be a peculiar form of philanthropy for tenants, whether farmers of crofters, individualy or collectively, to plant trees knowing that any capital asset might pass not to them or to their heirs but to the owner of that land. I suggest that it is well within the Government's ability to remove that anomaly and to give the full value of the planted trees not to the landowner but to the tenant.

This is not an insignificant matter because 40 per cent. of land in Scotland is tenanted, much of it in crofting counties and much of it eminently suitable for planting trees. At present, that land is effectively outwith the range of those who tenant it because they are not prepared to invest in forestry only to see the assets of their investment pass to the landowners. I should like the Minister to address that problem today. If forestry is to expand in places where it would benefit rural communities in large areas of Scotland, and no doubt other parts of the United Kingdom, something must be done to overcome that anomaly.

The Opposition want an expanded, productive, environmentally sensitive forestry industry in our countryside. That is achievable. We do not want the mixture of speculation and denigration of the public sector that has passed for forestry policy in the past decade. In European terms, I agree that we have to tread carefully. Clearly, there are moves to bring forestry within the CAP or its equivalent. The catalyst for that may be the production of cork in Portugal and other countries. Unlike the Minister—who, according to his remarks is guarding against moves towards a common forestry policy—the Opposition do not fundamentally object to the prospect of an FAP, or forestry action programme, so long as it is compatible with our interests, by which I mean the interests of our environment and our rural communities, not those of free market dogma and large-scale forestry investors.

10.28 pm

**Mr. Michael Lord** (Suffolk, Central): We rarely have a debate on forestry, so I am delighted that we are having one this evening. Forestry has, for many years, been a special interest of mine and I am delighted that trees are now receiving the attention that they deserve. My particular expertise is arboricultural rather than silvicultural, but as the two disciplines have become increasingly interconnected I shall make one or two points on both.

In forestry, as in agriculture, nothing is more important than continuity. It is impossible to change direction rapidly without causing a great deal of damage. Last year's budget changed the regime from one of tax allowances to one of grants, and I have no objection to that in principle. However, that change created a great shock within the forestry industry, which has taken much time to settle down, and caused much damage to many aspects of the industry. I hope very much that my hon. Friend the Minister will remember that for forestry, as for farming, continuity is all-important.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) spoke about the environmental impact of forestry planting. There is no doubt that we need a balanced attitude to what we plant and where we plant it. However, the hon. Gentleman had nothing to say about precisely where he wanted forests planted, or about what species he wanted planted. In some quarters I have detected something bordering on paranoia about some of our species. Sitka spruce is always singled out as the ogre of the piece—as a tree that we do not want anywhere—but it has played and continues to play an important part in our forestry.

There is great sensitivity about subjects such as the blanket bogs up in the north, in Caithness. I have made one visit there to see the environment for myself, and I understand the need for sensitivity about planting there, but there is obviously a sensible middle way. Lessons have been learnt, both by the Forestry Commission, whose record over the years I thoroughly commend, and by the private sector. No one wants the countryside of Scotland or anywhere else to be indiscriminately covered with great swathes of conifers. Neither do we want planting right down to our water courses—that has created problems in the past—or planting that damages the natural habitat of deer. These lessons have been learnt, and it is now possible to implement a sensible policy which incorporates all that we have learnt and includes the use of many of the softwoods that people condemn so indiscriminately.

It is all very well saying that broadleaved trees break up the forest and woodland and are attractive. However, it must be remembered that, given that timber must be produced and supplied to the mills, the hardwoods take much longer than—more than twice as long as—softwoods to grow, so providing the necessary timber is more difficult with them. By all means let us incorporate them in our forestry to make the environment more attractive, but to produce the raw material for the large processing factories in this country they are not the solution. The softwoods will ultimately play their part.

Forestry planting and management are extremely complicated businesses. Some species are planted together because they affect each other symbiotically in such a way as to increase their rate of growth. If such techniques are not used with, for instance, Sitka spruce, the time taken to get the trees to maturity will be greatly increased. There is no easy option other than to use the softwoods that we now use.

If we are to have a forestry industry, as we all agree we are, let us not beat about the bush. Let us accept that we can make some modifications to our practices, but if we want the right kind of trees grown at the right speed to keep our mills working, the conifer has the major part to play.

I welcome the changes in farming in lowland Britain which have resulted in more woodland planting. East Anglia has suffered greatly in recent years and it is good news that it will have more landscaping trees and perhaps a return to the old traditional timber-related crafts. East Anglia and the lowlands suffered from the effects of the hurricane. Housing, industrial and road developments have also caused the removal of trees. There have been agricultural improvements, too. Farmers in Suffolk are helping to improve the landscape now by planting trees and hedges—but agricultural improvements have taken their toll over the years.

Dutch elm disease has played an enormous part in removing trees from the landscape of East Anglia. The elm was often the biggest tree behind which the sun rose or set, and its loss has been a terrible tragedy for eastern England. People see the landscape changing enormously and sometimes farmers accidentally get the blame for the loss of our elms.

I should say something about the difference between planting and maintenance costs in relation to lowland trees. Often when we talk about planting trees we think solely of the cost of putting the tree into the ground, the stake and perhaps a guard. The most important part of establishing a tree is the treatment that it receives after planting. A tree that is maintained properly for up to four years after planting will look like a big tree in a very short time. If it receives minimum maintenance, or none at all, it will be a waste of time and enormous losses will result. I hope that, when budgeting, my hon. Friends will remember that the main cost is not in planting, but in ensuring that the tree survives thereafter.

It is sometimes said that a tree cannot be established in one's lifetime, but that is far from true. Trees come in all shapes and sizes, from whips to standards and even heavy standards, which are planted at 10 or 12 ft. If properly planted and looked after, those trees will grow by as much as 3 ft a year, and can add to the landscape within a very short time.

It is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and although I would not dream of welcoming the difficulties that farmers are experiencing, I very much welcome the fact that the East Anglian landscape will have many more trees.

One of the most important objectives in the report is "to participate in the most disadvantaged areas of the world by helping developed countries to use their forestry reserves rationally."

The chainsaw and other modern techniques have been a mixed blessing. We all know of the intensive logging in the tropical rain forests and in Third world countries. It has devastating effects, not just on native populations but, more importantly, on the world's climate and atmosphere.

Trees have been described, rightly, as the world's green lungs. Man takes in oxygen and breathes out carbon dioxide. By happy coindence, trees take in carbon dioxide

and give out oxygen, which we so badly need. The balance is crucial, and we are aware of the greenhouse effect and other problems caused because the balance is shifting. We must reduce felling drastically and introduce sensible management methods as quickly as possible. It will not be easy, because many underdeveloped countries have come to rely on the income from logging to help them to make ends meet. To reduce the amount of logging without damaging their economies, it is essential that all the nations get together to solve the problem. A way must be found quickly.

In this Chamber, we meet to talk and, I hope, to solve the problems of our fellow men and women. How futile it will be if, by not taking the action that I have described, we imperil mankind itself.

10.38 pm

**Mr. Richard Livsey** (Brecon and Radnor): This document on European legislation relating to forestry is an important development of the Community's policy, especially in relation to rural areas. The aim—to develop and optimally use forestry in rural areas—is laudable. Forestry must play a greater role in the reform of the common agricultural policy, and it will have a role in the development of rural areas. The important thing is how the policy is carried out.

Implicit in the document is the expansion of forestry in the Community, which is only 50 per cent. self-sufficient in timber. In many European countries, about 30 per cent. of their area is afforested, and the document shows that 40 per cent. of agricultural land and 20 per cent. of all land in Europe is afforested. I remember well, as an agriculture student, working for a brief time on a farm in Denmark. Forestry played a much greater part in the management of that land area than was common in this country. In fact, about 25 per cent. of it was afforested at that time. The thing that was striking and interesting to me, as someone from Wales, was that most of the afforestation consisted of hard wood. In fact, most of it was beech, and there was a little oak. It seemed to me to be a very well balanced system of land use. In France also there are many broad-leaved woodlands.

Unfortunatley Britain does not compare well in this respect. More recent forestry developments in this country tend to have produced vast areas of conifers. Many people now regret much of the very intensive post-war planting, because it has had a very deleterious effect on the environment. The United Kingdom is only about 11 per cent. self-sufficient in timber, and that is insufficient. We seem to have gone wrong in our forestry strategy somewhere along the way. We must surely take a longer-term view, rather than the short-term view that has been taken previously.

One of the weaknesses in the argument of the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) is that, from the point of view of having a productive forestry industry, one clearly has to supply softwood to the timber yards and timber mills to keep them running. But we should not be hooked entirely on softwoods; we must take a longer-term view and have more mixed forestry as well. This is entirely consistent with what the document says about making environmental improvements. Clearly, that is a factor that is under consideration in the European Community. That is to be welcomed, and I think that that is where the policies of this country have tended to break down.

I am very pleased that Bronydd Mawr experimental husbandry farm in my constituency has been developing agro-forestry, with far less intensive planting of trees and, indeed, with a great variety of trees and mixed grazing of sheep with a rather more lax forestry regime. That idea has been imported from New Zealand. Forestry is very closely linked to land use.

**Mr. Lord:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that conditions in New Zealand are very different from conditions in this country? The great problem is that our climate is not conducive to the production of trees as quickly as that in New Zealand. We have to get a species that will grow well in this country. Although it may sound well to talk about producing other species, if they do not deliver the goods it is pie in the sky.

**Mr. Livsey:** The hon. Gentleman is right: the climate in New Zealand is much more favourable. However, that does not obviate the need for research and development to get trees that are more suitable to our climate. I am glad to say that that work is being done already, and I think that it will develop in due course.

Clearly, in dealing with land use, forestry and farming must be integrated. I do not think we have given that matter sufficient consideration. There is a symbiosis between forestry and farming, and that can be less damaging to the environment. We know that, with blanket afforestation, acid problems have been created, and there is evidence of the release of aluminium ions as well. We know what that means in terms of the contamination of water courses and the possible effect with Alzheimer's disease and matters of that kind. Forestry amplifies the acid rain effect. I can quote research done by the Welsh water authority in the upper Tywi valley, where one valley was not afforested and nearly all fish that caged in the water survived—60 of them—during an autumn flood whereas in a valley that was afforested, in a stream there only six out of 60 survived in a cage. That was a serious implication for forestry when water is contaminated.

Aspects of proposal A are worrying, with investment ceiling holdings increasing from £26,000 to £52,000, when translated from ecus. That is good, but when the extension is to

"any other individual . . . or other bodies which afforest agricultural land",

it has implications. For example, in rural Wales certain properties could be bought out for afforestation, which could have an impact on the social structure of the area.

It is clear from proposal B that the development and optional utilisation of woodlands in rural areas is desirable. That will have implications for the local economy and for work in the area. The environmental and conservation matters referred to in the document are welcome. I hope that the Government will take those ideas on board. We want to see more processing and marketing of timber because of the work that that creates.

Can the Minister assure us that the Forestry Commission will not be privatised in future and that research and development will continue on the diseases of trees? How much work are we doing on atmospheric pollution? It is a problem in Germany, where some work is being undertaken. How much work are we doing on it?

The funding for the programme of 100 million ecus, or £66 million seems modest. It begs the question: is it enough? I would say that it was not enough for a major forestry development programme. What are the planning

*[Mr. Livsey]*

implications of the proposals? I see only references to the impact effect on 100-hectare blocks of forestry. The position in Wales and Scotland is different, as there are not the restrictions on large forestry developments found in England.

What efforts will be made to grow more hardwoods to reduce imports from the Third world? As hon. Members have already said, those imports cause the rundown of rain forests, which has an impact on the global climate. Surely we can make our contribution by growing more hardwood in the United Kingdom and Europe.

We benefit from the plantings of our predecessors and enjoy the fruits of trees planted 200 or 300 years ago. There was great sadness when some were blown down about 18 months ago. We must take a long-term view on forestry. It is no good taking a quick buck in the short term. The key is enlightened land use between forestry and agriculture, and developing forestry intelligently.

10.48 pm

**Mr. James Paice** (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I have listened to interesting speeches, but that description does not apply to the speech of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I feel some sympathy for the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who will have to try to resurrect any vestiges of Labour party forestry policy, as his hon. Friend's speech was a misplaced tirade with little indication of positive policies. I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the afforestation of wide tracts of scenic areas of Scotland, where I enjoy spending time. If he knew anything about forestry, he would know from the age of the trees that the planting has not been done in the past five years. It goes back over the past two decades. A tree in the first decade of life is hardly visible from any distance.

The tax breaks to which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North referred existed, of course, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) said, they had been in existence for some considerable time. I believe that the Government were right in acting as they did last year, because the natural resources of our countryside were being exploited. More and more people were saying that they did not want our countryside permanently afforested.

I must say that I was concerned when I read the EEC proposals. My first reaction was that here was a little more empire building by the European Commission. While I find many of the Commission's proposals attractive, sensible and containing some worthwhile objectives, I question fundamentally whether we need a Community policy on forestry. I was interested to note from the speech of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North that the Opposition were in favour of an FAP—a forest action programme—although, sadly, we often hear that they are opposed to its sister, the CAP. I find that anomalous.

The positive ideas which are clearly laid out in this proposal could be threatened by the over-regulation that will inevitably follow an EEC or Commission policy. Do we really want the Commission to set out afforestation proposals for the whole Community? I believe that it should be much more the responsibility of the individual nations to decide on the extent of afforestation within their own countrysides and the effect that it will have on the visual and physical environments in which their people will live.

It is significant that not long ago the forecast and assessment in science and technology report suggested that the Community softwood requirements could be met from 2 million hectares of surplus good-quality farmland. It specifically mentioned Atlantic farmland as opposed to Mediterranean, which is an important point, because it gives greater emphasis to the move—which the Government have already begun—towards putting more woodland and more forestry on to conventional farmland rather than on the uplands. It is sensible that we continue that step forward. The uplands are traditionally the areas of great scenic beauty and, as many hon. Members have said, they are affected much more by afforestation than those areas of traditional, arable and lowland farming.

It must also be said that, if we are trying to produce trees as a commercial crop, like any other crop they will grow better on better soils than they will in the uplands. Water is clearly an additional factor and certain areas are too dry for trees to be of great commercial value. It is important that we understand that with the changing nature of agriculture and the changing needs for employment in the countryside afforestation has an important part to play.

I was concerned to read in proposal A

"that Member States be required to adopt provisions governing afforestation, principally to prevent patchy afforestation of the countryside".

I believe that many people would say that patchy afforestation was much more attractive than massive single scale afforestation which renders much of the countryside less visually attractive and certainly much less physically attractive to work and live in. The traditional British patchwork countryside has historically been a major attraction of England and something that we should seek to retain as much as possible and, indeed, to re-create.

The document does not say much about existing woodland and about the effective management of the millions of hectares of existing woodland and forest, much of it extremely old. Much of that woodland has been derelict for many years and was seriously damaged by the gales of 18 months ago. Such woodland still requires a great deal of effort. A forestry policy be it a United Kingdom policy or an EEC policy, must pay great attention to the need to return to effective management the many millions of hectares of existing forest and farm woodland, which have an important role to play.

As part of the effort to re-establish the effective management of such woodlands, one must also consider the flora and fauna that they can or should support. We must ensure that any forestry policy pays a great deal of attention to achieving targets to ensure that wildlife can continue to live and expand its habitat in such areas. The EEC proposals do not provide enough assurances about that. Now is not the time for an in-depth discussion about the European attitude to many examples of wildlife, but we all know that some of our colleagues over the water have an inclination to shoot anything that moves. It would be sad if that attitude was not dealt with by ensuring that we have the appropriate policy to provide effective habitats and habitat management in Britain and throughout the Community.

I have grave reservations about the wisdom of going too far down the road of an EEC policy on forestry. I

wonder how many years it will be before we or our successors have a debate about reforming the FAP, similar to today's debate about reforming the CAP, because it has got out of hand. We must consider carefully retaining greater national control of a forestry policy. Certainly, we need to have a forestry policy, and we need to take steps to plant in our arable and lowlands which will do a great deal to help farmers to diversify. Whatever I have said, however, I suspect that an EEC policy on forestry will be formulated. If so, we must use it to enhance rather than to replace existing developments.

The Government have already initiated major forestry changes. The selling off of some of the Forestry Commission's plantations was a sensible way forward as it provided for a greater variety of ownership, which in turn has provided greater competition and benefits. The farm woodland scheme has been a trail-blazer for many countries. If the EEC proposal is accepted, I hope that it will be used as a means of enhancing that programme, which has already got off to a good start. That scheme already makes provision for a variety of plant species—a matter touched upon by a number of hon. Members—and shows that the Government have established a policy to provide for hardwoods and softwoods, differing regimes for different types of trees, which is sensible.

I am grateful for the opportunity to stress that we must not allow what looks like a sensible set of proposals to stimulate woodland and forestry to become burdened by the dead hand of regulations, which I fear will follow if we leave it too much to the Commission.

10.59 pm

**Mr. Elliot Morley** (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I am grateful for a chance to speak in the debate. I broadly support the proposal for a forestry action programme and the draft EEC regulations. We need an overall European strategy for forestry, although I have some worries about how it will work in practice.

Some of our policies are nothing to be proud of. I was surprised to hear the Minister say that people from Europe are coming here to look at the result of our policies, because in some ways our forestry policy has allowed some of the worst acts of vandalism by a Government who seem to have a philistine attitude to forestry and the environment. That stems from the way in which tax concessions are given. I accept that the concessions have been around for a long time, but in recent years they have caused trees to be planted in areas that are not suitable for such planting. It would have been cheaper and less damaging to give people packets of money to stop them doing that. In some cases, that has been done as part of the environmentally sensitive areas scheme.

The flow country is one of the last natural wildernesses in Europe and of special scientific interest not only nationally but internationally. Ploughing and planting in it is a real act of vandalism. That has been criticised by such bodies as the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, which have said that the return on investment in the flow country can be as low as 1·25 per cent. They have said that they have some doubts about the national economic benefits of the Government's aid, which is estimated at £10 million in tax concessions and £16 million in grants and services from the Forestry Commission.

Bodies ranging from the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have come out strongly against planting in the flow country. Because of the water table and the fact that the flow country is floating peat bog, even small plantations cause enormous and irredeemable damage to the whole area. It is worth bearing in mind the fact that the flow country has never been afforested. A forestry policy should concentrate on areas that were deforested following the first world war: that would be a more sensible approach.

I was privileged to go to New Zealand with the Select Committee on Agriculture to look at forestry policies there. The New Zealand climate is somewhat better than ours, but New Zealanders are planting trees on far better land than that on which we plant ours. Our policy is to direct planting towards marginal land. If we concentrated more on higher quality land, we would get a better return on the investment.

As recently as 20 January, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave permission for the planting of 1,400 acres in the flow country. Conifers are subject to wind damage and, as I said earlier, the flow country land is of extremely poor quality and unsuitable for trees. I suspect that planting is being carried on more to get tax concessions than for any other reason. Those tax concessions are still being given. Some of the plantings made before 1987 have no national value. Worst of all, I understand that a report calling for the planting of 100,000 acres in the flow country is being considered. If that were done, it would practically devastate this important ecological area.

The European Community proposals lay too much stress on commercial forestry. More attention should be paid to habitat protection. Hon. Members have spoken about that. I hope that the Government will ensure that the Community will assess potential damage from forestry policies by commissioning environmental impact studies. If we are to have a Standing Committee it is important that it is not dominated by commercial forest and that the Government ensure that the Committee has environmental representation. If we move towards tree planting on good quality land, the Government should consider boosting the United Kingdom farm woodland scheme. I concede that that scheme is a progressive step that will tackle surpluses, enhance the countryside and give farmers a constructive return on capital. We should be pressing for greater resources for conservation. As I said in my intervention to the Minister, the proposals are light on the conservation aspects of forestry, and we need to strengthen that. I hope that the Minister will raise this at the Council of environmental Ministers.

The Government should look to their record before saying that they have anything of which to be proud. The policy of planting in the flow country needs to be halted immediately. The Government should listen with more respect to their advisers in the Nature Conservancy Council, who have made it clear that the damage being done to the flow country is irreversible. I hope that, having recognised that they need to pay more attention to their conservation policies, the Government will press for adequate conservation policies in the EEC.

11.5 pm

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) is a distinguished ornithologist who sits, as an elected member, on the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. I am sure that all will have recognised the authority with which he speaks on these matters, and I for one am more than pleased to associate myself with what he said.

When the Under-Secretary opened the debate, I asked him whether it was the Government's view that the common agricultural policy should be extended to forestry, with the result that the Community expected to be self-sufficient in forestry products. I did not have an answer from him, and it may be that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wants to think about its response to this question, but it lies at the heart of the debate. If there is to be a drive towards self-sufficiency, then many of the fears expressed by Opposition Members about the dangers of aggressive over-afforestation may come true. If the Parliamentary Secretary can give us the assurance that his colleague from the Scottish Office was unable to give, we might be a little happier.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said that there was some confusion and lack of direction in Government policy, and I agree. There has been a slow and barely perceptible shift in the thrust of Government policy, and they have sent conflicting messages to the public. I shall give three examples. First, largely in response to Opposition and public pressure, tax concessions on planting, maintenance and harvesting operations were removed in the last Budget. The Opposition welcomeed that, but the Government's transitional arrangements allowed the abuse of our environment—by media stars such as Terry Wogan and Cliff Richard, and by Tory politicians such as Lady Porter —to continue unabated for a further five years, with the planting of 250,000 hectares of land that had been approved before the Budget changes.

Secondly, again in response to pressure from the Oppposition and conservation groups, the Secretary of State for the Environment has ensured that there will be no further coniferous afforestation on the English uplands. Despite many representations, neither the Secretary of State for Scotland nor the Secretary of State for Wales has extended similar protection to the equally vulnerable and arguably more sensitive uplands that are their responsibility. No one can dispute that the moors above Llanbrynmair in Wales and the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland, which has already been referred to, are of great importance. The protection that would be theirs in England has been denied them in Wales and Scotland. That sends a contradictory message to the British public.

Thirdly, all the Government statements, and many of their initiatives, have been supportive of the development of a broadleaf planting programme. The new woodland grant scheme, which replaces the old grant and tax concession scheme, while providing a higher maximum grant for broadleaf, provides a disproportionately greater increase for coniferous afforestation. The arguments are for broadleaf planting, but the money is for coniferous planting.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): What message would the hon. Gentleman give to those who are employed at the new mill at Irvine, where there are 480 jobs? The mill requires 200,000 tonnes of timber annually, and mainly coniferous. I believe that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) mentioned during the consideration of the Water Bill in Committee that there is a pulp mill in his constituency where 150 are employed. The mills need vast quantities of coniferous timber. What is the message that the hon. Gentleman is sending to the employees in these mills and in others?

**Mr. Davies:** The Opposition would send out the message that we must have a viable timber industry, and that the industry must take into account the real needs of the economy and the environment, as well as its own needs. I find it difficult to answer such questions when we have been arguing the case for employment and employment protection during a period when the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and his colleagues have supported a Government who have been deliberately and blatantly stripping away employment prospects for those whom I represent, as well as for the constituents of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I do not want to go down that track, however, as time does not allow me to do so.

We generally welcome the Commission's proposals and we shall not be dividing the House. I am sure that the Minister and the Government Chief Whip will be glad to know that. We have reservations, however, about detail. We would argue for greater emphasis to be placed on broadleaf planting on existing farmland in Atlantic Europe. Areas to be planted should be subject to the most stringent environmental assessment. We would thus support the controls that are operated by the Government in their administration of the farm woodland scheme to discourage planting on unimproved pasture or old improved pasture which has reacquired features of ecological value. We believe that there should be an environmental impact assessment for all new afforestation, including that of the Forestry Commission, which is currently excluded, for schemes of not only 100 hectares or more, as proposed by the Commission, but for all schemes of new planting.

The drive for self-sufficiency in various elements of the common agricultural policy should not become paramount in forestry policy within the Community. We should all understand the capacity of coniferous monoculture to inflict lasting damage on landscape and fragile ecosystems. Increasingly, forestry policy must be about objectives in addition to timber production. We are disappointed, therefore, that the forestry action programme does not contain proposals for the protection and nurturing of existing semi-natural woodland. That is an omission that it shares with the Government's farm woodland scheme.

Proposal A to amend regulation 797/85 should therefore be amended further. Proposal B envisages "operational forestry programmes" that are drawn up in conjunction with regional and local authorities in the context of an integrated development plan, including conservation and environmental protection. We welcome this provision, as it introduces an element of accountability and planning, and extends concern for environmental protection.

For too long, the United Kingdom's forestry policy has been determined by narrow investment decisions based on land values and opportunities for tax breaks. This has led to much of the approbrium that has attached to forestry as a destroyer of the environment. Much of the softwood

timber production has been expensive, of poor quality and not likely to meet Britain's long-term timber requirements. We are aware of the conclusion that was drawn by the Public Accounts Committee when it examined Britain's forestry policy.

We hope that we shall see the development of a more down-the-hill, hardwood-based, environmentally friendly multi-purpose industry that is more suited to Britain's needs. We hope also that the obsessive secrecy that surrounds the work of the regional advisory committees and the programmes of enforced sell-offs by the Forestry Commission can be swept away. Perhaps Brussels's bureaucrats can secure our right to public information where the House of Commons has failed.

Proposal E refers specifically to the protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution. We believe that the Forestry Commission and the Government have been complacent in their assessment of the impact of atmospheric pollution on the health of British trees. In a recent survey on the health of trees in southern England, which was warmly praised for the objectivity of its techniques by the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside in the House of Lords, the Earl of Caithness, Greenpeace disclosed that 74 per cent. of yews, 52 per cent. of oaks and 39 per cent. of beeches in the study area had been damaged by pollution. However, an absurd claim, which has since been discredited by independent sources, was made in a Forestry Commission press release, that trees actually benefit from

"high levels of certain pollutants."

That is taking the complacency to which I referred earlier a little too far even for me.

**Mr. Boswell:** Does the hon. Gentleman recall that that reference appeared in the Forestry Commission's annual report and was qualified by a measure of surprise that that apparently perverse result came through? The hon. Gentleman should not draw the easy inference that in some way the Forestry Commission was loading the facts to suit its case.

**Mr. Davies:** I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because I know that he follows these debates closely and he has been present for most of the evening without being called. However, that does not prevent me from drawing his attention to the report from the Select Committee on the Environment in 1987-88, which examined the point to which he referred. In its summary, recommendation 3 states:

"We note that the Forestry Commission stands alone in its refusal to accept a nexus between air pollution and tree damage. The health of Britain's trees gives us cause for concern and while research must continue apace, the maximum efforts must be made now to eliminate the emissions from fossil fuel combustion into the atmosphere."

I hope that the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) will read that report in full and he will then accept what I am saying.

Greater attention and more research must be directed at the complex interreaction between atmospheric pollution, coniferous afforestation and acidification of ground water. The destruction of aquatic life in many of Scotland's now dead lochs, and certainly the acidification of Llyn Brianne in mid-Wales and its associated catchment and river systems has been clearly identified with dry deposition encouraged by extensive coniferous forests. The Welsh water authority's declaration of forestry no-go areas is therefore understandable and welcome. Where one public body is in open conflict with another carrying a similar major responsibility, a major responsibility must ultimately rest with the politicians who are responsible.

Another area about which I want to express our concern for the record involves access. It is our contention that, where large sums of public money are invested—largely, we should not forget, for private profit—there should be an assumption in favour of open public access. That should certainly apply to Forestry Commission land and plantations, and it should also extend to grant-aided private forests. While I can see that there are cases in which public access would be inappropriate, I hope that the Minister will consider access in any of the schemes which might result from the documents that we are discussing tonight.

So far, I have discussed principally our domestic forestry policy. We all now realise that we share Planet Earth, let alone that part of western Europe that we personally inhabit. I want to put on record our belief that there is a great diversity of forestry and woodland in the European Community, and our assertion that different programmes and support must be developed for different forestry and woodland systems. Southern non-timber producing forests and traditional timber producing forests are often under intense pressure for intensification or improvement. There is little Community support for maintenance of existing viable and sustainable traditional forestry systems and that is a defect that we look to the forthcoming discussions to correct.

Tonight, we take a cautious approach. I suggest to the Minister that, if he presses for the safeguards we suggest —particularly those proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe—and if he proposes environmental representation on the forestry Standing Committee, and recognises the broader implications of forestry policy by ensuring that the FAP is considered by the Council of Environment Ministers before final decisions are taken, then any administrative or policy changes following from the programme are likely to receive a warmer welcome than we give the document that is before the House.

11.19 pm

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder):** That forestry is now being seen as having a positive role to play in Community affairs is something that I welcome, although, as with all Community proposals, we must be satisfied that they are sensible and cost-effective—as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) stressed so effectively.

Conditions in much of the Community—particularly so in the United Kingdom—are well-suited to the growing of a wide variety of trees. Nevertheless, the Community as a whole has to import half its timber requirements. In the United Kingdom, that figure is some 90 per cent., at a cost of £6·5 billion in 1988. The signs are that the internal consumption of timber throughout the Community is likely to increase between now and the end of the century with some experts putting the growth as high as 30 per cent. Even with the increasing output that may be expected from existing forests, it will not be enough to cope with the demand. It is all the more understandable that the Community is taking an increasing interest in the development of forestry in member states.

*[Mr. Richard Ryder]*

That is not to say, as the European Commission acknowledges that there should be one common forestry policy for the Community. Conditions are so diverse among member states that each should be left to tailor its requirements to its own individual circumstances. However, in an overall strategy, and in some detailed prescriptions, there is a great deal of common ground.

The Government fully support forestry in this country. I make that statement without qualification and in answer to doubts expressed by some Members in the debate. Certainly we have removed tax reliefs for forestry, but we fully compensated by substantially increasing the rates of grant available to planters. All the signs are that a vigorous and innovative industry is adjusting rapidly to the new situation.

I can tell the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that the FAP is not aimed at achieving self-sufficiency, but is designed only to reduce dependence on imports in future, when demand for timber and timber products is expected to increase.

The new situation is of immense importance to the Government. We have also extended the scope and purpose of forestry by introducing the farm woodland scheme, with the aim of taking land out of agricultural use and forging a new link between farming and forestry. That scheme has got off to an encouraging start. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State released figures on the initial take-up in a written answer on 16 February.

We look forward to a significant expansion of forestry in this country, borne on Government encouragement and support and the assurance of good markets for timber. The timber-using industry is effective, constrained only by the amount of timber that our forests can supply. The forestry industry now provides more than 40,000 jobs, and that figure could rise to 70,000 by the end of the century. Similarly, forestry could play a much greater role in many other parts of the Community. We have been asked to look at forestry on a Community basis and we must do so bearing in mind United Kingdom interests and the fact that, on many aspects of forestry, we are well placed to lead by example.

Let me make clear again that the measures put forward under the forestry action programme do not constitute a common forestry policy. They are simply an acknowledgement of the role that forestry may have to play in other Community policies—for example, as an alternative to the production of agricultural surpluses. On that front, the United Kingdom is showing the way—as the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) acknowledged —with the introduction last year, for example, of the farm woodland scheme. I also want to associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Caerphilly about his hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe.

The action programme is also designed to help certain areas that are perhaps suffering economically or socially as a result of the changing agricultural scene. That is of course consistent with the general aims of Community structural policy.

However, while we can support the broad aims of the package, we wish to ensure in our negotiations in Brussels that policies are properly targeted; that they achieve value for money and are properly monitored. Bearing in mind also the fact that the United Kingdom will contribute to the cost of the funding, we shall be anxious to look at the various ways in which United Kingdom forestry can benefit.

It has been of great benefit to the Government to hear hon. Members' views tonight. As I expected, comments have not been confined strictly to the action programme itself but have ranged over wider issues , some of which I should like to touch on in the short time remaining.

It is clear from many of the remarks made by, for example, the hon. Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that the environmental effects of forestry are uppermost in hon. Members' minds. The forestry schemes of today, however, are far removed from those of even the comparatively recent past. Major efforts have been made in recent years by forestry—and rightly so—to respond to changing perceptions of environmental matters. The introduction of the woodland grant scheme last year gave the opportunity to set even higher standards to ensure that forestry develops in harmony with other land uses and the environment. I have seen some of the Forestry Commission's efforts at Kielder, where I held long discussions with its chairman.

I fully accept that the industry is having to make some hard readjustment as a result of the tax changes to which many hon. Members have referred. It is too early to say what effects that will have on planting levels, but I can assure hon. Members that we will be keeping a close watch on developments, and we remain firm in our commitment to an expansion of forestry in Britain, in an environmentally acceptable way.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** We congratulate the Government on their cautious move towards environmental protection. If they accept that cause, however, how on earth can they justify their recent approval of the afforestation of over 1,000 hectares of a site of special scientific interest in the flow country?

**Mr. Ryder:** I hope to come to the flow country in two minutes' time, but before I get there I should like to talk about planting in the uplands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) asked about possible locations for planting, a question also raised by the hon. Member for Caerphilly. Restrictions have been placed on the planting of conifers in the English hills because of the relatively small amount of unimproved land in those areas. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have concluded that it is unnecessary to impose similar restrictions on the planting of conifers on the Scottish and Welsh uplands. There is no ulterior motive; it is simply a reflection of the fact that a far greater proportion of Scotland and Wales consists of uplands, where there is room for further conifer afforestation, provided that it takes place in ways compatible with the environment. The consultation procedures operated by the Forestry Commission will ensure that adequate account is taken of environmental needs.

In line with the Government's broadleaved woodland policy, alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central, we have seen a marked increase in broadleaf planting in recent years. In England, for example, the total area of broadleaf planting and restocking has risen by over 130 per cent. in three years to

some 3,300 hectares in the year ended 31 March 1988. Hon. Members may be interested to learn that 65 per cent. of all new planting carried out or grant-aided by the Forestry Commission in England in the year ended 31 March 1988 was of broadleaved trees, compared with 38 per cent. in the year ended 31 March 1985.

I promised the hon. Member for Caerphilly that I would deal—rather sooner than I had anticipated—with the question of the flow country, also raised by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North. Scottish Ministers have looked exhaustively at the problems raised by the clash of interests between forestry and conservation in Caithness and Sutherland, and have come to the view that there must be room for both in such a vast area.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland asked the Highland regional council to set up a working party to identify a land use strategy for his consideration. The working party has achieved considerable success by producing a report that has the support of all its members, including the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council. The Highland regional council has endorsed the report, which is now with my right hon. and learned Friend. I know that he intends to reach early decisions to bring to an end the unfortunate hiatus in land use planning in the area.

I had hoped to deal with many more of the points raised in this excellent—and infrequent—debate on forestry. I shall, of course, write to all those hon. Members who have asked questions that I have been unable to tackle during my concluding remarks.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8415/88 on forestry; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that action in this field takes full account of United Kingdom interests.

## SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

*Ordered,*

That, in the course of its consideration of the matter of Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday, 20th March at half-past Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

## Housing Benefit

*Motion made and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

11.29 pm

**Mr. Simon Burns** (Chelmsford): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the issue of housing benefit paid to tenants of private rented accommodation and to thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security for all the help that he has given me in this complex and unsatisfactory problem.

I should draw attention to the fact that, somewhat confusingly, my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Barrett are also constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), whom I have kept informed of the problems with which they have had to contend.

Mr. and Mrs. Barrett own a property in my constituency —20 Upper Bridge road, Chelmsford—which, until fairly recently, they rented out independently to two tenants. Both tenants were in receipt of housing benefit. Tenant A moved into the property in March 1984. The first problem arose with tenant A in December 1985 when he failed to pay his rent, claiming that the borough council had not paid him his housing benefit. That statement was utterly untrue, as was shown by a letter that tenant A wrote to the Barretts on 26 January 1986, when he said that he was short of cash and that he had borrowed a few pounds from his housing benefit, which he had intended to make up, but that he had spent it on drinking and smoking too much. He still owes the Barretts £7 from that unhappy incident.

The Barretts wrote to the council about that incident, which should have alerted the council to the fact that the tenant was not totally honest in his statements and it f cd12should have borne that in mind when further problems arose in January 1987. During 1986 Mr. Barrett wrote to Chelmsford borough council three times concerning payment of rates.

The real problems began for the Barretts in July 1987. On 17 September 1987, Mr. Barrett informed Chelmsford borough council that tenant A had ceased to pay rent from 13 July 1987 although housing benefit had been paid to the tenant by the borough council. That was confirmed by Chelmsford borough council on 24 September. At the same time, tenant A had come into conflict with the landlord. Mr. Barrett wanted him and tenant B evicted because they were not ideal tenants, due to the fact that dogs were kept on the premises contrary to the agreement and motorcycles were kept in the garden, and there were other problems.

On 25 January 1988, Mr. Barrett wrote to Chelmsford borough council asking it to confirm that tenant A was still in receipt of housing benefit and asking if it would be possible for housing benefit payments to be held over until the current legal proceedings were settled, as Mr. Barrett wisely observed that the arrears in rent were now going back six months and tenant A must be getting himself into financial difficulties.

Rather surprisingly, Chelmsford borough council never replied to Mr. Barrett's letter. However, the council did withhold the tenant's next benefit cheque pending an investigation. The tenant provided a signed statement informing the director of finance that he was in dispute with his landlord and that it was subject to legal action. The statement also informed the director that, on

*[Mr. Simon Burns]*

solicitors' advice, the tenant was placing the rent into a savings account. In view of this information, the borough council decided to release the benefit cheque held and continue future payments to the tenant.

On 8 February 1988, Chelmsford borough council was advised that tenant B was also withholding rent. By July 1988, a county court judgment had found against tenant A and neither tenant remained at 20 Upper Bridge road. However, tenant A owed the Barretts £1,027·55 and tenant B owed the landlords £461·21 in back rent, for which they had both received housing benefit. Both ex-tenants were long-term unemployed and did not have the money to pay the Barretts. To add insult to injury, tenant A wrote to the county court on 15 July 1988 to say that he could not pay the money owed by 27 July when it was required as he did not have the money and his sole income was £33·40 per week income support. The likelihood of the Barretts ever receiving any of the money owed to them is slim.

This case raises some important issues about Chelmsford borough council's actions, and the seeming lack of rules of accountability laid down by the Government for the payment of housing benefit. First, I find it odd that Chelmsford borough council never replied directly to the Barretts' letter of 25 January 1988 informing it that tenant A had not been paying rent for which he had been receiving housing benefit for the previous six months.

Secondly, I cannot understand why the council was prepared merely to accept tenant A's word that the money was being paid into a savings account. I am surprised that the council did not ask for proof that such an account existed, and did not ask at regular intervals for further proof that it existed and contained the relevant amount of money. I accept and understand that a person can abuse the system and still show proof that an account exists, but regular checks would have shown that the housing benefit which had been paid was not in the account.

Thirdly, I do not understand why the borough council did not seek more information from the Barretts about their side of the story before so readily bringing housing benefit back into payment early in 1988. I also find that odd in view of the incident in December 1985, when it was shown beyond doubt that tenant A had lied to the Barretts in saying that he could not pay his rent that month because the borough council had not paid the housing benefit cheque, when clearly it had.

Alternatively, although, in the summer of 1987, the council would not have been able to pay the housing benefit direct to Mr. and Mrs. Barrett without the tenants' consent until the rent was 13 weeks in arrears, I am surprised that the Barretts were not made aware of that rule so that they could have applied once the 13 weeks were up. Even if it was unsuccessful, such an application would have provided an opportunity for a more thorough look at the problem and at the background to the dispute with tenant A. In any case, it transpired that the dispute was not genuine, because the county court found in the Barretts' favour.

Looking at this problem from both the borough council's and Government's point of view, I accept that one must be careful that housing benefit arrangements do not prevent tenants from withholding rent if they have good reason to do so and genuine reasons for being in dispute with their landlords. Nevertheless, I believe that there is something wrong with the rules that have penalised my constituents. Why do not the Government lay down stricter rules to check up on the sums of housing benefit paid out to those in receipt of it when problems arise?

In this case, two tenants have spent £1,600 of housing benefit on anything but the purpose for which it was designed. The Government must be concerned about that. Surely something must be done to prevent that from happening in the future. What help can be given to the Barretts? It is all very well to suggest that they go to court to recover money that they should have been paid between 1987 and 1988, but if the amount from tenant A was fixed at £5 per month—not an unrealistic amount, considering that he was on income support—it would take 17 years to pay back the money owed to the Barretts, not to mention the lost interest, the inconvenience and the abuse that caused the problem.

I fear that the losers in this case are the Barretts and the taxpayer. That is unfair. Taxpayers' money has been spent to pay rent on a house, but none of the money was used to pay the rent—it was just frittered away. That is a gross abuse of public funds. The Barretts should be recompensed because they are the innocent victims of a problem about which they warned the relevant authority at the time. Even though they warned the authority in good time, nothing seems to have been done to rectify the matter. It seems almost as though the scales were weighted against them and that their pleas for help were ignored. Certainly, not enough was done diligently enough to put an early stop to the problem.

The system was clearly at fault, and I do not see why the Barretts should be penalised. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to help the Barretts and reassure me that, as a result of this case and the Government's consideration of housing benefit during the past year, new measures will be taken, or have already been taken, to prevent such abuses from occurring in the future at the expense of individual private landlords and the taxpayer.

11.40 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on securing this debate. I listened with care to his excellent, closely argued speech and share his concern that the social security system should not operate in such a way as to allow tenants to evade their obligations to their landlords at the expense of the taxpayer. This is an important issue concerning a group of people—landlords—whose interests in the social security system we do not often have a chance to examine in the House. I am glad of this opportunity to do so.

The Government have done a great deal to ensure that local authorities have adequate powers to prevent abuse of the housing benefit scheme. The new regulations that we introduced last April contained several new measures, but before describing them it may be helpful if I began by outlining the background to this case and the action taken by the local authority. Then I shall be better able to explain how the new regulations would have helped, because—properly applied—they should ensure that an identical case cannot arise again.

In 1987, when my hon. Friend's constituents' problem first arose, the housing benefit regulations already gave local authorities certain powers to take action against

housing benefit claimants who failed to pay their rent. If the rent arrears amounted to 13 weeks' rent, the local authority had discretion either to pay the housing benefit direct to the landlord, or to withhold payment of benefit altogether.

As my hon. Friend said, the main events of this unhappy saga date from 17 September 1987. On that day Mr. and Mrs. Barrett wrote to Chelmsford borough council about the problems they were having with tenant A's non-payment of rent. At that time tenant A had not paid his rent since 13 July 1987, and Mr. and Mrs. Barrett asked the local authority to confirm that he was still receiving housing benefit.

A prompt reply was sent from the finance director of Chelmsford borough council on 24 September confirming that housing benefit continued to be paid, and inviting the Barretts to contact him should they have any further queries. But that letter failed to explain that, if the rent was still not being paid on 12 October, the local authority would then be able to pay housing benefit direct to the Barrett's instead of to the tenant. Clearly that would have been a great help to the Barrett's and, like my hon. Friend, I cannot imagine why the finance director did not mention it.

In the meantime the rent was still not being paid, and on 25 January 1988 the Barretts wrote to Chelmsford borough council again asking whether the housing benefit was still being paid, and pointing out that they had still received no rent. Rather belatedly perhaps, the local authority decided to act, and it suspended payment of housing benefit while it made further inquiries. The tenant gave the council a statement. It alleged that he had been in dispute with the Barretts for two years and that legal action was being taken. According to the tenant, the Barretts has stopped collecting the rent. He said that they told him to put the rent and rent book in the letter box of the property next door, which they also owned. But he had not complied with this request as he did not believe that it was a secure method of payment. His rent would be paid into his savings account instead.

I share my hon. Friend's amazement that the council did not reply to the Barrett's letter, giving them the opportunity to comment. Instead, the local authority simply put housing benefit back into payment, relying on the tenant's uncorroborated assurances. I am afraid the Barretts have not seen any rent since, even though housing benefit continued to be paid to their tenant until 5 August 1988, when he moved out.

I do not wish to be unfair to the local authority, and it is, of course, easy for us to see, with hindsight, how the Barretts' difficulties might have been so easily avoided. But I remain astonished that Chelmsford borough council, having at one stage accepted that there was a need to suspend payment, simply continued paying housing benefit right up to the tenant's departure, without giving the Barretts any further opportunity to give their version of events or to ask for benefit to be paid directly to them. They may still not have been able to recover their arrears in full, but their loss would have at least have been a little less.

I mentioned at the start the new regulations that the Government introduced in April last year. They provide for tougher rules on direct payments and give landlords in the position of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett much stronger protection. Local authorities are now required either to pay housing benefit direct to landlords or to withhold payment altogether as soon as rent arrears amounted to eight weeks or more. That contrasts with the previous discretionary power to pay direct when the arrears amounted to 13 weeks or more, or to withhold payment. In the Barrett's case this means that payment would have had to be made direct to them when they first wrote to Chelmsford borough council on 17 September 1987, as their tenant was by then already eight weeks in arrears.

Alternatively, if the local authority had considered that it was not in the tenant's overriding interest for his benefit to be paid to the Barretts, it would have had to withhold payment until satisfied that it could pay direct, or that the tenant had already discharged his liability, or would do so once he received his benefit. As it was, the local authority failed to advise the Barretts that direct payment, under the old rules, could have been considered from 12 October 1987.

But what of events after April last year, when the new rules came in? I do not think that it would be unreasonable to expect someone in Chelmsford borough council with knowledge of the case to have looked at it in April 1988, in the light of the new direct payment rules, and to have inquired whether the rent was still not being paid. Action could then have been taken to ensure that the flow of public money to the tenant was redirected to its proper destination.

My Department has overall responsibility for the scope and structure of the housing benefit scheme, but, as my hon. Friend knows, Parliament has given individual local authorities full statutory responsibility for its day-to-day administration. Local authorities have other powers, as well as the duty I have already described, to pay housing benefit direct to the landlord or to withhold it altogether, if the tenant has arrears amounting to eight weeks' rent. They must pay the landlord direct or withhold the benefit if the claimant's social security local office is paying some of his income support direct to the landlord to pay off rent arrears. The local authority may pay the housing benefit direct to the landlord if the tenant has requested or agreed to this.

Local authorities may also pay the landlord if this would be in the interest of the claimant and his family, or if the tenant has moved out of the property, leaving arrears before the housing benefit is awarded. As well as having the power to withhold housing benefit, rather than pay it direct to the landlord, in any of these cases, where direct payment would not be in the interest of the claimant or his family, there is one situation where the local authority may withhold benefit but not pay direct. That is where the authority is satisfied that the claimant is not paying his rent regularly, regardless of the amount of arrears actually owed.

There are also powers for deductions to be made from a claimant's income support, which can then be paid direct to landlords towards a tenant's rent arrears. The Barretts' tenant was on supplementary benefit and income support throughout the relevant period. If the local office had known about the arrears in time, deductions could have been made.

Unfortunately, the Barretts did not know about their rights in this respect, and it was not until my hon. Friend first raised the possibility on 20 December 1988 that the local office considered making deductions. As I have explained, the tenant had by then already moved on. But under the regulations, deductions are possible only in respect of a debt owed to a current landlord.

*[Mr. Peter Lloyd]*

The rules on direct payments represent a delicate balance. As my hon. Friend said, we have to strive to ensure that opportunities for abusing the system, whether for claimants or for landlords, are as few as possible. Unfortunately, rules which are designed to prevent abuse by one group may facilitate abuse by another. The Government recognise that the reasonable interests of private landlords are important, but so is the need to encourage those who are dependent on social security benefits to take on more responsibility for managing their affairs.

In addition, some tenants may have good reasons for wanting to withhold their rent. It was, I suppose, possible that Chelmsford borough council sincerely believed that the Barretts' tenant was justified in withholding his rent. If it did, the proper course would have been for it to continue withholding his benefit.

Again, we have to be careful that our rules do not prejudice the interests of tenants in that position. That, together with the risks of abuse by some landlords, is why we do not allow housing benefit to be paid directly to landlords automatically, as some hon. Members often suggest.

Finally, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising his concern about landlords, as illustrated by the case of his constituents, about which he feels strongly. We believe that local authorities do now have sufficient powers to control this sort of abuse, but as this case shows, sadly they do not always use them in such a way as to achieve a fair outcome for all.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Twelve o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 28 February 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Trafford (Secondary Education)

1. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning secondary education in the borough of Trafford.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher):** My right hon. Friend has received 19 letters in support of the Trafford local education authority's proposals to reorganise secondary education, 270 statutory objections and 96 non-statutory objections. He has also had requests from two hon. Members for meetings to discuss the proposals, and a similar request from Trafford LEA.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The Minister may be aware that the borough of Trafford intends to maintain selective education. Is he aware that in Trafford's primary schools, while some 20 per cent. of those schools have a pass rate of more than half the pupils, about 40 per cent. get under a fifth of their pupils into the grammar schools, including 11 of the 13 schools in my constituency, which is the poorest part of the borough? Can he tell me whether he really believes that selection in Trafford is a measure of educational ability or possibility, or whether it is simply a very good measure of social class and address?

**Mr. Butcher:** No, Sir, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's contention. If he looks at various reports he will find quite spectacular differences in academic performance between schools in the same socio-economic grouping. I happen to believe very strongly that selective schools have a major benefit in that in the main they produce a good social mix which is based on the grounds of ability alone.

If the hon. Gentleman would like to discuss what I agree is an interesting if somewhat disconcerting phenomenon, I shall be pleased to do so either in conjunction with a delegation from Trafford or in a conversation with the hon. Gentleman.

### Further Education Colleges

2. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider introducing legislation to allow colleges of further education to opt out of local authority control.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson):** My right hon. Friend has no current plans to do so.

**Mr. Franks:** Does my hon. Friend agree that many colleges of further education, particularly in large rural areas such as Cumbria, would be far better off if they could to opt out of local authority control? In view of the Government's commitment to devolve responsibility from local authorities to schools, parents and teachers, will he consider a review of policy for the future to give far greater independence to colleges of further education?

**Mr. Jackson:** I direct my hon. Friend's attention to a speech made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the other day to the Association of Colleges for Further and Higher Education, outlining a very wide-ranging set of proposals for the improvement of the supply of further education. Under the Education Reform Act colleges will shortly be gaining new powers and a great deal of autonomy from the LEAs. They will also have the opportunity to obtain corporate status, and we hope that they will take that opportunity, but the LEAs will continue to have an important planning and funding role. We believe that it is best to wait and see how they perform that role before considering any further changes in the structure and organisation of further education.

**Mr. Rowe:** I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply, but I hope that he is aware that in colleges of further education such as mid-Kent college, of which I am a governor, the range of courses undertaken is of such diversity that they face very serious problems in knowing which direction to take, whether to move closer to higher education or to concentrate more on providing technical education. I believe that a degree of autonomy such as my hon. Friend has suggested would assist in that direction.

**Mr. Jackson:** As my hon. Friend says, mid-Kent college has a great deal of autonomy under the Education Reform Act, which offers a great opportunity to colleges of further education for the exercise of autonomy in determining their future. It is also a great challenge for business, because business will have a key role to play in supplying the governing bodies for the new colleges.

### New Teachers

3. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many new teachers were recruited in 1988 with experience in non-teaching professions; and what plans he has to encourage recruitment of other skilled mature entrants to the teaching profession.

**The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker):** Thirty per cent. of new student teachers training in 1988 were aged 26 or over. We have a campaign to boost the number of older people from industry and business who want to switch to teaching. The licensed teacher route will directly help such people.

**Mr. Evans:** Will my right hon. Friend congratulate Welwyn Hatfield in Hertfordshire on its lead in that matter, and make sure that such a policy is followed elsewhere so that specialist teacher posts can be filled in part by students?

**Mr. Baker:** I have no hesitation in endorsing my hon. Friend's comments. The Hertfordshire scheme for recruiting mature entrants has been successful. In the past two years there have been 53 appointments of mature people with a variety of experience and I hope that the scheme will pave the way for other local education authorities to follow suit. The introduction of our licensed teacher scheme later this year will greatly help that process.

**Mr. Beggs:** Does the Secretary of State agree that, considerable progress has been made in increasing the number of graduates with teacher training entering the teaching profession, which should not be diluted? Does he further agree that mature students with experience in commerce and industry have skills which will complement the expertise already in schools? What arrangements will he make for those entering teacher training without any direct class contact?

**Mr. Baker:** There are two schemes. One is for mature entrants in their twenties and thirties who have not had teacher training but who wish to change their career. From September this year, they can be taken on as teachers in schools. The head teacher and the local education authority will be responsible for their training for two years, principally on the job, with some day release to colleges. That will be widely welcomed in the education service.

**Mr. Patrick Thompson:** When dealing with mature entrants, will my right hon. Friend consider the continuing shortage, often expressed by head teachers and others, of teachers of physics, chemistry and other specialist subjects, and do what he can to deal with that problem at the same time?

**Mr. Baker:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I recognise that that is a problem. There are various schemes to meet those teacher shortages. For example, the bursary scheme makes available a grant of £1,300 for the one-year training course. I have extended that scheme in financial terms and to include people who want to train as chemistry teachers from September this year.

**Mr. Vaz:** The Secretary of State may like to know that last week I conducted a survey of schools in my constituency which revealed an appalling recruitment record. One headmaster stated that he had left to become a double glazing salesperson, and one class had had 12 different teachers in the past year. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the crisis of confidence in our education system is directly related to the Government's policies? When does he intend to allocate more cash to improve prospects for teachers?

**Mr. Baker:** The hon. Gentleman should know that last Friday I visited one large successful comprehensive school and one small primary school in Leicestershire. I specifically asked the head teachers of both schools whether they had any vacancies or recruitment problems and their answer to both questions was no.

**Mr. Favell:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that one question that should be asked of entrants is whether they are prepared to help with team sports? Did he hear Roger Uttley on the "Today" programme this morning saying that there was an enormous shortage of pupils leaving school prepared to play rugby football? Does he agree that team sports are an essential part of education for everyone, but that there has been a decline in the past 10 or 20 years?

**Mr. Baker:** I understand that rugby football is enjoying a boom at the moment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not in Wales."] Wales will have to do better next term.

Education is not simply a matter of training either children's minds or their bodies, and time will be devoted to physical education as part of the national curriculum.

**Mr. Straw:** When does the Secretary of State expect the teacher shortage crisis to be solved?

**Mr. Baker:** The hon. Gentleman knows that we have a range of proposals in place. Last year there was an increase of 1,000 in those wishing to enter teacher training, making an increase of some 3,000 over 1986. The hon. Gentleman is always accusing me of increasing my Department's publicity budget, but the largest increase has been on programmes to recruit teachers.

## Schools (Opting Out)

**Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to whether the resources of any local education authority have been used to support campaigns *(a)* for or *(b)* against opting-out proposals for secondary schools in the maintained sector.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** Any local authority is free to make its views known about a proposal that a school in its area should become grant-maintained. I expect all authorities to ensure that they act fairly and responsibly and that any costs represent a proper use of public funds.

**Mr. French:** Will my right hon. Friend make sure that any decision either for or against opting out is based on the result of a free and fair ballot? Will he, in particular, make it clear to parents that they have the right to demand a ballot, irrespective of the views of LEA officials or recalcitrant governors?

**Mr. Baker:** I agree with my hon. Friend. There has been a great deal of misrepresentation in some of the ballots that have taken place so far, which I deplore.

**Ms. Armstrong:** What about your propaganda?

**Mr. Baker:** The stuff that we put out is absolutely correct and absolutely fair. We put forward the advantages of the opportunity. What the Opposition do not like is the extension of parental choice which grant-maintained status provides. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall make it clear to parents that they have that right as well as governing bodies. The right is being exercised on a growing scale. I noticed yesterday that three schools voted to opt out.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** I am not sure what the Minister's photograph has to do with objectivity, but that is one of the things that is sent round. Why has the Department's propaganda expenditure risen by 3,000 per cent. since he became Secretary of State?

**Mr. Baker:** I have already mentioned one of the large increases. The other large increase in my publicity spending is on informing parents, governors and teachers about the effect of the Education Reform Act 1988. The hon. Gentleman talks about advertising. I have here a

minute from Derbyshire county council—his own county—saying that it is agreeing to a contribution of £350 to enable teachers in the Chesterfield school wishing to oppose GMS to produce leaflets and letters to parents. That is money being used by a particular education authority on just one side of the argument.

**Mr. Pawsey:** Does my right hon. Friend believe that the circular letter that he recently sent to local education authorities stressing the right of parents and governors to opt out will be observed by local education authorities and that it will stop some of the unacceptable practices now going on? Does he also agree that it might reduce the amount of black propaganda circulating recently in some of our schools about the situation?

**Mr. Baker:** I hope that it will. I am sure that the great bulk of local education authorities will observe the advice that I have given in that letter. One of the most offensive devices was for LEAs to threaten to take governors to court, with the threat of huge legal bills. I have made it clear that if governors act in good faith and are taken to court the LEAs will have to pay the legal fees incurred.

**Mr. Straw:** What has the Secretary of State to say to those who regard the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust, with a Conservative Member of Parliament as chairman and a Conservative councillor as director, as a Conservative front organisation?

**Mr. Baker:** The Grant-Maintained Schools Trust and its promotional activities are funded entirely by private money, and that is how it should be. I know that the hon. Gentleman has been attacking grant-maintained schools for a very long time and will continue to do so. What I find extraordinary is that he should write articles in *The Times*, the very crown of Mr. Murdoch's empire, extolling consumerism and how Socialism must relate to consumerism, but when it comes to listening to parents as consumers he is against it.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** Given that 16 out of the 27 schools which have balloted to opt out are schools facing either closure or merger, and that the reason why local education authorities campaign is sometimes that they are afraid that the Secretary of State does not take into account the strategic planning of education in their area, how much weight does he give to the effect of other educational provisions on decisions to opt out when he makes his decision whether to approve a ballot?

**Mr. Baker:** I have to take many factors into consideration. I have to discuss the viability of the school and consider whether it is strong enough to survive. I take into account the degree of support that is expressed in a ballot. After the events in Yorkshire last week, I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman has gone off balloting. However, his figures are wrong, because 30 schools have voted to opt out, 11 have said no, another decision is pending, and about another 20 schools are going through the process.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that knowledge is power, and that if parents are to have sufficient information about either the virtues or the disadvantages of opting out, increased publicity is necessary? Does my right hon. Friend not find it strange that the Labour party believes in parent power except when parents are able to express it through the ballot box?

**Mr. Baker:** I agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that the ballots and the campaigns surrounding them are conducted on a level playing field, and in a way which ensures that the arguments on both sides are put fairly. Obviously one is concerned when, in particular cases, public money is used.

## Science (Women Teachers)

5. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to encourage more women to go into science teaching.

**The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold):** We are very keen to encourage more men and women into science teaching. We have made available £6·5 million to higher education for specially designed courses to increase the supply of teachers in shortage subjects, including physics and design and technology. Some of those courses are specially designed to include part-time study and distance learning, with women graduates returning to teaching after starting a family in mind.

**Ms. Quin:** In view of the shortages and predicted shortages in science teaching, will the Department regard it as a matter of urgency to encourage more women to enter the profession? Can the Minister give details of how many new access courses will be created and when they will come into effect?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, we are encouraging mature students from other careers who are seeking a career change to teaching. We are also attacking the hidden shortages with in-service training for the conversion and updating of under-qualified teachers. Open learning materials commissioned from the BBC and the Open University will also be used to mitigate the problems of supply cover. We are collaborating with a group of independent television companies to produce science videos for updating and improving the teaching skills of science teachers. All those efforts can be targeted at helping returners to teaching—including women wishing to return to the profession after having families—to update their skills. According to information to be published later this week by the National Foundation for Educational Research, girls are doing better than boys in science learning in United Kingdom schools. That is very encouraging.

**Mr. Bowis:** Does my hon. Friend agree that one way of attracting more women and men into science teaching is to encourage more part-time teachers, so that scientists working in industry and elsewhere can give the benefit of their knowledge to our schoolchildren? Incidentally, the science that they teach may be even more up-to-date.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The new licensed teacher route is geared directly to such entrants, and we look forward to enjoying the results of that scheme when it is introduced.

## Nursery Education

6. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase support for nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The number and proportion of three and four-year-olds in schools have grown steadily over the period of the present Government. Our plans for expenditure on under-fives education in 1989-90 are, at £536 million, 10 per cent. higher in real terms than those for 1988-89, thus allowing that healthy trend to continue.

**Mr. Griffiths:** The Secretary of State may recall that one of his predecessors, who has since moved to higher things—to a position that the right hon. Gentleman himself perhaps coverts—predicted in 1971 that by 1981 there would be 700,000 places in nursery education. The Government have been in power for a decade now, but they are still 200,000 places short of that target. Why have they failed to achieve it, and why do Labour local authorities provide most places and Conservative local authorities least?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not present when the House recently debated the subject, when he would have learned that about 85 per cent. of three and four-year-olds have some form of pre-school education. That record is considerably better than 10 years ago.

**Sir John Stokes:** Will my right hon. Friend take great care that in increasing support for nursery education she does not tempt mothers to dump their children? A mother working at home is doing just as important a job as one working in an office or factory. I did not leave home and go to school until I was nine, and it has not done me any harm.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My hon. Friend is a clear model of parental care, showing that parents are the first and the best educators of young children.

**Ms. Armstrong:** When will the Minister ensure that the opportunity for choice in nursery education in Tory areas matches that in Labour areas?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The hon. Lady is well aware that the amount of money put into rate support grant is targeted particularly towards the inner cities and to areas where there is perceived to be a special need. That is why, in the case of the inner cities, there is more provision from the local education authorities and the local authorities, while in the county areas there is greater provision from the voluntary sector.

## City Technology Colleges

7. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made on his plans for city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** The CTC programme is making excellent progress. Kingshurst opened last year, Nottingham and Teesside will open in September, with Bradford, Gateshead and the London school for performing arts and technology due to open in 1990. Further announcements will be made soon.

**Mr. Hughes:** As the CTCs have failed to attract public support, and as the Secretary of State has been finding it increasingly difficult to raise private donations, what percentage of the capital cost of future CTCs will be met by the taxpayer and what proportion does he expect to get from private donations?

**Mr. Baker:** I reject entirely the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and Sir John Egan, chairman of Jaguar, proposed a CTC for Coventry—the hon. Gentleman's city—at a meeting with the chief education officer and the vice-chairman of the education group. The Labour majority on the education committee decided not to go ahead with the proposal and, unhappily for Coventry, that would appear to be the end of the matter. It is particularly regrettable when one bears in mind the fact that Coventry is the 16th highest spender in the country but only 61st in terms of the examination results of its school leavers.

**Mr. Tredinnick:** On behalf of my constituents, I thank my right hon. Friend for his decision to visit John Cleveland college and Barwell primary school in my constituency on Friday. Given his plans to look at CTCs, and bearing in mind the 25 per cent. increase in land prices in Leicestershire last year, will he also consider the county council's capital allocation? If that were increased, it would allow for the refurbishment of Barwell primary school.

**Mr. Baker:** My hon. Friend's question goes a little wider than the original question. However, I can say that Leicestershire's allocation of £6·8 million for 1989-90 represents 53 per cent. of its planned expenditure, compared with an average of 34 per cent. for all authorities. Leicestershire has therefore done considerably better than the average. It is up to the authorities there to decide how to spend their allocation—whether on land purchase or on other capital work.

**Mr. Madden:** Why is the Secretary of State so enthusiastic about parents having ballots to enable schools to opt out of the state education system, but so implacably opposed to the parents of children who may go to a CTC having ballots to decide whether or not they want, as in Bradford, £7 million or £8 million of taxpayers' money to be spent on the establishment of a school when the city's existing schools are crying out for expenditure on renovation and repairs?

**Mr. Baker:** I will make a forecast to the hon. Gentleman, who represents part of the city of Bradford, that when that school opens next year it will probably prove to be one of the most popular in Bradford and that many of his constituents will want to send their children to it.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Will my right hon. Friend remind industry that its support is very welcome, not only for city technology colleges but also for schools which opt out? Is he aware of the great jubilation in Bolton this morning at his decision about St. James' school despite the pernicious obstruction by the local council?

**Mr. Baker:** Again that goes rather wide of the question. Let me remind the House, however, that I decided this morning that St James's Church of England school should become grant maintained, and I consider that it will be a successful and viable school.

**Mr. Fatchett:** When the Secretary of State told the Conservative party conference in October 1986 that he would establish 20 CTCs by the end of the decade was that a serious target, and can he now explain why he has failed?

**Mr. Baker:** I assure the hon. Gentleman—because I know that he wants to see the programme succeed—that we shall have more than 20 CTCs. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] As soon as authorities, especially Labour authorities, co-operate in the provision of sites. Only when the Conservatives gained control of Bradford city council was it possible to start a CTC in Bradford.

## Cleveland (Education)

8. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent correspondence he has received on the state of education in Cleveland.

**Mr. Butcher:** During November last year my right hon. Friend received three very helpful letters from my hon. Friend about a range of issues arising during his visits to schools in his constituency.

**Mr. Devlin:** Does not the lack of other correspondence from the people of Cleveland show that the overwhelming majority are very happy with the new arrangements for higher standards in the national curriculum? Testing arrangements, the new city technology colleges and the changing status of our polytechnic will all receive a general welcome throughout the county, contrary to the allegations of the local Labour party.

**Mr. Butcher:** My hon. Friend has made a gracious commendation of the delivery of excellence in education by the schools in Cleveland. Cleveland is No. 8 in terms of academic results from school leavers, and is the 34th highest spender. That goes against the usual pattern of Labour-controlled LEAs, which combine high spending with low academic achievement. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend for his comprehensive reports from a large school visits programme, and I assure him that we respond as positively as we can to the information that he sends in.

**Mr. Bell:** The people of Cleveland will welcome the Minister's statement on the high standards that we have obtained in the county. He ought to add his congratulations to the local Labour-controlled authority which has brought that about.

Can the Minister tell us why more was spent on the CTC than on the 200 schools in the county of Cleveland? Would it not have been more appropriate to put the same amount into those schools as into the CTC?

**Mr. Butcher:** No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] If I have interpreted the hon. Gentleman's past comments correctly, I think that he and I share an interest in maximising inner city children's chances of improved opportunities in the labour market, and indeed elsewhere. If that is the case, I hope that he will accept that the new initiative will be of immense benefit to Cleveland.

This is new money, and I suspect that the Labour party will find itself in a major dilemma. In the early days its members opposed council house sales, and that rebounded on them. They will find that, for social reasons, their opposition to CTCs will do the same.

## Engineering Degrees

9. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students started first degree courses in engineering during the last three years.

**Mr. Jackson:** In 1987 there were 19,300 first year full-time first degree students studying engineering at higher education institutions in Great Britain. In 1986 and 1985 there were 19,000 and 18,200 students respectively.

**Mr. Thompson:** Does my hon. Friend agree that although, thanks to the Government's successful policies, engineering output is growing strongly, the number of applications for engineering places has declined? Does he agree that that is not a healthy situation, and can he spell out what steps he and his colleagues are taking to improve it?

**Mr. Jackson:** We accept the advice that we receive from employers and from the Engineering Council that there is a need to sustain and increase the number of engineering graduates to maintain our competitiveness. We have taken a number of initiatives—the engineering and technology programme, the manufacturing systems engineering programme and the hi-tech programme—but we are not satisfied with the progress being made. That is why we have announced a series of studies—and we are grateful to the Engineering Employers Federation and the Engineering Council for supporting them—to try to find out more about the reasons for the unacceptable high wastage rate in engineering courses, and also to find out more about the attitudes of suitably qualified school leavers to the study of engineering.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** Does the Minister accept that, in the past, many youngsters left school at 16, obtained good engineering apprenticeships and got into higher education as a result of day release and night school? As that avenue has now been stopped, because of the decline in the number of apprenticeships, is it not high time to reform education for 16 to 18-year-olds to make it more appropriate for people going into engineering? Does the Minister also accept that the present A-level syllabus does nothing to encourage people to go into engineering?

**Mr. Jackson:** The hon. Gentleman will have noticed the programme for an integrated engineering degree sponsored by the Engineering Council, which the Government have broadly welcomed. On the broad issue of 16 to 18-year-olds, the hon. Gentleman should refer to the speech, which I mentioned earlier, made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Association of Colleges for Further and Higher Education. It showed the way in which the Government are addressing the subject. I notice, meanwhile, that the policy attitude of the hon. Gentleman's party seems to be shifting.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my hon. Friend care to make a statement about the impact of the thoroughly unprofessional activities of the Association of University Teachers on the individuals who have entered engineering studies? Will he give an assurance that the Government will not give in to the unprofessional blackmail being practised by the AUT?

**Mr. Jackson:** The Government deplore the line being taken by the AUT. We consider it to be irresponsible and damaging to the aims that the AUT and its members claim to hold dear, and we condemn it utterly.

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** Are the Minister and Government not concerned that, notwithstanding the initiative to which he referred, Brita n still produces barely two thirds the number of engineering graduates as does, for example,

West Germany? Moreover, is the Minister aware that serious concern is now being expressed about the standards and quantity of first degree courses in this country? Has the Minister read the article in the *National Institute Economic Review* on the subject and what does he propose to do about it?

**Mr. Jackson:** I have already expressed the Government's concern about the number of engineering graduates. There is a controversy about the international comparisons to which the hon. Gentleman refers. He will have studied the reports in the *Department of Employment Gazette* on that point. The Government are taking various steps, such as the survey that we are undertaking to find out more about the attitudes and motivation of engineering students. I must emphasise the importance and relevance to all this of the changes we are making in schools, such as the broadening of the school curriculum through the national curriculum, which will have a major impact.

## Abortion

10. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teaching to pupils over the age of 13 years of subjects covering the issue of abortion.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** It is for schools to decide whether and how to deal with the issue of abortion. The Government look to schools to show sensitivity in dealing with issues such as abortion, taking into account the views and concerns of parents.

**Mr. Amos:** Is my hon. Friend aware that in 1987, there were more than 4,000 abortions on girls aged 15 and under, compared to only 553 in 1968? Virtually all those were under the statutory ground No. 2. Will she, therefore, ensure that sex education involves far more teaching about the moral issues involved, instead of just the mechanics?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The responsibility for determining what is dealt with in sex education, and how, lies with the governing bodies of schools, as I believe my hon. Friend knows.

**Ms. Mowlam:** The Minister suggested that the responsibility lies with the schools, but she also said that she expected a certain degree of sensitivity from teachers. Can she expand on what she means by that and try to explain to the House the necessity, which I am sure that all hon. Members feel, to have sensible and rational discussion on such issues.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The hon. Lady will know that a number of different syllabuses are available in science teaching in schools and that the responsibility rests with the teachers. One hopes that the teachers will choose sensibly from the available syllabuses and ensure that all the circumstances that relate to matters of biology are taught sensibly and sensitively in schools.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** Does my hon. Friend agree that abortion should be dealt with in religious education and that the Christian position on abortion should be explained? Does she also agree that it is shocking and bad that some head teachers have said that they may not observe the law on Christian-based assemblies and religious education?

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I think that my hon. Friend will know that the whole matter of religious education has been dealt with in the Education Reform Act 1988. We hope, therefore, that schools will obey the law, as it has been strengthened, on religious education. Of course, my right hon. Friend and the standing advisory councils on religious education that are to be set up for each local education authority will monitor the position and will expect children to have a sound Christian-based religious education where that is applicable and right.

## Capital Spending (Nottingham)

12. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet parents and pupils in Nottingham, North to explain the consequences for education of his recent decision on limiting capital spending by the Nottinghamshire county council local education authority.

**Mr. Butcher:** My right hon. Friend has received a letter from the chairman of the education committee of Nottinghamshire county council setting out the committee's views on the capital allocation for 1989-90 and seeking to bring a deputation. I have agreed to meet a deputation of interested parties from Nottinghamshire.

**Mr. Allen:** I am glad that the Minister is to meet a deputation, but the question asks whether he will meet parents and children in Nottingham, North. The Minister will find it difficult to explain to them why his Government are spending twice as much on one school—the city technology college—as they are spending on all the other schools in Nottingham put together. Will he come and try to explain that to the parents and teachers who are suffering?

**Mr. Butcher:** I was in Nottingham last week. Had I had the chance, I would have explained to the people. The capital allocation this year is £3,215,000. That is 43 per cent of the bid, compared to the national average of 34 per cent. I shall look forward to receiving further observations when the deputation arrives.

## Special Educational Needs (St. Helens)

13. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children in St. Helens have received statements for special educational needs.

**Mr. Butcher:** A total of 479 children in St. Helens have statements of special educational needs.

**Mr. Evans:** I thank the Minister for that reply. Is he aware that, using the Warnock definition of children with special needs, there are some 5,000 children in schools in St. Helens who have special educational needs but who are not statemented? How does the Minister intend to ensure that the interests of those children are protected when individual schools shortly receive their budgets under the terms of the Educational Reform Act 1988?

**Mr. Butcher:** I think that the hon. Gentleman may not have understoood that circular 7/88 on local management of schools makes it clear that variations in special needs between schools should be taken into account in the local education authority's resource allocation formula. Local education authorities will have discretion to except from delegation specialised support services such as education

psychologists, peripatetic teachers and educational welfare officers. On the broader question, I shall be happy to speak to the hon. Gentleman and to his friends from the LEA if he wishes me to do so, but for the time being the LEA says that there are 479 pupils in this category. That did not come up as a subject when our officials visited the authority recently. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I ask hon. Members to desist from private conversations during Question Time.

### Industrial Sponsorship

14. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is currently taking to promote industrial sponsorship in schools.

**Mr. Butcher:** The Government welcome all types of activities which link schools and industry. We recognise that they can represent a valuable way of both enriching the school curriculum and developing the understanding of pupils and teachers. We use every opportunity to encourage industry to develop and strengthen its involvement with schools.

**Mr. Coombs:** At a time when, as the Minister has said, industry's links with schools are seen as ever more crucial for effective education, does my hon. Friend agree that industrial sponsorship deepens and widens links between schools and industry? Does he also agree that even Labour-controlled authorities, such as Birmingham, have belatedly come to this view? Finally, does he agree that there is a case for further fiscal incentives, especially for small firms, to encourage further industrial sponsorship?

**Mr. Butcher:** I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will take careful note of my hon. Friend's last point. I am delighted to say that this whole question of school—industry links is now no longer one of "Why should we do it?" but "How do we go about it?" The growing national consensus is that that can do nothing but good for the betterment of education in our country.

**Mr. Cryer:** Does the Minister accept that it is one thing to provide schoolchildren with an understanding of industry, but it is quite another to sell schools to industrialists as the Government are doing under the CTC programme? Does he agree that it is an outrageous way to dispose of ratepayers' and taxpayers' money by providing a billboard for such companies as Dixons in Bradford on the side of a CTC for £1 million, when the ratepayers and taxpayers of Bradford have paid the bulk of the capital costs and the entire running costs?

**Mr. Butcher:** The hon. Gentleman is 100 per cent. wrong, because private industry money is coming in to pay for free places for children in inner cities. It is a cause for great commendation of those industrialists that their money is supporting the state system. It is new money for free places.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher):** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

**Mr. Ashton:** Will the Prime Minister find time to tell her Ministers that unemployment is not falling in every region in this country? Is she aware that in my constituency, following the closure of Shireoaks colliery, male unemployment in the travel-to-work area will increase from 15 to 18·4 per cent.? Why do areas such as mine not receive assisted area status or even any rate support grant? Why do we have to go cap in hand to the Common Market begging for a handout when we get nothing from the Government? Is the Prime Minister not aware of what is happening in the coal mining areas of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire, which are facing rocketing unemployment because of her policies towards the coal mining industry?

**The Prime Minister:** As the most recent figures showed, unemployment is falling in every region of the country, with one exception—Northern Ireland. Of course, in regions where there has been a colliery closure there will be particular pockets of unemployment. We shall do all we can to retrain and I hope that very good redundancy payments will be given. The hon. Gentleman surely cannot wish to keep collieries open when there is no market for the coal or a market only at a price that will put up the cost of electricity to other industries enormously.

**Mr. Aitken:** Is my right hon. Friend aware of the warm welcome that has greeted the announcement that she is planning a new offensive to curb the excessive powers and abuse of power by the European Commission? In a week which has already seen attempts by the Commission to harmonise children's imitation toy food out of existence and to try to change Britain's drink-driving limits by edict from Brussels, does my right hon. Friend feel that it is time to tackle the unconstitutional use of article 100A by having a legal argument about the basis on which it is being used at present by the Commission?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend refers to a particular provision which was put in to enable us to get directives for the completion of the single market. We watch very carefully to ensure that that section is not abused. As my hon. Friend is very much aware, we do not want detailed regulation in the directives. We want the minimum regulation in the directives to enable goods to move more freely about the whole Community. That is our philosophy, and that will continue to be the aim of the action that we take.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Will the Prime Minister tell us what words she would use to describe her Government's international trade record?

**The Prime Minister:** Our Government's international trade record will continue to be non-protectionist, which is what it should be.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Will the Prime Minister tell us when she next expects the monthly trade figures to show a surplus?

**The Prime Minister:** For many years they showed a surplus—*[Interruption.]*—which would have put the Labour Government to shame. We now have a higher

standard of living than we have ever known. We have a great budget surplus. The steps that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is taking will deal with both inflation and the adverse trade balance.

**Mr. Sayeed:** As agriculture has now declined to 1·5 per cent. of gross domestic product and employment within it has fallen to 586,000, whereas the contribution from small businesses has increased to 21 per cent. of gross domestic product and the number of people employed therein has increased to 6·5 million, why do we have a Department and a Secretary of State for the former rather than for the latter?

**The Prime Minister:** There are several answers to that question. *[Interruption.]* I will try to give them all.

Most farms are small businesses, so the figure that my hon. Friend uses includes small farms. Secondly, in addition to the 1·5 to 2 per cent. of people employed in agriculture something like another 8 per cent. are employed in industries ancillary to agriculture—the equipment industry and the food processing industry. So it is not fair to take the particular set of figures that my hon. Friend gives. Both are vitally important to the future of Britain's economy, agriculture and other small businesses as well.

**Mr. Lord:** Is the Prime Minister aware that many of the country's largest industries now take as a matter of routine 90 days to pay the accounts of smaller companies that supply them? Is she further aware that these smaller companies are absolutely vital to the nation's economy and jobs, and will she undertake to look into this matter with great urgency?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with the reasoning behind my hon. Friend's question; it is quite wrong to take the maximum amount of time to pay bills, particularly those of small businesses which need the money as soon as possible for their cash flow. I hope that the companies concerned will take note of my hon. Friend's question and of my reply.

Q2. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Evans:** Did the Prime Minister notice yesterday that, following the publication of the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Tony Banks:** It has already got half the Cabinet.

**Mr. Speaker:** Have another go.

**Mr. Evans:** The Secretary of State for Health announced a ban on the use of bovine offal in the production of baby food and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced another inquiry into the effect of BSE on human health. If, as appears likely to the Secretary of State for Health, BSE is a threat to humanity, why not ban the use of this offal for all human consumption? If, according to the Minister of Agriculture, it is not a danger, why was it banned for consumption by babies?

**The Prime Minister:** We set up a committee of experts under Professor Southwood. We published the report in full. We referred it to the Chief Medical Officer of Health and we accepted the recommendations on both, precisely. There is no point whatsoever in setting up a committee of experts, in having a Chief Medical Officer of Health, in receiving their advice and then not accepting it. We would rather accept their advice than that of the hon. Gentleman.

Q3. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Morgan:** We read in today's reports of the Prime Minister's meetings yesterday with President Mitterrand of the divergence of view between them on the urgency of the need for modernisation of NATO nuclear weapons. In view of the fact that short-range nuclear weapons have the unfortunate habit of dropping on Germany, would she not agree with President Mitterrand that this must remain a sovereign German decision?

**The Prime Minister:** No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Most certainly not, and I did not gather that that was precisely President Mitterrand's view. He made it perfectly clear that, so long as the Soviet Union is modernising short-range nuclear weapons, so should we, and he said that very clearly indeed. He also accepted, as he was at the last NATO meeting—I was there on both occasions and heard everything; and he knew that Chancellor Kohl and I were agreed—that political solidarity and military strength provide the basis for dialogue. We reaffirmed the declaration of the NATO summit of 3 March 1988 in Brussels, where we joined together in confirming that our strategy of deterrence depends on the appropriate mix of effective nuclear and conventional forces, kept up to date where necessary. We are all pledged to that view.

**Mr. McCrindle:** Will the Prime Minister find time to persuade those who doubt that water is a suitable industry for privatisation—including, it would appear, some Conservative voters—that if we are to enjoy an improvement in water quality, costs will have to rise, whether water remains in the public sector or is privatised? Will she also persuade them if their opposition to privatisation relates to the outdated nature of sewerage in this country, that it will be infinitely easier to raise finance to improve that if the industry is privatised and can raise money on the open market?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that my hon. Friend has largely done my task for me. Of course, we all require higher standards in the quality of water and that will mean increases in costs and, therefore, in prices, and the same would be true whether water remained in the public sector or was privatised. There is far more likely to be increased capital spend on the improvement of water quality if the industry goes into the private sector. I notice that France, a country which has nationalised many things, has specifically kept water in the private sector because it provides a better service than would a nationalised water service.

**Dr. Owen:** Will the Prime Minister make it crystal clear that, under the law, the right of publishers to publish, booksellers to sell and readers to read is an absolute, and will not be changed under threat or deadline, whether of a week or a year?

**The Prime Minister:** Freedom of speech and expression is subject only to the laws of the land, in particular libel and blasphemy, and will remain subject to the rule of law. It is absolutely fundamental to everything in which we believe and cannot be interfered with by any outside force.

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the £1 million of extra funding that the Government give to London dial-a-rides will provide extra mobility for disabled people? Will she congratulate London dial-a-rides on their work, and say that we look forward to the extra work that they will be able to carry out with the extra money given by the Government?

**The Prime Minister:** I gladly respond to my hon. Friend's invitation. This Government have done more for disabled people and have increased expenditure on them by 90 per cent. in real terms. That is more than under any previous Government and we are very proud of it.

Q4. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** Does the Prime Minister recall that 10 years ago tomorrow, the Scots voted with a majority of 77,000 for a greater say in their own affairs? Does she accept that, since the feeling that there is a need for change is even stronger now, her stubborn refusal to accept the aspirations of the Scottish people is unacceptable? Does the treaty of Union matter?

**The Prime Minister:** My views have not changed. I thought that the views of the Labour party had not changed either, but perhaps I was wrong. I believe that first steps towards devolution would finish up in separatism and I do not believe that the majority of Scottish people want that. I am very glad indeed that the Scottish people have responded to Tory policies so well that they have achieved a unique level of prosperity.

Q5. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Amos:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the £850 million boost that the north of England will receive from the introduction of the unified business rate represents one of the biggest ever investments in the north of England?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, under the new business rate system, manufacturing business in the north will generally pay less in rates than it has been paying. I hope that that will be a great boost to industrialists to put more and more manufacturing services into these areas, where other costs will also be lower.

Q6. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Buchan:** Was today's report that the DSS is about to issue plastic cards to the elderly some kind of ironic joke? Would it not be much better if the Government restored to married couples the £18 that they have stolen from them?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that the DSS is considering a system that will be more helpful to pensioners and less conducive to the stealing of pension books. That is the only purpose of what the hon. Gentleman has read in the papers this morning.

With regard to our pensions record, may I point out that the pension has kept pace with inflation over the whole period, even though we have had to pay it to 1 million more pensioners? As for Labour's record, they fiddled the RPI figure when it no longer suited them, and although the Opposition said that they would keep the pension up with average earnings, they then put in an incomes policy to keep down average earnings, and did not even live up to that promise.

## NEW MEMBER

*The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:*
William Jefferson Hague Esq., for Richmond, Yorks.

## BILL PRESENTED

### Hare Coursing

Mr. Robin Corbett, supported by Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Dame Janet Fookes, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Kevin McNamara, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Jeremy Hanley and Mr. Robin Squire, presented a Bill to make hare coursing illegal: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 March and to be printed. [Bill 88.]

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

**Mr. Speaker:** With the leave of the House, I will put together the seven motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Ordered,*

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

# Installation of Smoke Detectors Bill

3.32 pm

**Mr. Alistair Burt** (Bury, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the installation of smoke detectors in domestic premises.

If 1989 is a year like any other, by 31 December about 650 people will have died from accidental fires in dwellings and more than 8,000 will have been injured. Colleagues who have attended the scenes of fatal fires will have seen the gutted house, the upset firemen and distraught families and will need no reminding how awful these incidents can be.

On Christmas day 1984, nine people lost their lives in a house fire in my constituency, and the shock of that led me into the search for greater family safety from fire. It is in that spirit, and remembering those people, that I present my Bill to the House.

Following a campaign inside and outside the House, the Government have introduced legislation to control the sale of foam-filled furniture. Welcome though that is, it has its limitations and will take some time to have an effect. Families will not instantly discard their furniture, so the risk in many houses remains.

There are also many other sources of accidental fires in homes, and it is time to turn our attention to the earlier detection of fire. The greater use of smoke detectors in homes throughout the country could have a profound effect on protection from fire. These items retail from under £10 and the average price is between £12 and £15. Studies and surveys show why the introduction of smoke detectors is now strongly supported by fire brigades and consumer and safety organisations, insurance companies and house builders.

The crucial facts to remember in considering house fires today are the tremendous temperatures produced quickly from today's furniture, and the danger from fumes, which kills before individuals are affected by flames. The earlier the detection of fire, therefore, the better the opportunity of escaping and surviving.

The assistant chief fire officer for Greater Manchester fire brigade, Mr. Bob Graham, who was rightly honoured with the MBE in the new year's honours list for his services to fire safety, has examined the fire statistics dealing with fatal and injurious fires. He concluded in a 1986 report:

"For 83 per cent. of fires in dwellings the interval between ignition and discovery of the fire was estimated to be at least five minutes and for 48 per cent. of the deaths the interval was estimated to be over 30 minutes. On the face of it at least 48 per cent. would have received an early warning of the fire if detectors had been fitted, and probably this applies to most of the remainder. There is little doubt that detectors would have improved the situation."

In the United States and Canada, smoke detectors are in much more widespread use. I have seen in Los Angeles the efforts undertaken by chief fire officer Ed Beneda in his area. A survey in 1985 in the United States revealed that 75 per cent. of all households have detectors. By contrast, a survey commissioned in 1988 by the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, which kindly supports the Bill, revealed that only 13 per cent. of households in London were fitted with smoke detectors.

The experience of the United States is described in a study that investigated a decade of widespread use of detectors in the United States. It was published by John Hall, junior, the director of the United States National Fire Prevention Association. He concluded:

"The USFA's national fire incident reporting system has been used to estimate the risk of dying in homes that have detectors as well as those that do not. Most such analyses estimate that detectors cut the risk of death in half. That is, a person who has a fire at home but does not have a detector is twice as likely to die in a fire as another person who is protected by detectors. This two-to-one ratio has stood up with little or no variation since it was first calculated from 1979 . . . data."

He directly relates this ratio of success to the early discovery of the fire. The chance of death is increased by delay. That is exactly the same conclusion as Bob Graham reached.

I have a quotation from last Friday's edition of the *Bury Times*, my local newspaper, which says that, on the Tuesday before, firemen in Bury went to deal with a kitchen blaze. A fire brigade spokesman said afterwards:

"We would like to stress that the lady only knew about the fire after an alarm in the kitchen was activated. We would not like to say how severe the fire could have been had the woman not been made aware of it sooner."

The Bill would divide domestic property into three types. First, I propose that, three months after Royal Assent, all newly built domestic property will be required to be fitted with smoke alarms. Secondly, in the rented sector, I propose, bearing in mind the cost to private and public landlords and the need to ensure a sufficient supply of detectors, that from a date to be agreed, all rented property must be protected by smoke detectors. I hope that that would occur as soon as it was feasible. Thirdly, in the owner-occupied sector, I propose that, from a set date three months after Royal Assent, smoke detectors must be fitted before sales of domestic property can proceed.

The provision ensures that there will not be a sudden effective date for all owner-occupied houses, which would produce an explosion of demand difficult to satisfy. It would also ensure that enforcement was achieved in the usual process of buying and selling houses.

At present, the Government prefer not to legislate. They are co-operating in a scheme in Greater Manchester to fit smoke detectors in local authority housing. I very much welcome their interest. The Government have said that they will examine the results of that scheme. They believe that the voluntary placing of detectors is better than legislation, bearing in mind the motivation needed to maintain alarms.

That is not enough. The statistics of effectiveness in reducing death and injury, potentially by 50 per cent., speak for themselves, and there are a number of reasons why we should legislate. One is that this House has a good record in passing safety legislation. We legislate to protect children from cruel, unsafe toys and flammable nightdresses. Why not legislate to save them from the fear of death while they sleep?

Experience tells us that the households most likely to suffer these tragedies are those least likely to fix detectors without being required to do so. The maintenance required is no more complicated than changing the cassette in a video recorder. Just because it is impossible to force such maintenance to be done is no reason to shy away from protective legislation.

I have been enormously encouraged by the widespread support for the Bill both inside and outside the House. A growing number of building and construction companies now fit smoke detectors in their newly built properties. I welcome the support of companies such as Lovell Homes, Barratt, Wimpey, Costain Homes and Bellway, which fit

detectors. The National House-building Council is considering changes to the building regulations, and a decision will be made this summer, after consultation with the Home Office and the Department of the Environment, on whether to require all newly built property to be equipped with smoke detectors. I hope that that happens.

An increasing number of insurance companies are offering smoke detectors at a discount to their customers. The Prudential, the Commercial Union and Norwich Union have told me of this, and they too support my Bill. I have received support from all manner of consumer and safety associations. The British Safety Council, the Consumers' Association, Age Concern, the British Standards Institution—which is seeking to ensure a common high standard for detectors—and many others all support the Bill.

The fire brigades support the measure. Greater Manchester fire brigade is a sterling champion of smoke detectors. The Surrey, Royal Berkshire, Hampshire and West Midlands brigades have done much. But perhaps the most moving letter of support I have received has come from an individual west Yorkshire fireman, who wrote saying:

"on 25 December 1988 we were called to a flat fire in an area of Halifax. I was in the team which were first on the scene. We gained entry to the premises and found the body of a young man in his early thirties. It was yet another distressing statistic in the ever growing list of fatalities caused by asphyxiation by smoke at a fire scene. This death, like many others, could have been prevented by the purchase of a domestic type smoke detector . . . maybe one day my colleagues and I will have less pathetic figures to pull out of a fire situation. It's not very nice, and even us firemen have emotions."

For generations, this House has been at the forefront of protecting the people of this nation, but too often it has taken action after tragedies have occurred. It is time now to take the next step forward in fire safety. For a lesser price than many people spend on burglar alarms to protect their homes, the safety of their families can be increased significantly.

With or without legislation, I hope that many more smoke detectors will, with the passage of time, be found in British homes, but I hope that the House now feels sufficiently moved by the weight of public opinion in favour of this cheap and simple device to give my Bill a First reading so that the reassuring noise given off by a smoke detector such as the one I hold aloft now—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member must put that away.

**Mr. Burt:** I hope that that reassuring noise will be heard in more and more British homes and that, to that end, hon. Members will give my Bill a First Reading.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alistair Burt, Mr. John Wheeler, Mr. Michael Colvin, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. David Sumberg, Mr. Ken Hargreaves, Mr. Conal Gregory, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Charles Kennedy and Mr. Simon Hughes.

### Installation of Smoke Detectors

Mr. Alistair Burt accordingly presented a Bill to require the installation of smoke detectors in domestic premises; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 April and to be printed. [Bill 87.]

## ESTIMATES

*Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 131(2) (Liaison Committee), and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House agrees with the Report [23rd February] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

# Royal Navy

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

*[Relevant documents: Sixth Report from the Defence Committee of Session 1987-88 on the Future Size and Role of the Royal Navy's Surface Fleet, HC 309, and the Government Reply, Cm. 443.]*

3.45 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury):** I am pleased to open the debate on the Royal Navy. Today we have the first of the three days during which we discuss each of our armed services. It is normal on these occasions to start with an account of the work and activities of the Royal Navy, and this I intend to do.

However, I shall speak more briefly than is usual about that work for two reasons. First, my hon. Friend the Minister of State will, if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, have more to say, both about the achievements of the Royal Navy and about its current activities. Secondly, I intend to give rather more time than is customary to the ships and equipment of our Navy. It is, of course, as Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, my particular area of ministerial responsibility. Moreover, we have a large number of new classes of vessel and new types of equipment coming into service and we are in a period of rapid technical development.

It is perhaps appropriate in this context to note that, on this day 123 years ago, the Navy finally declared grapeshot obsolete, after well over a century in service with the fleet. I doubt whether much of the new equipment we are now bringing into service will stand the test of time quite so well as that. Such are the lengthy time scales of naval procurement that we are only now beginning to see the full fruits of the major investment in the Royal Navy that this Government first began nearly 10 years ago.

The Royal Navy continues to plan an essential part in ensuring the defence of the United Kingdom and her allies. The numbers and sophistication of Soviet maritime forces have continued to increase. To give just one example, the latest Kirov class nuclear-powered battle cruiser, Kalinin, was commissioned last year. It is equipped with surface-to-surface missiles and guns, and carries up to three helicopters. Its displacement is seven times greater than that of our latest ship, the type 23, and its crew is nearly five times as large. NATO clearly must be ready to respond to the threat that this and other Soviet forces might pose to the Alliance's northern flank and to our transatlantic and cross-channel lines of communication.

The Royal Navy has a crucial role in this task. Forward maritime defence is vital if we are to prevent Soviet submarines from breaking out into the Atlantic to attack reinforcement shipping and break our vital sea lines of communication. In the event of hostilities or a crisis occurring the Royal Navy would provide nearly 70 per cent. of the NATO maritime forces immediately available to deploy forward into the Norwegian sea and cover the eastern Atlantic and Channel areas prior to the arrival of United States reinforcements. In addition, throughout the past year, as in every year since 1969, the Royal Navy has continued to maintain at least one Polaris submarine on patrol at all times, thus ensuring the constant readiness of our nuclear deterrent.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines, ably assisted by their respective reserves, also make an important contribution to the direct defence of the United Kingdom by countering the threat of mines in coastal waters, defending ports and anchorages and protecting key points. Within home waters, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines also help to safeguard the United Kingdom's fishing interests and offshore gas and oil platforms, as well as contributing to the vital role played by our search and rescue service. The Royal Navy also supports the Royal Ulster Constabulary by patrolling the Province's coastline.

Although the majority of the Navy's commitments are in the NATO area, experience since 1945 shows that actual operations occur more fequently out of area. We continue to maintain a naval presence in the Caribbean, the south Atlantic and Hong Kong, while the Armilla patrol remains in the Gulf area, ready to render assistance to entitled merchant shipping if needed. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed forces will, I hope, be able to enlarge on these aspects of the work of the Royal Navy later. All these roles will be familiar to right hon. and hon. Members, but they remain as important and valid today as they have ever been.

Again in 1988, as throughout its long and very distinguished history, the Royal Navy has continued to discharge its responsibilities. We sometimes forget the professionalism, dedication and sheer hard work that underlies that phrase "continues to discharge". Our Navy represents tremendous value for the nation, and the Government in turn aim to provide value for money both for the navy and the taxpayer in the way we equip and support it.

The new plans for the Defence Budget set out in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper include increases in the defence budget of £175 million in 1989-90 and £610 million in 1990-91 over and above the previous planned provision. The 1991-92 provision is £910 million above that for 1990-91.

That means that the budget is now set to grow by about £1 billion a year in cash terms over the next three years. On current forecasts for inflation, the plans allow for real growth in defence spending over the next three years. They provide the money judged necessary by the Government to fund defence properly over that period and to allow us to maintain capable forces in all of our major defence roles and commitments. That gives us a sound framework for confident planning into the 1990s.

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): Are the Minister's assumptions based on the rate of inflation on which last year's Budget was based, or on the current level of inflation which appears to be of the order of 7 per cent.?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** As the hon. Gentleman would expect, they are based on the public expenditure White Paper. He should bear in mind that the influence of the mortgage interest rate on the rate of inflation does not necessarily apply to procurement of defence equipment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I should have thought that hon. Members would realise that not many defence contractors have mortgages on their factories which would be subject to that effect.

Up to the end of the financial year 1987-88, over £4·5 billion more had been spent on the Navy in real terms, taking account of GDP inflation and excluding Falkland Islands and Trident costs, than if spending had continued at the level inherited from the previous Labour

Government. That has meant that £4·5 billion more has been made available for the conventional role of the Royal Navy.

We may, if previous experience is a guide, expect to hear some criticism from the Opposition Benches of aspects of our defence policy. I very much doubt whether we shall hear a great deal about their own policies. I dare say that Opposition Members will try to persuade us that their policies are in preparation. I would suggest that they are more likely to range from the incoherent to the profoundly implausible. In any event, I suspect that we shall not hear much of the defence policies of the Social and Liberal Democratic party or the Social Democratic party. They probably have enough on their plates defending themselves from each other to spare much thought for other defence issues.

**Dr. David Owen** (Plymouth, Devonport): The Social Democratic party's defence policy is clear. The Minister will find that it does not vary in any major particular from that of the Government. But have the Government no obligation to society? How can the hon. Gentleman justify taking 7,500 jobs out of Devonport and suddenly now announcing that he will not even put HMS Southampton into Devonport to redress in some way the damage that has been done to the regional economy of the south-west?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have not announced that. The right hon. Gentleman should wait to hear what I have to say about the dockyards.

The Royal Navy remains the second largest NATO navy, deploying some 200 vessels of all classes. That represents a very substantial investment in all areas of maritime capability. Each year, for example, we spend approximately £3 billion on equipment procurement for the Navy. It is worth recalling that 64 new ships have been ordered by the Government since 1978-79. Vessels currently on order include no fewer than five first of class vessels, of which three are planned for acceptance in the coming year.

We have provided for the updating of the strategic deterrent and currently have two Vanguard class submarines on order. VSEL has recently submitted a tender for the third, planned for order later this year.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): When the hon. Gentleman talks about updating the strategic deterrent, could he tell us exactly what extra extent of extermination power the Trident nuclear weapons have over Polaris and give us an idea of the number of people that the Government are prepared to kill on a mass scale by use of Trident, which they are prepared to use, as I understand it?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** All hon. Members will be familiar with the hon. Gentleman's lack of comprehension of the nature of a policy of deterrence. I have to remind him that a deterrent, in order to be an effective deterrent, must be a credible deterrent. That is what Trident is.

Three aircraft carriers will continue in service with the Royal Navy, all of which have now been modified to increase their complement of Sea Harriers from five to eight. As has always been our intention, two carriers will be available for operations immediately or within a short period, and the third will be maintained in refit or standby.

The Government have also been able to maintain a balanced and capable surface fleet and remain committed to a force of about 50 destroyers and frigates. Significant improvements have been achieved in the capability of the escort force as new type 22—and soon type 23—frigates enter the fleet, and as existing ships are updated with new weapons systems and sensors.

In 1988 four new type 22 frigates entered the fleet. A fifth ship, HMS Campbeltown, was accepted only last Friday from Cammell Laird, and HMS Chatham, the last of the type 22 frigates, is planned for acceptance at the end of the year, bringing to an end the build programme for this class.

**Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** (Bexleyheath): My hon. Friend will know that there is some concern on these Benches that the 50 destroyers/frigates may not be in the pristine order in which we would expect them to be. In particular, some of our newer ships have not got the modern equipment which anyone would agree to be necessary. What can he say to give us some encouragement about these matters?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** What I am about to say will, I hope, give my hon. Friend the encouragement he seeks. In general terms, the capability of the fleet as it now exists is greatly in excess of what it was in 1978-79.

Last July, when I announced the order for three new type 23 frigates, bringing the number currently on order to seven, I told the House that we intended to invite tenders for a further batch of type 23s later this year.

The first type 23, HMS Norfolk, is to be accepted from her builders later this year. She will carry a number of new weapons and equipments—notably, vertical launch Sea Wolf to meet the air threat, Harpoon anti-surface vessel sea-skimming missiles, sonar 2031 towed array, and a helicopter. It will be more economic to build and will have a 25 per cent. smaller crew than the type 22s.

**Mr. A. E. P. Duffy** (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The whole House will welcome the Minister's reference to the type 23s and hope that there is more and better news to come. Can he tell the House if the first of class, the Norfolk and the Marlborough, are yet capable of the central command control system operation?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Perhaps I could come to that in a moment. There seems to be a tendency to anticipate the things I am going to say, so perhaps I should press on.

I will expand a little on the additional capability represented by the vertical launch Sea Wolf and the additional capability to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) referred.

Sea Wolf is a fully automatic, all-weather, day and night naval point defence system for the protection of surface ships from missile or aircraft attack. It is a derivative of earlier Sea Wolf systems, the main difference being that the missiles are housed in a vertical launch silo structure in the ship, which replaces the conventional trainable six-barrel launchers. That method of launching missiles improves system reaction times, eliminates launcher blind arc problems and provides an improved capability of defending against "saturation" attacks.

The house is aware that there have been problems in the development of the command system to which the hon Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) referred. The CACS 4 programme was cancelled when it was realised that the computing power and capacity of the original design would be inadequate for the planned weapon and sensor fit and that the realiability goals—to which we rightly attach a great deal of imortance—were most

*[Mr. Sainsbury]*

unlikely to be achieved. The new type 23 command system will incorporate the rapid advances in computer technology that have been made in recent years. It will be based on modern, distributed computing architecture and will have many times more computing power than CACS 4. It will also incorporate adequate redundancy and resilience to satisfy stringent availability, reliability and maintainability requirements.

New project definition studies were recently undertaken, and the results are being evaluated. I am sure the House agrees that while it was a difficult decision to cancel CACS 4, it was also the right one. Although a number of early type 23s will spend some time in service without an integrated command system, each weapon and sensor system will be capable of independent operation. The absence of a command system in the type 23 does little to impair intrinsic performance of its main defensive armament but will impose a number of limitations on its use.

**Mr. O'Neill:** Am I to infer from the Minister's remarks that the first five type 23s will not have the CACS and that there is not to be any announcement yet as to when contracts for that system will be signed? Am I right in thinking that April 1989 is no longer the target date for the signing of such contracts?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** As I said, the definition studies were recently completed and are now being examined. I should not like to forecast how long it will take to complete that examination and to lead on to a contract. It could be by the date to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I repeat, there will be a period when a number of ships will not, on initial fit, have the new command and control system. I explained why that is, as well as the improvements that will be derived from the new system and the capability of the ships meanwhile. Those ships will still provide a very much more effective contribution to our maritime forces than the Leander class frigates that they replace.

The Government remain committed to maintaining an amphibious capability in the longer term. Last autumn, we invited tenders for an aviation support ship to provide dedicated helicopter support for amphibious operations. We expect to receive tenders for the vessel in July. The ASS will have the primary role of embarking, supporting and operating a squadron of naval support helicopters, and carrying a commando group of Royal Marines, together with the support vehicles and equipment they require. The ship will be capable of landing troops in battle-ready formation both by helicopter and landing craft. That will provide a most useful increase in capability.

In addition, we are currently assessing the results of feasibility studies into the replacement of the assault ships, Fearless and Intrepid, in parallel with the results of a study into the option of extending their lives. We shall make a decision on the way ahead in plenty of time to ensure that the capability that those vessels represent will be replaced when the ships reach the end of their current useful lives in the mid-1990s.

Events in the Gulf have increased awareness of the threat from mines. This year sees the entry into service of HMS Sandown, the first of the Royal Navy's new class of single role minehunters, which is to be accepted from Vosper Thornycroft next month. Four more of those highly advanced vessels are on order from the same yard.

The SRMH is designed to hunt for mines in conditions where minesweeping would be impossible. It can operate, for example, in deeper water throughout the continental shelf, and is equipped with a sophisticated sonar in advance of anything comparable being used in that role elsewhere. It is also highly manoeuvrable, and has a smaller complement than the vessels it will succeed. Its GRP, non-magnetic hull is designed to reduce the threat from modern mines. Its cost is only 75 per cent. of that of a Hunt class minesweeper, and its procurement has clearly demonstrated the benefits of batch ordering. I can fairly say that that represents excellent value for money.

**Sir Antony Buck** (Colchester, North): That is welcome news, because the Royal Navy's minehunting and minesweeping capability is of vast importance. In view of my hon. Friend's earlier remarks about the Royal Marines and helicopters, can he say whether the Royal Navy is also considering minesweeping by helicopter, as has been done by other nations? Such a development might tie in with my hon. Friend's welcome news about the possibility of replacing Intrepid and Fearless in due course, and the continuation of our amphibious capability.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Our experience in the Gulf indicated that our minesweeping and minehunting techniques were superior to those of nations using helicopters. I advance the Sandown class as being equal or superior to any form of minehunter or minesweeper.

HMS Quorn, the last of the highly competent Hunt class mine countermeasures vessels, was delivered by the builder in January. The aviation training ship RFA Argus also joined the fleet during the past year.

We have maintained and modernised our mixed nuclear and conventional fleet of submarines. This month saw the entry into the fleet of the SSN HMS Trenchant, bringing the number of nuclear fleet submarines to 16 as compared to 11 in 1979. Four of the new class of diesel electric patrol submarines are currently on order. The first, HMS Upholder, is planned for acceptance around the end of this year.

We have, and will continue to provide, modern and capable aircraft to enable our platforms to fulfil their role. Further orders of Sea Harriers are planned, and major updates are in hand to upgrade existing naval aircraft, including mid-life updates to the Sea Harrier to improve its weapons capability, and improvements to the Sea King helicopter's sonar that will enhance its anti-submarine warfare capability. The development of the Anglo-Italian Merlin or EH101 helicopter continues.

Another area where significant progress is being made is in our sonar capability. Sonar 2050, for example, is a new state of the art, hull-mounted sonar for surface ships. It is to be fitted on build to all batch one and two type 23 frigates, and will be retrofitted to the type 22s and the later type 42s at refit. The contracts for the development and initial production of 17 equipments were placed following competition. A third production order, covering a further 10 fits, will be put out to competition shortly.

By taking full advantage of the latest research into signal processing conducted by the Admiralty research establishment at Portland, sonar 2050 is both a far more capable system than its predecessors and, by using the

latest technology, considerably smaller and cheaper—and we believe that it will prove to be more reliable than its predecessor, sonar 2016. Further savings were achieved by designing the new sonar to work with the ARE-designed sonar 2016 transducers already fitted to the type 22s and 42s, thus avoiding the costs of replacing those expensive assemblies. The first two ships, HMS Brilliant and Broadsword, have been fitted and early reports are of much improved detection capabilities. Having mentioned sonar 2016, I acknowledge the Comptroller and Auditor General's recent report on reliability and maintainability of defence equipment and the favourable comments on sonar 2016 as a project that should be emulated. Sonar 2050, I am pleased to report, is designed to surpass sonar 2016 in that regard.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the invaluable work of our scientific and technical staff at the Admiralty research establishment, whose expertise and hard work has kept the United Kingdom among the world leaders in those and other areas of naval technology.

There has, understandably, been a good deal of interest in all parts of the House in the future of HMS Southampton, following her collision while on operational duties in the Gulf. Today, I can announce that, for technical reasons, we have decided to combine the repair of HMS Southampton with her refit, which was originally scheduled to begin this autumn, and to seek competitive tenders for the expanded work package.

**Dr. Owen:** Shame.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I am very surprised to hear the right hon. Gentleman saying, "Shame," at hearing of competitive tenders. He does not seem very interested in the idea of obtaining good value for money for the Royal Navy or for the taxpayer. This decision accords with the Government's policy of seeking to increase the proportion of naval shipwork exposed to competition, as recently endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee. In the light of the wide interest shown by the private sector, we expect to receive bids from both the shipbuilding and the shiprepair industries, a well as from the commercially managed royal dockyards. Tenders will be issued shortly, and, subject to a satisfactory price being obtained, we expect to be able to award a contract by the early summer, which would enable HMS Southampton to return to operational service in 1991 with an enhanced capability.

I appreciate that this decision will disappoint the work force at the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation. Southampton's refit had been expected to form part of the programme at the FMRO. All those concerned are aware that we have been undertaking studies into the future of the FMRO, and this work is continuing.

I should like to confirm that today's announcement does not imply that any decision has been taken on the long-term need to retain a refit stream in Portsmouth. I should also like to emphasise that the role of Portsmouth as a major naval base is not in doubt. Our present plans do not envisage a reduction in number, or a change in type, of the ships base-ported there, and the fleet will continue to need a local capability to support operational ships and submarines with programmed maintenance and unprogrammed work for repair or operational enhancements. In this context the Government recognise the excellent record of the FMRO since its establishment in 1983.

As I said in the corresponding debate last year, however, there can be no guarantee that the current level of employment at the FMRO will continue indefinitely. Whatever the outcome of the current studies into its future role, some manpower reduction will be necessary to reflect efficiency targets and the drop in total naval production load available since the FMRO was established in 1983. This reduction would have been necessary irrespective of the decision on HMS Southampton. The normal process of consultation with the trade unions will take place, but the number of redundancies is likely to be small, and they will be achieved on a voluntary basis.

I would like next to say something about the royal dockyards, which, together with the FMRO at Portsmouth, currently undertake some three quarters of the refit and repair work for the fleet. The efficiency and manning levels of the dockyards have understandably been a matter of concern to the House.

There has been a general recognition that the period immediately before and after the change to commercial management was bound to be difficult. The difficulties were increased by the further changes that have been taking place in the total refit, repair and maintenance workload. As I have explained on other occasions, this reduction was the result of a number of factors, including the much reduced maintenance requirement of modern warships, and a move away from restorative refits that nearly amounted to rebuilds, which were found not to be cost-effective. I am glad to report that as we move out of the transitional period—it is now nearly two years since vesting day, and only a couple of refits that started before the handover are left outstanding—we are now seeing the benefits of the new system.

Both companies have made important progress: organisationally the yards have been restructured; the advent of commercial accounting and information technology-based planning systems has led to improved control of costs and greatly improved management information; and pay and effectiveness agreements have been negotiated with the work force, rationalising the complex structure of ex-Civil Service allowances, and introducing flexibility between crafts and grades.

Individual ship refits are now being completed within budget, with few exceptions. This process has been reinforced by encouraging movement, particularly at Rosyth, towards the achievement of full-risk pricing, which gives the dockyard a greater incentive to complete a refit within time and budget.

I should like to extend my congratulations to both DML and BTL for the determined, yet sensitive, way in which they have conducted industrial relations, which has produced, locally, changes that could not have been achieved so readily under the monolithic Civil Service structure before vesting day. The work force, too has played its part in adopting a constructive approach to the changes that are necessary to compete in the commercial market and secure a more prosperous and soundly based future.

Another aspect of our overall pursuit of value for money is the reviews that we have been undertaking of the organisation and location of the sea systems controllerate, which is that part of the procurement executive responsible for ships, submarines and their equipment. The reorganisation of the controllerate into project-related groups which reflect more fully the latest procurement practices has already largely been implemented. The sea

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systems controllerate is now undertaking a study into the possibility of collating its staff in order to improve the integration of procurement activities. Sea systems controllerate project staff are currently dispersed between Bath and Admiralty research establishment sites at Portsmouth and Portland. This study is thus distinct from other studies in hand, which are looking into the feasibility of relocating other parts of the department away from London. The results of the preliminary in-house investment appraisal have convinced me that collocation is the best way forward.

I have endorsed the conclusions that this approach would be both practicable and cost-effective, but further work is necessary to refine the initial costings and to produce firm recommendations for a preferred site option. This further work is expected to be completed by the end of August, and I expect to be able to take a decision before the end of the year.

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (Dorset, South): With regard to centralisation of the sea systems controllerate—putting 4,000 people on a single site—does the Minister not believe that it is very foolish to allow a three-year delay in getting the organisation working efficiently? Should we not be looking at the way in which we run this organisation on the three separate sites? After all, 10 years ago we moved it off a single site because it was inefficient there.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Understandably, my hon. Friend takes a very close interest in this issue and in the welfare of those of his constituents who are involved. No doubt he appreciates that one is always dealing with a changing situation and with changing requirements. As he knows, the work that the sea systems controllerate had to do 10 years ago was very different from the work that it has to do now. The points that my hon. Friend has mentioned will certainly be taken into account in the study to which I have referred.

On this occasion, as on others, I have taken the theme of value for money. I am confident that the whole House will agree that we do indeed get exceptional value for money from the skills and commitment of the officers and men of the Royal Navy and its Reserves.

I have explained how we seek to provide that same value for money throughout all those parts of the Ministry of Defence that support the Royal Navy, including the procurement of ships and equipment. As a result, I believe, we have a Navy continuously improving in capability, in which we can all take pride.

4.17 pm

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): Like the Under-Secretary, I welcome the debate. The fact that it is taking place on the Adjournment affords hon. Members on both sides of the House an opportunity to pursue a wide range of issues. While, traditionally, these debates cover strategic concerns—the nature of the threat and our ability to meet it; the state of the service; morale, pay and conditions; and constituency procurement concerns—it is often difficult, in opening, to find a coherent line to take. The Minister's concentration on procurement was understandable, especially in view of his responsibilities, but it is regrettable that he gave us very little fresh information—information that we would not have been able to obtain by reading Ministry of Defence handouts and so on.

The Opposition have to register our disappointment that no announcement is being made about type 23s. We approach any service debate with enhanced expectation that at least one of the major procurement questions will be answered, but we have yet to receive any kind of reassurance on the type 23s.

However, I am more than happy to join the Under-Secretary in his tribute to the service and to those who devote their lives to it. Our record in the Gulf, with the Armilla patrol, is an example of the unique contribution that we can make. We often forget that—partly because of our history and partly because of our geography—we are uniquely equipped for the kind of mine-hunting and minesweeping work that our service men have done in such difficult, unpleasant and uncomfortable conditions. We welcome the fact that they have been so successful that some of them are now able to return to cooler waters and a more pleasant climate.

I should like to take a slightly different tack and consider at least some of the tasks that previous defence estimates laid out as the responsibility of our Navy.

The 1987 White Paper identified a number of tasks as being the responsibility of the Navy: the interception and containment of Soviet forces in the Norwegian sea; direct defence, reinforcement, resupply and economic shipping in conjunction with United States and European maritime forces; anti-submarine defence of NATO's striking fleet, supported by the RAF; and the protection and deployment of the combined UK-Netherlands amphibious force to reinforce the north flank of NATO.

It has been suggested that each of those tasks is of a considerable size, and that a country with our resources will have great difficulty in meeting all of them. Certainly cost-cutting is still happening, and the global figures that the Under-Secretary announced do not mask the effect that the defence budget will continue to fall in real terms until the early 1990s. The part of the equipment budget on which the Minister has placed such a strain has been affected by inflation far above the retail prices index, whether or not it includes mortgage increases. Historical evidence supports the view that the replacement cost of military equipment is far in excess of anything reflecting inflation, and that the money available for the tasks involved will, of necessity, result in a cut.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I remind the hon. Gentleman that the budgetary figures that I gave represent an increase of some 3 per cent. over the present figures in real terms, after allowing for inflation. I hope that he was listening when I drew hon. Members' attention to several types of equipment and classes of ship which, with the use of modern technology, are costing less than the equipment and ships that they replace.

**Mr. O'Neill:** It cannot be denied that some equipment costs less, but more often it costs considerably more than we budget for. The reliability and maintainability reports of recent weeks suggest that a considerable amount could still be done to reduce costs. I realise that the Minister is not complacent and I am sure that that will be done, but in saying that we have enough money to meet our tasks he is in grave danger of misleading the House.

**Mr. Jonathan Sayeed** (Bristol, East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the second and third Trident submarines are costing decidedly less than the first? Are not the Government, through consistent batch ordering, reducing the costs of the same items of equipment?

**Mr. O'Neill:** The hon. Gentleman can argue for competitive tendering and for batch ordering, but he cannot always argue that "rent-a-missile" means considerable savings. The reductions in the cost of the Trident programme are accounted for more by the fact that servicing is to be done at Kings bay in Georgia than by any other single item, apart from hitherto beneficial changes in the exchange rate.

As the Minister has said, no other continental or northern European member of the Alliance makes the same maritime contribution as us. At a time when the United States Government are trying to reduce their public expenditure deficit, I imagine that the US navy will be one of the more attractive targets for cost-cutting. It is therefore essential for us to appreciate the nature of our tasks in the light of what we consider to be the threat posed by Soviet naval forces.

For the same reason that the US navy does not deploy its entire 600-ship fleet in the Atlantic, the Soviet navy does not devote all its assets to these waters. Global powers recognise other areas of concern, and although we may feel that the sun rises and sets in Europe, people in California are far more concerned about the Pacific basin and the Indian ocean. The Soviets, for their part, are clearly anxious for their relations with Japan and the People's Republic of China to improve, but until that happens they will wish to continue to dedicate much of their resources to the coastal protection of their eastern seaboard.

It must also be recognised that a sizeable part of the Soviet naval offensive capability is frozen in the Kola peninsula for long periods in the year. It is significant that the activities of the Soviet navy have been reduced considerably since our last Navy debate on 3 March last year. In July last year, General Akromeyhev said that the cutback was an example of the Soviet attempt to develop a purely defensive doctrine.

The reduction in activity was confirmed by Admiral William Crowe, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, who attributed it to cost-cutting in a report in the *International Herald Tribune* on 18 July 1988. The US navy has produced figures showing that the decline covers Soviet destroyers, frigates, corvettes, logistic ships, attack submarines and strategic submarines carrying nuclear warheads and cruise missiles.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that in the past two or three months the Soviets have moved an additional Kiev carrier and an additional Kirov cruiser to the north fleet, as well as an additional squadron of Backfire bombers for naval aviation? That is hardly a build-down. Exercise activity has somewhat diminished, but modernisation proceeds apace.

**Mr. O'Neill:** I shall come to that in a moment.

In 1984 the Soviet fleet deployed an average of 46 submarines each day. By 1987 the number has fallen to 25. In 1987 the average deployment of warships fell from 31 in 1984 to 24, and for the first time in a number of years no Soviet task force was sent to the Caribbean. Those findings were confirmed in an article in *The Daily Telegraph* on 23 February.

The cuts may be entirely due to perestroika. It was suggested last year that, owing to cost considerations, the Soviet navy spent 85 per cent. of its time in port, while the figure for the US navy is about 66 per cent. Those statistics may also be attributable to Gorbachev's desire for the Soviet armed forces to assume a more defensive posture. I do not know the reason, and I do not think that any hon. Member has a clear idea of it.

What is clear, however, is that, when Gorbachev spoke to the Yugoslav Parliament 12 months ago, he suggested a freeze in the number of US and Soviet ships in the Mediterranean from 1 July 1988. He also suggested that ceilings should be set on their numbers thereafter, and that both sides should give notice of their intention to move warships and to hold naval exercises and start to invite observers to watch the exercises. He said that measures should be drafted to ensure the security of intensive shipping in the Mediterranean, especially in international straits. He also wanted to withdraw US naval and Soviet naval craft from the Mediterranean. According to Reuters, the response from NATO was mixed and cool.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Has not the Soviet navy decided to adopt that defensive posture? The Soviets are effectively massing their naval forces precisely where the British Navy must put itself in time of war. The naval forces will be massed against our frigate and destroyer screens going up into the Norwegian sea to reinforce Norway in the event of a land war within Europe.

**Mr. O'Neill:** If I understand the hon. Gentleman correctly, he is saying that the Soviet Union is withdrawing its naval capabilities up into the far northern waters, where they will be frozen for a large part of the year.

**Mr. Bruce:** In Soviet territorial waters.

**Mr. O'Neill:** Part of that is Soviet territorial waters. The hon. Gentleman has said that it could be a defensive posture. I am not sure whether it is a defensive posture, but I am merely trying to explain some of the strategic thinking which may lie behind the Soviet action. I quoted the speech made by Gorbachev last year in Belgrade. He made another speech in September 1988 in Krasnoyarsk, in which he called for talks and spoke of not increasing Soviet forces in the Pacific region. He invited naval powers in that region to hold discussions about freezing and reducing naval and air force activities in the region and he identified the area where the coasts of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Japan, North Korea and South Korea converge. He suggested giving up Cam Ranh bay if the United States agreed to eliminate its military bases in the Philippines.

**Mr. Bruce George** (Walsall, South): Are those not examples of Mr. Gorbachev's proposals that are slightly tongue in cheek? In citing them, my hon. Friend may detract from the more serious offers. In the case of the Mediterranean, the Soviet fifth eskadra is tiny, so to abandon it and to put that squadron back into the Black sea would be almost marginal for Soviet purposes if, in return, the Soviet Union demands the withdrawal of the sixth fleet, which is not only infinitely larger, but performs a crucial task for NATO in the southern region. Furthermore, if Soviet naval forces were removed from

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Cam Ranh bay, that would, again, be virtually marginal compared to the withdrawal of American naval forces from the Philippines. Is it not true that those proposals may be less than serious and geared more to capturing public opinion than are some of the other proposals, which deserve to be treated more seriously?

**Mr. O'Neill:** I am grafeful to my hon. Friend for his intervention; he has begun to make the point that I am going to make.

**Dr. Alan Glyn** (Windsor and Maidenhead): The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) maintains that the Soviet fleet is largely bottled up in the Kola peninsula by weather conditions. He must surely accept that it can be moved at any time and must be taken into consideration with the whole of the Soviet naval forces.

**Mr. O'Neill:** I dealt with that point when I answered the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce). The Soviet fleet there will be bottled up for much of the year and will not be able to sail the world seas.

Judging by the statements made by Gorbachev, it seems that he has an approach to questions of disarmament by which he makes several statements, over a number of months, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) said, are often dressed up with other issues that are extraneous. He made an appeal to the United States in the middle of the presidential election with his Krasnoyarsk speech, which did not invite a serious response. But the important thing is that Gorbachev is making those speeches and offers, and something will happen. If we in the West are not careful, we shall end up with yet another propaganda defeat similar to the defeat we suffered after the speech Gorbachev made in the United Nations before Christmas.

What is even more important is that, when we talk about conventional forces in Europe and discuss it within the confines of the area from the Atlantic to the Urals, we often choose to ignore the fact that, whereas the Soviet lines of supply go from the Urals to Eastern Europe, our critical lines of supply go across the Atlantic. If we think that we can keep our naval capability out of talks, we are living on borrowed time. Rather than going into such talks in a grudging and half-hearted way, we should explore the possibilities as soon as we can.

When we consider the deployment stage and questions of strategy rather than the grubby matters of procurement —one can understand a shopkeeper being preoccupied with such matters—the Minister may be allowed to say something more on that. That is one of the advantages of a debate such as this, in which we are not constrained by the terms of a motion before the House. We can be relatively expansive and we recognise that we are not likely to make tremendous demands on your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in trying to get into the debate.

Gorbachev has been making statements and they are straws in the wind. The hon. Member for Dorset, South was present with me at an interesting and useful conference at Greenwich, at which a number of analysts who were in no way sympathetic to the Soviet Union repeatedly made the point that we should anticipate the Soviet Union making cuts in its naval capabilities before too long. The analysts said that there were two schools of thought. One believed that the Soviet Union wanted to contribute genuinely to the disarmament process and the other took the cynical view that we would see the Soviet fleet become leaner and meaner. I am not sure about that.

Much has been made of the size and quality of the Soviet fleet. There is much in their craft that is comparable to those of the West, but the Soviets are constrained by economic concerns, and cuts are resulting. The most famous of those is the new Soviet nuclear-powered carrier, originally known in the west as "Black Com 2". When it was launched in December 1985, it was known as the "Leonid Brezhnev". For reasons that I do not need to explain it has since been renamed the Tbilisi. What is important is that the *RUSI News Sheet* in autumn last year reported a series of modifications because the Russians had not been able to get their act together technically or in the way that they had hoped. The carrier has been downgraded, the aircraft and helicopters have been limited to 50 and the conventional take-off and landing facilities have been forgone. The article concluded that the Soviet Union's first supercarrier does not have the fighting edge it was assumed to have.

It is general knowledge that the level of information technology and computing that the Soviet navy has at its disposal is considerably more limited than that available to the Western navies and that the general spread of technology throughout the Soviet navy is considerably restricted by comparison with ours. The naval threat may not be as great as it was assumed to be. We know that the Soviet Union has been forced to economise and is beginning to seek talks. We should consider that carefully, from the point of view of trying to take advantage of its discomfiture. We should not go into such matters in a blaze of publicity in which we are seen to be forced to the conference table by the weight of public opinion in this country or elsewhere.

We have had this afternoon the ritual expression that we have a fleet of, probably, about 50. It is clear that the national guessing game continues and that we may be down to 43 or, in a bad week, to 28. The truth seems to be that if we have 50 destroyers and frigates with a life of 20 years, we must replace them at the rate of two and a half a year or five every two years, if we scrap five every two years. If we do not do that and if we try to replace them at a higher rate than we scrap them, that will be ideal, but at the moment we are nowhere near that.

We try to extend the life of the ships, and some of them are now very old—well beyond their 25-year lifespan. There is at least one that goes beyond that. If we extend their life too far, their quality diminishes and their effectiveness is reduced. They become more costly and difficult to maintain. They distort manpower and training patterns and become irrelevant in our response to any threat. Until we get the rate of ordering suggested in the Select Committee's report, we will not get away from the problems of morale and of people leaving the service, as they have been doing, and the difficulties that are created for the Navy as a result of the Government's unwillingness or incapability to meet its legitimate demands.

It is not just the present class of frigate that we need to worry about. The anxiety of the shipbuilding industry is not confined to the loss of orders, but involves the uncertainty of intentions. It might have helped if the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement had told us something about the Euro-frigate and about the Government's plans for the next class. As we know, studies are going on. They are taking the form of elaborate

programmes of drip-feeding the shipbuilding industry. But in Yarrow—the only commercial yard in the United Kingdom capable of participation in the NFR90—the design team has fallen from 360 to 160 in the last two years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary may not be in a position to say anything about it, but I believe that, when the Secretary of State was at Yarrow, he said that the Government intended to make a statement towards the end of the year. Perhaps the Minister of State will confirm later that we shall have to wait until the end of the year for a clearer indication about what will happen to the collaborative project which is in its early stages. Can the Minister confirm that it will be sustained and that by the end of the year we will know definitely whether we will have a Euro-frigate for the 1990s? It is disappointing that the report in the *Sunday Telegraph* about a possible announcement for three more type 23s has turned out to be optimistic.

The Under-Secretary gave us no room for reassurance in his remarks on computer-assisted command systems. He even suggested that there would be a slippage in the date of April 1989 for the confirmation of an order. He has indicated that five type 23s—the pride of the British surface fleet—will go to the defence of the country in a state in which they are less than capable of defending themselves and that our seamen will be at a disadvantage compared to an enemy, because we will not have the kit that other navies have.

**Mr. Neville Trotter** (Tynemouth): If the hon. Gentleman had been a Minister, would he have gone ahead with a design that was not competent and not able to defend the ship?

**Mr. O'Neill:** After eight years of government we would have been able to establish better control of major projects.

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton):** Nimrod.

**Mr. O'Neill:** The hon. Gentleman refers to Nimrod. The Labour Government did the business on TSR2; they took the tough decision and cancelled it. The Conservative Government were in power for seven years before they were prepared to grasp the nettle of Nimrod. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that it took seven years to identify the problems in something as glaring as Nimrod. Surely they should have been able to deal with something as insubstantial as the software system in CACS much more quickly.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** When it came to the decision to switch on Nimrod, it was the Opposition who suggested that we should have stayed with GEC.

**Mr. O'Neill:** The Opposition argued at the time that there was a case to be made for sustaining support for the British design for another 18 months. That was the position that we took and which we would have been happy to justify. We were not in government. The Government had eight years to make up their mind. At the end, they sold out British workers and designers because they did not stand up to the people in their own Ministry who sniped persistently at Nimrod and who kept changing the specification. The Minister is on weak ground when he seeks to divert attention to that issue.

I take the Minister's point that we have to await a definite statement on the future of our amphibious capability. We have the usual paragraph that appears every year, but the mid-1990s are getting closer. I do not think that the House will be fobbed off indefinitely with that paragraph. We need something far more concrete than a pious hope that in a couple of years the project analysis will be finished. The Minister owes the House much more, perhaps not in this debate but certainly in the defence estimates debate in July or October.

As to the repair and refit of HMS Southampton, if it had been just the repair of the craft, it would have been legitimate for it to go to Portsmouth. However, given the nature of the work and the fact that it is a professional decision which is not really in the hands of politicians, the decision to repair and refit would have been a heaven sent opportunity for the Government to give much-needed work to Devonport. That might have restored the balance of the Government's betrayal of the dockyard. They reduced the size of the core programme and made an already difficult task in that dockyard much harder.

Following my visits to the two dockyards since privatisation, I agree with the Minister that a great deal has been done. It is a tribute to management and the unions that the understandable anxieties of the work force when the privatisation schemes were going through have to some extent been met. Both sides have buckled down to the job of trying to meet their responsibilities to the Navy. Sad to say, the Ministry of Defence is not meeting its responsibilities to the dockyards.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I join the hon. Gentleman in what he said about the dockyards. Do I understand him to say that he would deprive all the other shipbuilding and repairing yards that would be interested in tendering for HMS Southampton, including those in Scotland, of the opportunity to tender for the work?

**Mr. O'Neill:** Perhaps the Minister will tell the House which yards he is talking about. Perhaps he will tell us which ones are left and which are capable of doing the work. Will he reel them off?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** If I stick to the ones in Scotland, I anticipate that we are likely to have a tender from Babcock Thorn Ltd. in Rosyth, and it is possible that we will have a tender from Yarrow. In the north-east, we would expect to hear from at least one, if not two, yards on the Tyne. In the north-west we would expect to hear from Cammell Laird.

**Mr. O'Neill:** The Minister has not given them all. I imagine that we could get down to plastic hulls from Vospers and one or two places like that. The Minister and I disagree on a basic point. We believe that the quality of the work and the way in which it has been carried out over the years suggests that the naval dockyards are the most effective places to carry out major repairs and refits for the Royal Navy. When the quality of work was compared, that of the dockyards was far superior to that of the private yards. From experience, I should have thought that the Minister would put that as a higher priority than trying to hawk repairs around the yards of Britain in the misleading expectation that he might either create work in other parts of the country or save a few bob for the country.

*[Mr. O'Neill]*

I know that, as a result of television programmes, a number of questions have been tabled about the Trident programme. The "World in Action" programme certainly suggested that all is not well with the expenditure on Trident. At an appropriate time, the Minister will no doubt tell the House much more about it. I am sure, too, that he will have to attend the Select Committee when it carries out what I imagine is its annual survey of Trident.

We have not heard anything today about the construction of the atomic weapons research establishment and the recruitment of staff. We have not heard of the progress of the only British independent part of our deterrent, and whether we will have that, as promised, by 1994-95 or whether there will be a slippage and, as well as renting the missiles, we will have to rent some warheads too.

The Government have yet to come up with the sort of arithmetic that suggests that our Navy will be supported and protected from inflation and from the inter-service battles, which are caused by the inadequacy of the defence budget that in large measure is accounted for by expenditure on the Trident programme. Frankly, there is not much that can be done about the Trident programme, because it is so far down the road. By the next general election, I believe that it will be about 70 per cent. complete.

The Government are misleading the House when they do not take account of the other factors that have yet to be addressed. It is all very well for the Minister to talk piously about the quality of, and the contribution made by, our service personnel, but he must recognise—we made this point in October during the debate on the White Paper—that the demographic changes are not working in favour of the Government. By the early 1990s we shall have considerable difficulty in recruiting personnel. In the 1990s we shall have acute problems in the capital or equipment intensive areas of our services—the Air Force and the Navy.

We must look seriously at the recruitment, training, education and remuneration of our service personnel. We must pay the Government credit for the fact that once again they have accepted the recommendations of the pay board. Only time will tell whether those recommendations will be met when the rate of inflation continues to rise. Certainly the services will be able to recruit some of our finest and most capable young people while there is still unemployment in many areas; those young people will join the services because there is nothing else for them. However, when the number of youngsters drops in the early 1990s, they will need to be attracted to a career with favourable remuneration, working conditions, time off, support and accommodation.

While the Under-Secretary may not have felt that it was within his province, I believe that he gave only one side of the story when he spoke about the increased resources available for the armed services. I hope that the Minister of State will respond to that point.

The Labour party has yet to be reassured on the point made in the Select Committee report about the apparent confusion in the Ministry of Defence over the role and functions of the escort fleet, and what we are supposed to be doing with the 43 or 50 frigates and destroyers. We have yet to receive a clear explanation from the Government of why we need our present Navy. I certainly believe that we need one, and I have indicated some of the areas in which the Labour party would want to make use of that service. The Government must tell us why they need it and that they see the sea lines of communications being defended. Whether they do that on the basis of supporting convoys or individul ships, they must tell us how they will meet their responsibilities for the amphibious craft.

The Government must tell us far more frankly about the ordering programme that we need to maintain the capabilities that we require. The Opposition are not happy with what we have heard today. We await the White Paper not with optimism—as we suspect that it will be more of the same thing—but because we recognise that the Government must do a lot better before they can enjoy the confidence and support of a service for which at present we appear to be doing far less than we should. At present the Navy is doing for us a job which is quite remarkable in the circumstances created by the Government.

4.56 pm

**Mr. Michael Mates** (Hampshire, East): It is always a pleasure to listen to an Opposition Front Bench spokesman who has clearly done his homework and has tried to master his brief. I say that in genuine admiration of the way in which the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) has come to grips with his job. I believe that parts of his analysis would evoke no dissent from Conservative Members. Indeed, most of us could go along with most of his analyses. Now that the hon. Gentleman has his feet under the table—or, to put it more accurately, his bottom on the bed of nails—we must hear from him just what is the defence policy of the Labour party.

We have listened to the hon. Gentleman for 40 minutes. He has made some criticisms of what the Government are doing—some of which are good subjects for debate—but we have not heard one word about whether the size of the Navy is right, whether it is doing the right job or whether the Labour party would have a Navy at all if it were in Government. To go on in the way in which the Labour party is at present is not fooling the electorate or anyone in this House. I look forward with great interest to debating with the hon. Gentleman when he tells us the Labour party's defence policy, whether it has one.

The Minister's speech was welcome in many respects. It was upbeat, and it has good cause to be, because our record on defence and on what we have done for the armed forces is a good one, although, as my hon. Friend knows, some of us feel that there are areas for legitimate debate and criticism. However, as far as it went, his speech was excellent.

The Minister's point about HMS Southampton was well made. To do the refit at the same time as the repair was a competent decision. I believe that the hon. Member for Clackmannan went along with that assessment. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made an uncharacteristically parochial remark. He normally paints on a wider canvas rather than considering only—serious though they are—the interests of constituents. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman would really consider it right for work to go to a dockyard regardless of cost, date of delivery or ability to perform. Obviously the decision to put it out to tender, which

Devonport could well win, is the right one. On reflection, I believe that he will realise that it was one of the less sensible remarks that he has made in the House.

I am glad, too, that we have had a chance to debate the Select Committee's report on the surface fleet, published at the end of last summer. I hope that the analysis that we attempted to make of some of the Government's dilemmas will help the House. I am sad to see that the Government tendered a rather churlish reply. They felt that they were being criticised and got at and, in their reply, retired somewhat into a bunker. I assure them—if they need my assurance—that it was not critical. I said at the time that it was not a critical report but I added that it was a challenging report, because we have to base our assessment of what is going on on the assumptions that the Government have announced, and if we find that there are areas where the Government appear not to match up to those assumptions, that is a legitimate cause of comment.

We tried to analyse the role of the Royal Navy, should we come to war, and the hon. Member for Clackmannan gave much the same analysis as we have all come to accept of the tasks that the Navy might have to do. There is a notable remark in the Government's reply:

"The Government attaches high priority to countering the Soviet submarine threat and to ensuring the security of the Northern Flank. It believes that this will best be achieved by a forward maritime strategy, while possessing flexibility to respond as necessary to opposing force dispositions in the event of war."

That is not to mention any convoy escort duties which might be required, any threat to our shore line or to the Channel which might require mine clearing, minehunting and defence. The Government continually stress the importance to their strategy of flexibility, but flexibility must be in very large part a function of numbers: the fewer ships there are available, the less flexibility, by definition, there can be.

What we have not had from the Government is anything to dispel our concern that forward operations will require such a high proportion of the surface fleet that there will be very little strength for operational flexibility elsewhere. I think that that is a subject that we can legitimately pursue and I hope that it is one that the Government will see fit to argue their corner about, rather than simply dismissing it in a very short paragraph of a Government reply.

I turn now to the question of the figures which, in many areas, the Government reject. They are, of course, entitled to reject our conclusions but it is odd that they do it without suggesting that the facts on which these conclusions are based are wrong. We are left a good number of facts, and there has been no indication in their reply that the Government argue with the facts, simply that they draw different conclusions. That is a matter for the House and it is a matter for individual hon. Members to debate, but if we are to try to have a constructive debate with the Government from the Select Committee's point of view, it is important that they do more than simply dismiss our arguments and produce counter-arguments of their own, based on the same facts as ours, if they agree with them.

We shall continue to monitor very closely the situation as regards the availability of the surface fleet. We now have, after a certain misunderstanding, the monthly returns from the Commander-in-Chief, Fleet. We are very grateful for them—they are useful to us—and we shall continue on the House's behalf to watch the numbers—because they do vary, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan said—and to make sure that, in maintaining the commitment for "about 50", we are not stretching the word "about" beyond the limits of any dictionary definition.

Good news too from the Minister that the planned study for amphibious replacement is under way, but the constant assertion that there is plenty of time is beginning to wear thinnner and thinner as these debates come and go. We were fortunate enough to get out to see Exercise Teamwork in the autumn on board the amphibious ships with the Marines, and, excellently as they are doing their job—and the crews are making the most of them—they are very old ships and really are coming to the end of their natural life.

**Mr. Eric S. Heffer** (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman says that we have not got much time. Who is about to attack us? The Soviet Union? America? Who? I have never heard such a lot of rubbish.

**Mr. Mates:** The hon. Gentleman misunderstands me. I was referring to what the Minister said, which I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman heard, about there being plenty of time before the present amphibious capability becomes obsolete. It is to that——

**Mr. Heffer:** We do not need that immediately. There is a defence.

**Mr. Mates:** I quite understand that the hon. Gentleman has a point of view that we need no defence. It is a view that finds very little sympathy on the Government side of the House, as I know it finds very little in the country. Unpalatable as he may find that, it is the reason why there are a hundred more of us in the House than there are of his party.

**Mr. Heffer:** It is a lie to say that I do not believe in defence.

**Mr. Mates:** I am not generally called a liar, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am not giving way.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker):** Order.

**Mr. Heffer:** It is a lie to say that I do not believe in defence.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you not bring the hon. Member to order? It is the second time that he has used the word.

**Mr. Heffer:** Yes, and I will repeat it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a lie to say that I do not believe in defence.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) is not accusing the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) of telling lies. It would be out of order if he were to do so.

**Mr. Heffer:** He accused me.

**Mr. Mates:** I thought that we were having quite an interesting debate until, rather like a thunderflash in a dustbin, the hon. Gentleman arrived, having not heard the opening speeches and understandably not realising that I

*[Mr. Mates]*

was referring to a part of the Minister's speech that he had not heard. Then he asked me who we were threatened by. I do not feel threatened by him——

**Mr. Heffer:** I feel threatened by you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mates:** On the whole, I take that as a compliment. Nevertheless, it would be prudent if we got this debate back on to its tracks. The interesting diversion to the whole concept of whether we need defence or not is for another day.

The frigate-ordering programme is at the heart of numbers of flexibility. Shortly after our report was published, the Government announced their decision to order three new frigates. This was, of course, welcome as the Government recognised that it was just the sort of measure that the Committee was looking for. They say that this more than meets the requirement which the Committee has identified for 2·6 new ships to be ordered each year if the fleet is to remain at its present size. What we said was that we need to achieve an average of 2·6 ships to be ordered annually over a period of more than six years. We hope that this requirement will be met but that remains to be seen.

At the end of their reply, the Government

"notes the Committee's concern [about] the size of the . . . fleet . . . and the announcement of its decision to order 3 new Type 23 frigates will presumably help to allay these concerns."

While that helps to allay the Committee's concerns, it does not allay them completely, because we are now waiting to see how many ships are to be ordered this year and then how many are to be ordered next year. I say this not as a criticism but as a challenge, because the Government have set themselves a very high target to achieve if they are to maintain the pledge of a fleet of about 50 surface ships, all in good order and not over the top in age. This is something that we must watch in the closest way to see that they are maintained.

We have seen a good bit of the Navy this year. We were able to spend a day on board HMS Illustrious in the North sea on exercise and we visited Exercise Teamwork and went ashore with the Royal Marine commandos in alliance with the Norwegian forces, on both of which occasions we were most impressed with all that we saw. We received a comprehensive briefing at Northwood—perhaps too frank for the taste of the one or two Ministers—when we made an initial visit of this Parliament to the headquarters of the fleet. Nevertheless, it is refreshing that we can see the Navy working as professionally as it always has. I speak for the whole Committee when I say how impressed we have been with the Navy's attitude, demeanour, professionalism and dedication. That goes for those parts of the Navy that we have not seen, particularly those who have been involved in the Gulf and in the Armilla patrol.

In conclusion, I should like to say how warmly I welcome what the Government are doing—up to the point they have told us about. In the near, middle and distant future we shall be looking for an absolute undertaking that the guarantees and pledges made about the strength of the Royal Navy will be honoured.

5.9 pm

**Mr. A. E. P. Duffy** (Sheffield, Attercliffe): NATO's unity during the past 40 years has been based mainly on a common perception of the threat posed by Soviet expansionism, in both its military and political manifestations. As Mr. Gorbachev continues to set the international agenda, however, there is evidence of a weakening of that common perception. How do we, as parliamentarians concerned for security policy, interpret a development that is increasingly bewildering to colleagues and constituents who are increasingly in favour of a radical reassessment of western policy, and probably impatient to see some evidence of early progress?

How do we explain the exemption of naval forces from the forthcoming negotiations in Vienna on conventional forces? Why do naval forces call for separate treatment in arms control talks? Why is there no reference to the naval component in the assessment of the Soviet threat in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", either in paragraphs 104 to 108 or pages 5 to 7?

Surely, the most significant strategic development of out time is the enormous expansion of Soviet maritime capability since the early 1960s. I do not refer just to the growth of the Soviet navy and naval air force—it is twice the size of our Royal Air Force—but to the carefully nurtured growth of its merchant, oceanographic and fishing fleets, which are now operating worldwide.

How do we respond to the invitation of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) to assess this naval threat in the light of perestroika? Has perestroika yet led to any reductions in the Soviet maritime posture? I entirely share my hon. Friend's curiosity and anxiety that, if there are grounds for doing so, we should proceed as soon as possible to re-examine the naval threat.

As a result of my curiosity during the past three months, and of exchanges with SACEUR, and the commander in chief in the Pacific—this is relevant because the largest of the Soviet fleets is now deployed in the Pacific and no longer in the Kola inlet—and talks in NATO only last week and at SHAPE, I was repeatedly assured that there was no evidence yet, even on the margins, of any reductions in Soviet military postures—maritime or otherwise—as a result of perestroika. That suggests to me that, even more than arms control, the western alliance needs an overall political concept for dealing with the new circumstances brought about by Mr. Gorbachev's new thinking. Failing that, the Western alliance will undoubtedly run into trouble over its strategy doctrine and the practical decisions needed to carry it out.

The Soviet northern fleet is of greatest concern to us. We must continue to ask ourselves why the Soviets need such naval forces, even if reduced—although as yet there is no evidence of that. Why do the Soviets need such potent forces? Can they be only for defensive purposes?

In addition to protecting shipping on their own sea lines of communication, the Soviets have the ability to threaten allied reinforcement shipping that is vital to the West for the defence not only of the central European land mass and the northern flank of NATO, but for the sustenance of our own civilian populations. We must expect the Soviets to conduct amphibious operations in support of their land campaigns.

The threat is multidimensional and increasing in reach and capability. At one end of the spectrum is surveillance

from space; at the other, complex underwater warfare from the open oceans and polar regions, to the vicinity of our own shallow seas and choke points.

In a time of rising tension or hostilities, we, with our allies, would be responsible for the maintenance of sea control in the whole of the east Atlantic. For the United Kingdom, that includes—this must be stated and restated—first, a major anti-submarine effort using our carriers, towed array frigates, submarines and maritime patrol aircraft and, secondly, the support of reinforcement forces.

In consequence, we shall see a significant change in the make-up of the fleet. During the 1990s, type 12s, Leanders, Counties, Bristols and type 21s will all leave the active fleet. Air coverage will continue to be provided only by type 42 destroyers, while our principal anti-submarine warfare escorts will be type 22 and type 23 frigates. We shall work to just two two classes of surface escort—the type 23 for the ASW and a successor to the type 42 for anti-air warfare. I hope that the latter will come from the NFR90 programme. I entirely share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan for the preservation of that programme, not only for our own shipbuilding capacity or fleet but for the collaborative programme of which it is a part. A more broadly based collaborative programme is not available to the Alliance. Now and then we hear whispers that that programme is at risk. I hope that it is not and I hope that the Minister will accept my hon. Friend's invitation and assure the House that the programme is as secure as it can be at this stage.

I think that, on personal contemplation, any hon. Member will agree that the forward look that I have offered to the House is bound to come about. How far is that development reflected in today's defence estimates or the long-term costings? Yet, if there are marginal reductions in the Soviet maritime posture—even without the additions described by the Minister when he opened the debate—we still have to face the threat from fast, deeper-diving and quieter Soviet submarines such as the Alpha, and the heavy armament of the Oscar. I single out only two classes, but they both demand a higher standard of response. Bigger and more numerous weapon control and communication systems often lead to larger and therefore more costly ships.

The underwater threat today is as great as it was in 1942-43, In spite of advances in methods of detecting submarines and the effectiveness of the weapons used against them, operational research in world war two showed that the submarine threat could be effectively countered only by adequate numbers of escorts and aircraft operating together as an integrated ASW force. The operative word here is "adequate". Do we have adequate surface forces?

Despite the Government's oft-repeated pledge to maintain a fleet of about 50 destroyers and frigates, I wonder how many hon. Members present—all of whom are interested in our security policy—are really assured on that point. As I recall, we have not had a debate for some years in which such anxiety has not been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

In the debate in October on the defence estimates, I raised several questions and the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement replied to me afterwards, for which I am grateful. I am sorry that he could not stay, so that I could thank him for his good response, which was helpful to debates of this kind. I hope that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will convey my public thanks to him. I asked him how many vessels were operational and how many in dockyards or on disposal lists. He replied:

"On 11 November, 38 Destroyers/Frigates were available immediately, or within a short period, and nine were in refit".

Those are sobering figures. The Minister continued:

"We plan to pay off 2 ships by the end of the financial year; Two new type 22s will be introduced into service in the same period."

So it is possible that we are now down to 38, and certainly no more than 40. The Navy has been demanding peacetime commitments of the fleet in the south Atlantic and on the Armilla patrol, commitments which account for as many as 25 per cent. of the 38 surface ships. This overstretch must prejudice naval participation in NATO exercises.

Extending ships' lives and modifying upkeep cycles could maintain the fleet, but that will involve keeping a number of ships in service longer than was originally intended. Moreover, extending a ship's life increases maintenance requirements and is likely to lead to further reductions in availability——

**Mr. Archie Hamilton** I hope that I can put the hon. Gentleman out of his agony. The statistics at the moment are that there are 49 destroyers and frigates in the fleet, 41 of which could be made available for operational deployment immediately or within a short period.

**Mr. Duffy:** I am grateful for that information, but it still represents a reduction to 41 from 43 just a year ago. The trend is downwards. The number is certainly not 50 or thereabouts, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannon reminded the Minister. The figures that the Government are good enough to yield up show a descending trend, which is a matter of concern to both sides of the House.

I also want to discuss the structure and composition of the fleet. The Minister told me:

"The average age of our major warships is currently just over 12 years, which compares favourably with that of our NATO allies.

By now the average age of our carriers is six years, of our destroyer and frigates 12 years, and of our landing platform docks—including amphibious ships—22 years. So we cannot settle for figures alone. We thank the Government for being helpful about figures, but we need to know more about the quality of the ships.

Considering the vast amount of shipping that would operate in the north European NATO area in a time of crisis, we realise that it would be completely at the mercy of the mine unless routes were secured by NATO's mine countermeasure forces. Much of the burden of securing the sea lanes, not only for merchant ships but for the Navy's warships and attack submarines and SSBNs, will fall on the Navy's mine countermeasures vessels. The Minister knows that I have been especially interested in this subject for some time; I keep asking questions about it, and did so last October, thereby securing a further reply from the Minister.

I wanted to know how many of the minesweeper orders planned under a £1 billion modernisation scheme introduced by the Government near the beginning of their period of office would be completed by the mid-1990s. The programme was intended to provide us with about 50 new hulls. The Minister replied:

*[Mr. Duffy]*

"We have brought 19 new MCMVs into service since 1979, and there are currently five single role Mine Hunters on order. We expect to order more in due course, but no decision has yet been taken on the size and timing of further orders."

So 19 out of 50 have been finished and we are more than halfway through the life of the programme. Although the Minister referred to the programme, he did not mention new orders, although it had been expected, last year as well as this, that there would be an order for four SRMH-type vessels.

I have said enough to show that there are ample grounds for concern about the state of the Navy. That concern cannot be limited to frigates, destroyers or mine countermeasures vessels. The MOD was reported last summer as trying to divert criticism by pointing out that the Navy also has carrier and submarine forces, but it failed to mention that there is neither the manpower nor the aircraft to man one third of the carrier forces, even in crisis. The MOD also failed to point out that no further nuclear submarines—attack submarines—can be built for use by the fleet until the Trident force is complete, with the result that the attack submarine force will age in the same way as the frigates and destroyers, perhaps to a point from which recovery will be difficult.

Feasibility studies for the replacement of the amphibious assault ships Fearless and Intrepid continue, according to the Minister. He mentioned the aviation support ship and said that a tender would be invited in July. All that suggests a slowing down.

Merchant shipping, as was shown in 1982, now forms an integral part of the amphibious lift capability in contingency planning and would provide the bulk of the British minesweeping forces too, having a vital role in the carriage of NATO reinforcements across the Atlantic.

The defence statement devotes only two paragraphs to merchant shipping and, compared with the 1987 statement, amounts to a tacit admission that the size of the British merchant fleet is no longer adequate to meet both NATO's reinforcement requirement and that of the support of the United Kingdom's armed forces.

On manpower, outflow is still high. The most serious shortfalls are to be found among the voluntary reserves. In 1984 the Government announced a plan to increase the strengh of the voluntary reservists in the Royal Naval Reserve by 40 per cent., from 5,226 to 7,800 by the early 1990s. The previous year it was announced that the Royal Marines Reserve would be increased from 1,047 to 1,580.

This defence statement shows that, on 1 January a year ago, the RNR had 5,600 men and women, and the RMR 1,300. Thus, four years after launching their expansion plans, the Government have achieved less than 10 per cent. of their target for the RNR, and less than 50 per cent. for the RMR in five years.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** As a former aviator, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that the RNR Air Squadron is more than fully recruited—it has many applicants whom it cannot place in stocks.

**Mr. Duffy:** As a former reservist I take pleasure from that, but it is the only section of which that is true. Overall, the MOD still needs to enrol another 2,200 recruits over and above wastage levels by 1994—the promised target date by which it was hoped that the reserve will be capable of manning 60 per cent. of all British MCM ships and providing 12 per cent. of total naval manpower in war.

I was pleased to learn from the Minister that more resources will be available in real terms to the Navy over the next three years. I have had time to only describe a few areas in which those increased resources will be very welcome.

5.28 pm

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): The House will have been extremely pleased to hear the remarks of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who clearly stated that forward defence was vital to preventing a Soviet naval breakout. We have often heard it said that the forward defence of Germany is the forward defence of the United Kingdom. It was refreshing to hear a Defence Minister stating that the principle of forward defence applied also to maritime defence.

This principle was reiterated in the Western European Union platform of The Hague in which all the member countries committed themselves to the defence of their nations at their borders. When we are talking about northern defence in naval terms, most of us are thinking about a northern dimension of maritime defence. The balance of power on the northern flank preoccupies strategists and is of great concern for the security of this country.

Over the past 20 years, the Soviet navy has indeed become an instrument for global power projection. It can be argued why that occurred, but in the past 20 years not only has the Soviet navy acquired a blue water capability but it has become a formidable component of the USSR's strategic nuclear deterrent force; if deterrent be the right word. With the introduction into service of the very latest SSBNs such as the Typhoon and the Delta IV, the need for the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear submarines to go into the farthest oceans of the globe to carry out their intimidatory or deterrent missions has been obviated. Now of course, the SSBNs of the Soviet Union can lurk equally effectively in the dark and icy waters of the Arctic, the Barents sea and the Greenland sea.

This may in part be an explanation for the apparent diminution of exercise activity in the past three years. There may be other reasons such as that the Soviet navy needs to absorb the new equipment which it has acquired. It probably needs to make some savings in running costs by cutting down on sea time. Naturally, as the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), the chairman of the political committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, has pointed out, it would indeed be embarrassing for the Soviet Union if the naval exercise programme of the Soviet fleet was out of step with the political statements of Secretary-General Gorbachev. The Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), has alluded to this factor.

If we accept that the deterrent balance is operating in a period of arms control when it is likely that land-based systems will be the first to be dismantled—which was already the case for the INF—then the importance of sea-based nuclear delivery systems will increase, with SSBNs and submarine-launched cruise missile systems as well as air-launched cruise missile systems and dual

capable systems also. Therefore, it is very important for the Soviet Union to maintain the modernisation of its northern fleet. It seems to have done so, as I pointed out.

However, we must not confuse apparent intention with capability. Intentions can change as rapidly as the men who are supposed to have them. Capabilities, especially in modern naval warfare, can take decades to acquire. It is clear that the Soviet Union has acquired the capability to operate the very latest systems. Its submarines, such as the Typhoon, are the deepest diving in the world. They have acquired quiet technology from the United States and are a formidable threat.

Furthermore, the Soviets regard sea power as a seamless web, with a spectrum of capabilities from the intelligence gatherers to the fishing vessels, from the merchant marine to the oceanographic vessels to the high sea and coastal forces of the Soviet navy, with its attendant naval aviation. Britain must address this maritime threat on the northern flank.

**Mr. O'Neill:** Does the hon. Gentleman for giving way, also accept that the British Navy considers that its activities take the form of a seamless garment? The point I particularly wish to make concerns the acceptance of the forward northern strategies by NATO. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that acceptance implies the willingness and the capability of the Alliance to fight a nuclear war at sea, and to win in the very early stages of a conflict in Europe? Is that what the hon. Gentleman understands to be the underlying theme of a northern maritime strategy? If so, is it any wonder that the Norwegian Government are most concerned about the provocative deployment of these ships in northern waters?

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. His remarks merit clarification.

I was lecturing to the Oslo Military Society last night. The naval strategy and forward posture of NATO greatly interest Norwegians. They regard the forward naval strategy of SACLANT to be as important as the West Germans regard the forward strategy of SACEUR. SACLANT's posture is a deterrent one. In other words it is important to have adequate warning of a possible threat available to the NATO alliance. Secondly, the warning should be properly interpreted. Thirdly, political decisions should be taken promptly and fearlessly. Fourthly, reinforcements should take place early enough.

Two aspects of such reinforcement must be highlighted. The defence of northern Norway depends very much on the arrival at the earliest possible date of SACLANT's striking fleet Atlantic. Without the early arrival of SACLANT's carrier battle group into the Norwegian sea, it is possible that deterrence might fail. This is important. The second aspect is that relevant amphibious forces have to be mobilised—first, the United States marine brigade so that it can be put into Norway to take advantage of the equipment that has been pre-stocked there recently; secondly, the United Kingdom-Netherlands amphibious force, which should at least get under way. It is arguable, however, that it should not be put ashore too early, as the flexibility that such marine forces inherently possess should be available until the appropriate moment.

We delude ourselves if we imagine that NATO surface vessels would be able to survive in the Norwegian sea if deterrence broke down without the striking fleet Atlantic. The dominance of Soviet air power is such that they would be very much exposed. When people talk of the European role, especially that of the Royal Navy, before the arrival of SACLANT's striking fleet Atlantic, I assume that the emphasis will be on the activity of SSNs to try and keep tabs on the SSBNs and important components of the northern fleet. Certain commentators suggest that Invincible class carriers would be safe to operate up north, I question this very much. An early objective of Soviet commanders would be to deny NATO the northern airfields in Norway, if not to take them.

We should recall that the Soviet marine brigade which is available in the Kola now exercises regularly and would be a serious threat. Therefore, the key to the whole scenario up north and to the effectiveness of our strategy is the air situation.

**Mr. Trotter:** My hon. Friend has referred, rightly, to the need for the striking fleet, but will he confirm that he is referring to conventional deterrence?

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I can give my hon. Friend no such confirmation. The whole essence of deterrence is to have a range of capabilities, and by their nature, carrier groups are dual capable. That is why the Soviets would be foolhardy to launch aggression of any kind against northern Norway or any part of the Alliance. It is important for the Alliance to have a nuclear capability because it is fundamental to our strategy. That is well understood by the Soviets and it has helped to preserve the peace.

**Mr. O'Neill:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for answering my earlier question in some detail. He has painted a scenario in which there would be the possible use of NATO SSNs against Soviet SSBNs—against ballistic missile submarines in the Soviet fleet. Does he not think that the early challenge of those SSBNs would bring about the likelihood of an early use by the Soviet Union of nuclear weapons on the basis that they should either lose them or use them? It was that kind of provocative act which I implied in my initial question.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** No. I used the phrase "keep tabs on". One must remember that a forward naval strategy has a peacetime dimension just as much as it has a wartime dimension. The Norwegians are fearful lest the Norwegian Sea should, in peacetime, become a mare Sovieticum, for the NATO allies do not spend nearly as many sea days as do the Soviets in this inhospitable stretch of water. We should, in peace, have a capability and exercise there regularly, and then, should we have a transition to what could—and we hope it will not—be war, we would be in the right place at the right time and with the right range of naval forces.

In this period, when we are rightly preoccupied with arms control and are seeking to make progress towards a reduction perhaps of 50 per cent. in strategic nuclear delivery systems—and, hopefully, reductions in chemical weapons and ultimately in conventional forces on the central front—we should not forget that these developments make even more important naval power in general and naval nuclear deterrent power in particular.

As we are increasingly preoccupied with the central front and the attendant balance of forces, let us not forget the imbalance of the northern region, in that the Soviet Union is in place there with substantial forces, whereas the Danes and the Norwegians are totally dependent, if

*[Mr. Wilkinson]*

deterrence fails, on our NATO reinforcement. Such reinforcement cannot effectively take place unless we take the hard political decisions early enough, unless we make the reinforcement decisions quickly and effectively and, above all, unless we have the air power available to make the forward naval strategy possible.

5.44 pm

**Mr. John Cartwright** (Woolwich): I wish to comment in particular on the final comments by the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), for there will be satisfaction in all parts of the House that this debate should be taking place against a background of a more positive international climate than has been the case with naval debates for some years.

We welcome the progress that has been made on arms control. We hope that the INF treaty will be followed by progress on strategic nuclear weapons, and we hope that there will be progress in the conventional stability talks, which will enable mutual security and stability to be assured at much lower levels or armaments deployment.

There are clear signs that the Soviets are beginning to make cuts in their offensive capabilities. They have a long way to go before they have achieved the sort of cuts that would remove the sense of insecurity which exists in western Europe, but it is right to acknowledge that the process has at least started, and that is to be welcomed.

Welcome though those developments are, they are no reason for taking risks with our defences or for gambling with our security. In particular, they offer us no reason for giving up Britain's nuclear capability. That is why I believe it right for the Government to be proceeding with the Trident programme. It is well known that Trident would not have been my first preference for Britain's minimum nuclear deterrent, but those arguments are now behind us. It is now clearly a question of Trident or no nuclear deterrent in Britain, and on the basis of that choice, I prefer Trident to no nuclear weapons of any sort.

I say that because I do not believe that the aim of securing the sort of mutual balanced nuclear disarmament that we want to see would be helped by Britain throwing away its nuclear weapons. I was glad to see Mr. Gorbachev taking that view when a delegation recently waited on him in the Soviet Union.

Trident is a flexible system. Its firepower can be reduced by reducing the number of missiles carried on each submarine or by cutting the number of warheads on each missile. I hope that the British Government are alive to the possibility of such developments in terms of arms control and are willing to scale down Britain's nuclear capacity in line with cuts made by other nations.

Before dealing with the role and size of the surface fleet, I must deal with the issue of decommissioning nuclear submarines, a problem which is with us. We know that Dreadnought came out of service in 1982, that its nuclear fuel was removed and that it has been lying at Rosyth ever since, awaiting a decision on the appropriate method of disposal. We also know that a further nine nuclear-powered submarines will be coming out of service by the year 2000.

I understand that the Ministry of Defence has identified three possible options for dealing with the problem. The first is to sink the entire submarine at sea. I should have thought that in the present environmentally conscious world climate, that would not be a popular step to take. So that is not a strong option.

The second is to bury the intact reactor compartment somewhere on land. Again, I cannot imagine that we would be knocked down in the rush as inhabitants of the United Kingdom volunteered to have those components buried in their areas. The third alternative is to cut up the reactor plant and store the parts piecemeal with a view eventually to disposing of them in deep sites which have yet to be developed.

Replies to parliamentary questions show that no decisions about those options have yet been taken. We are told that the options are under active consideration, which reminds me of old Civil Service joke that when something is said to be under active consideration, it means that the papers have been lost and officials are searching for them. I hope that that is not the case in this instance, although we have been told by the Ministry of Defence that those options have been under active consideration for several years.

In a memorandum provided to the Defence Committee, the Ministry says:

"it is not possible to say when a decision on the way forward will be reached. It remains the MoD's intention however that decisions will be taken in good time to ensure adequate and safe disposal or storage of this category of nuclear waste and to prevent unacceptable interference with RN operations."

That is, I am sure, intended to be a reassuring comment. It sounds, I am sure the Minister will accept, somewhat bland and complacent, and I hope that we shall get some greater sense of urgency on this matter, some clearer indication of when decisions are to be taken, when the Minister replies.

I now turn to the role of the Royal Navy and the size of the surface fleet and, like others who have spoken in this debate, I will start with the issue of forward defence. In our last debate on the Navy on 3 March, the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces made it clear that forward defence was a very important element for the Royal Navy. He said:

"The Royal Navy would thus make a key contribution to NATO's strategy of forward defence, seeking to contain and intercept Soviet maritime forces in the Norwegian sea before they could reach the wider expanses of the Atlantic."—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1988; Vol. 128, c. 1176.]

In the evidence that has been given to the Select Committee, it has become, I think, fairly clear that that appears to be the primary aim of the surface fleet in a wartime situation.

The limited number of vessels available makes it likely that other roles—defence of convoys, for example, and protection of seas around the United Kingdom—would inevitably have a lower priority because of the demands of this forward defence strategy.

I have no difficulty with the concept in general of forward defence. I can see too the attraction of seeking to bottle up Soviet maritime forces, and particularly Soviet submarines, north of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap. If that could be achieved, it might well provide the most effective defence for the re-supply convoys which would have to cross the Atlantic from north America.

However, there are certain obvious question marks hanging over this strategy and its effectiveness. In a period of tension, for example, the forward deployment of royal naval vessels in the Norwegian sea could only monitor the

movements of Soviet naval forces. Clearly, in a period of tension there is no way in which one could stop the movement of those Soviet naval forces, and one could not stop them reaching the Atlantic, where they could subsequently, if there were to be a conflict, prey on merchant ships crossing the Atlantic.

In a period of tension it can at least be argued, I think with some force, that forward deployment would be seen as extremely provocative and could aggravate an already difficult situation. So there are doubts about the effectiveness of this strategy; it would certainly absorb a large proportion of scarce naval assets, and it could turn out to be ineffective by simply trying to bolt the stable door long after the horse had gone.

The Ministry of Defence, faced with that sort of criticism, has stressed that this is a flexible approach and that the strategy would have to vary depending on the circumstances of the time. The difficulty I see is that, the fewer ships that are available, the less possibility there is for that degree of flexibility, and that is where we come back to this constant problem of the current size of our surface fleet.

We have already had comment in this debate on what "about 50" means in terms of numbers. We have already established that, at any given time—this is clearly a changing picture—fewer than 50 vessels are actually available. The evidence given to the Select Committee by the Ministry of Defence, for example, shows that, on 2 March 1988, 36 ships were fully available for operations, with seven preparing for operations or in trials and training. On 10th June, 32 ships were fully available, with eight more available at short notice. So, at any given time, considerably fewer than 50 vessels are available for actual service.

I sought to argue in the debate last year that one of the problems about this situation is that the current size of the surface fleet appears to be dictated not by the tasks that it is being asked to carry out but by the availability of funds to pay for the vessels needed. I was very encouraged to see a memorandum put to the Defence Select Committee by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton, who made just the same point. He said:

"Thus the present size . . . of the destroyer/frigate force bears no actual relation to the present threat, but is based solely on what this Government believes it can afford to spend on it."

He went on:

"This opinion has been publicly stated on many recent occasions by the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic—who asserts that he has no more than half the number he needs to perform his assigned war tasks—and by our own successive Commanders in Chief."

Lord Hill-Norton commented about the implications of the "about 50" force when he was personally responsible for these matters. He said that, at that point, "the number which Ministers accepted to be necessary was 68, and I have seen no evidence that the threat has since diminished."

That sort of expert comment puts the "about 50" surface vessels argument into perspective. We really ought to ensure that we have the number of vessels to carry out the tasks or we ought to reduce the tasks to be sure that they can adequately be carried out by the force we have. We cannot simply go on stretching the available assets to cover a wider area than is reasonable.

Like other Members who have spoken, I think the issue is not only the number involved but the age of the vessels that we are talking about. In 1981, the Government proposed to dispose early of older ships and that they would accelerate the introduction of the type 23 frigates. However, when they came to respond to the fourth report of the Defence Committee in 1986-87, they referred to

"decisions to extend ships' lives and modify upkeep cycles, with the result that it is not now necessary to order three frigates a year in order to maintain a surface fleet of about 50 destroyers and frigates."

It is therefore quite clear that the Government are honouring their famous pledge to maintain the "about 50" surface fleet by keeping in service a number of older ships, which on earlier criteria were coming to the end of their useful life. That clearly seems to be a policy response to financial pressures on the defence budget, but it has had implications for the effectiveness of the surface fleet. As other hon. Members have pointed out, older ships need larger crews, and that adds to the demands on the Navy's manpower. It is certainly likely to aggravate the problem of family separation, which in its turn has an adverse impact on the problem of retention of trained and skilled manpower. We also know that older ships may be more vulnerable; they certainly have higher maintenance costs, lower reliability, and all the problems of obsolescence.

Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton had something to say about this in his memorandum to the Defence Committee:

"Our ships must have capabilities which match the threat, and if they do not their deterrent value progressively lacks credibility. To dilute capability by running on our current generation of ships beyond an effective age, would require a reversion to the policy of major up-dating which experience has proved to be too expensive."

That again, I think, is a very important issue.

We have already had reference in this debate to the question of ordering policy, and the Select Committee in their report, which we are considering in conjunction with this debate, suggested that a total of 25 frigates was due to be withdrawn from service over the next decade, even allowing for the longer operational life which the Government now proposes. At that point, eight ships were on order, and the Committee therefore calculated that 17 vessels were needed over six and half years. That led to the famous calculation that we needed an ordering rate of 2·6 ships a year.

In reality, the Select Committee suggested, that meant ordering two in 1988, three in 1989, and then alternately two and three every year up to and including 1994. After the publication of that report, the Government announced an order for three new frigates, and I remember the Minister claiming that that had more than met the need for the 2·6 identified by the Select Committee. Of course, the Select Committee was making it clear that that was only the first stage in the programme it had outlined. The order that the Government announced last year followed a period when, in two out of three years, no orders at all had been placed; the last time the Government ordered three type 23s was in 1986-87, and there was no order at all in the following year. With that sort of pattern, the ordering rate will clearly fall well below the programme set out by the Select Committee. The result is that we shall end up with a smaller, older and less effective surface fleet.

Admiral Lord Hill-Norton addressed just that point when he said:

"Unless there is a large increase in the rate of ordering, applied at once and continued, the Royal Navy thus faces an inevitable decline to a total which will certainly be less than 45

*[Mr. John Cartwright]*

operational destroyers and frigates in the mid 1990s. This must come close to the total of 42 planned in the ill judged 1981 Review."

He concluded:

"The facts seem to demonstrate that the Government intends, perhaps unwittingly, to allow a decline of this order to occur."

Such a charge, by someone with the experience and distinction of Admiral Lord Hill-Norton, must be taken much more seriously than it has been so far by the Government. I look forward with great interest to the Minister's reply on that issue.

6 pm

**Mr. Neville Trotter** (Tynemouth): It is understandable that in opening the debate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement should have concentrated on the Royal Navy's equipment, but I want to begin by referring to the men and women who serve in it. When one visits the Navy one is always impressed by the enthusiasm, confidence, air of responsibility and professionalism of those one meets, who often seem to be particularly young men and women.

The commander of the United States surface warfare establishment said last year that there was no better anti-submarine warfare force in the world than the Royal Navy. That was a tribute indeed, coming from that source. It is due mainly to the high professionalism of the people who serve in the Royal Navy.

The quality of life in the Royal Navy is as high now as ever. If one reads the Navy's annual reports that are circulated to retired officers, one sees the worldwide extent of the service's involvement—the submarines Superb and Turbulent surfacing together at the north pole—the first occasion on which two Royal Navy submarines have been there together; Endurance at the other end of the globe on its annual duties in the Antarctic; the Ark Royal leading a squadron to Australia; the guard ships of the Falkland Islands, and the 7,000 men in the submarine service about whom we naturally seldom hear much. I was struck to hear last year of the conventional submarine that sailed on patrol to the Falklands from the United Kingdom and was away for no fewer than 139 days, of which 109 were at sea —a remarkable achievement. It is only right to also pay tribute to the men of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary who support the Navy wherever it may go in the world.

Naturally, in the circumstances of last year, it is the Gulf to which we should pay particular attention. Month after month in harm's way, the Navy has performed there with superb professionalism and the highest morale. We are talking here today about the theories of naval warfare, but it is important to remember the endurance of our crews on those ships in the Gulf who served watch and watch about, six hours on and six hours off, under constant threat of attack day after day on a regular basis. In 70 days HMS London alone escorted 13 million tonnes of merchant shipping in and out of that hostile area, the crew constantly tense and on alert for attack.

In the 10 months to the end of October, before the escorting of convoys ceased, no fewer than 621 merchant ships were escorted and not one was attacked, and none were attacked under escort in the previous period during which the patrol operated. No less than 25 per cent. of all sea time in the Royal Navy has been Gulf-related. The escort of merchant ships in the Gulf has now ceased, but the squadron remains on patrol in that part of the world. Who can say that trouble will not flare up again in those distant waters?

Naturally enough, over the years when we have been considering the Royal Navy's role, its NATO context has received most attention. This is the 40th year of NATO and it has been a remarkably successful peace-keeping operation. It is against the capabilities and intentions of the Soviet Union and its navy that we must continue primarily to consider the future force, strength and disposition of the Royal Navy.

The Soviet navy's capabilities remain undiminished. In the past three years 15 per cent. of the Soviet main northern fleet has been replaced by new ships. Two nuclear-powered battle cruisers have joined this fleet, as have two new aircraft carriers, and there is now in service a nuclear-powered electronic jamming vessel, unique in the world. Whatever the Soviet leadership's intentions, there is constant military expenditure on new and very capable equipment at sea as on land and in the air. Until we see some reduction in that massive military production by the Soviet Union, we must continue to be on our guard. All hon. Members hope that the reduced tension that we enjoy today will continue, but it would be unwise to ignore the Soviet capabilities.

When we consider the Royal Navy's future, we should pay particular attention to its worldwide capabilities and the tasks that it may unexpectedly be required to perform. Who can say what will happen in 10 years' time in some remote part of the world? Who could have foretold that the author of a rather dull-sounding novel might set the middle east aflame in the way that is possible at this time? Who can say that there will not be some need for the Royal Navy to intervene in some far-off spot which has nothing whatever to do with tensions between east and west? This in itself is a justification for maintaining Britain's naval capability.

The demands on the sailors in the Royal Navy are as high now as they ever have been. Inevitably, naval life has always involved separation, and I pay particular tribute to those at home in the naval personnel and family service who look after the 33,000 families of the sailors, especially when they are away on long-distance voyages. The Navy has always worked hard, and it is now working very hard indeed. We must keep an eye on the sea-shore ratio, which always used to be 40 per cent. at sea and 60 per cent. ashore, but is now in danger of swinging the other way. The highest priority must be to retain the skilled and expensively trained senior ratings and officers in the service. At present, that is not a particular worry, but it is something to which we must give constant attention for the future.

I have noticed with interest the complex changes that have been made to the system of allowances in all three services. The Royal Navy's allowances have been particularly complex. I understand that the objective has been to compensate particularly those who suffer from family separation through sea service. If the Treasury, or anybody else, were tempted to save money in that direction, it would be a false economy. It is essential to maintain a system that encourages senior men to continue to serve in the service.

There is a clear case for less manpower-intensive ships so that we can reduce the strain on naval manpower. The published aim is that the total personnel strength of the

Navy will be reduced by another 4,000 in the years ahead. The best way of achieving that reduction must be through the introduction of new ships requiring smaller crews. We have a major ordering programme in hand, with 10 frigates and nine submarines under construction. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will not be surprised to hear me say that there is a need for further orders, in particular for further frigate orders.

In the Falklands campaign we proved that our ships are good and there is no question but that the new type 23 frigate will be very good. In 1854 Lord Kelvin said:

"The public cannot tolerate large increases in costs for small increases in performance for guns and ships. Large increases in costs and questionable increases in performance can be tolerated only for racehorses and fancy women."

There is the same tendency today for the cost of each new generation of military equipment to be much greater than that of the last. However, unlike in Lord Kelvin's time, the new ships are at least twice as good as those that they are replacing.

The question of the number of frigates will obviously continue to be very contentious. I suggest that my hon. Friends have created a cross for themselves by ever putting forward the figure of "about 50". Once that figure was publicly mooted it became a benchmark against which all the time comparisons would be made. So far as I am aware, nobody has ever said that there ought to be 50 infantry battalions or 50 squadrons of aircraft in the Royal Air Force, but, perhaps unwisely, the figure of "about 50" has become a benchmark for the strength of the surface navy.

**Mr. Sayeed:** Is my hon. Friend aware of the NATO force goals, which deal with figures of ships now required?

**Mr. Trotter:** I suspect that other NATO force goals similarly refer to the number of infantry battalions and squadrons of the Royal Air Force that we should have.

Having set the target of 50 in the public perception, we ought to achieve it, and I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Minister of State say this afternoon that we are nearly there. The figure is 49; we need only one more to achieve 50. I suggest that it would be well worth while to ensure that we have 50 so that this argument can cease. But, far more important than whether we have 49, 48 or 50 is the capability of those ships and I believe that there is a very strong argument for continuing the type 23 programme.

Twenty-six type 22s and type 42s will continue to serve in the fleet for many years ahead, but there are all the old Leanders and in time the type 21s to replace. Presumably we shall need some 24 new frigates to replace them. Seven type 23s have so far been ordered; that leaves 17. I very much hope that we shall see at least three more ordered in the very near future. It is now a year since the tendering process started for the last batch and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to consider very seriously whether they should not now be starting the procurement process for the next batch of type 23s.

The life of a warship should be decided not just on the obsolescence of its equipment and the wear and tear on its systems, but on its operating costs. The old Leanders are undoubtedly very costly to maintain and operate. Inevitably there is very heavy maintenance, not just because of their age, but because of their design and the fact that they have an old steam plant and, in particular, a very large crew. The crew of a Leander is 50 per cent. bigger than that of a replacing type 23, and, as I have already said, the latter is twice as good as the ship it is replacing. There are, therefore, great manpower savings as well as capability improvements and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to think very carefully about the need for a sustained replacement programme of these older ships.

The need for other naval orders is, I suggest, at least as self-evident. The AORs are an essential part of the concept of the operation of the type 23. I hope that before too long we shall hear that tenders have been requested for the third of the AORs. I believe that the original intention was that there should be six and I hope that we shall build up to that figure as soon as possible.

The support given this afternoon from the Front Bench for our amphibious capability was good news. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) about the need for our Royal Marine force to arrive in Norway at the earliest possible moment in a crisis. I would see its arrival in good time as a deterrent to an attack on Norway and to conventional war breaking out in that part of the world.

Certainly the Royal Marines have a unique capability also to intervene in unexpected crises in the rest of the world. It is good news that the Government are proceeding with the aviation support ship and are planning a replacement for the two commando landing ships Intrepid and Fearless. Surely it must be better to go for a new build in this direction rather than a refit of the existing hulls, which will be 30 years old. We shall have a much better ship and a much smaller crew if we start all over again and design with modern technology.

**Sir Antony Buck:** I should like to say how much I agree with my hon. Friend about the replacement of the amphibious ships to which he has referred. Many of us are firmly committed to the amphibious capability. In dealing with the northern flank, would he commend one thing, which I believe has been an improvement over the years, and that is the prepositioning of heavy supplies, so that the men can be got there quickly and will be greeted by the supplies they need, which do not have to be taken great distances across the sea?

**Mr. Trotter:** As my hon. Friend knows, that is the case with the American marine brigade, which has its equipment based prepositioned. The problem with prepositioning is that there has to be two lots of equipment —one based there and one for other operations—which is expensive. Also, of course, one must maintain the capability to intervene elsewhere than the north. But I agree entirely with the principle of what my hon. Friend has said.

Turning to the question of repair work for the Navy, I was absolutely astonished to hear both the Opposition Front Benchers say that the repair of HMS Southampton should not go out to competition, and presumably that Tyneside should not be allowed to show that it can win this work and should not be given the chance for fair competition. Apart from the fact that it is most unfair to suggest that this work should not be made available, it would be more costly simply to allocate the work to one of the dockyards as suggested by the Opposition.

In my own part of the world, Swan Hunter has just won the design contract for the updating of both the type 42s and the three aircraft carriers, and I know that the yard is

*[Mr. Trotter]*

very capable of carrying out the work on HMS Southampton. I wish it well in its bid. The taxpayer will certainly gain as a result of our going out to competition.

I welcome the stated intention to increase the percentage of repair work in general that will go out to competition rather than just be allocated to Rosyth and Devonport, but I would ask my hon. Friends when we will see the further Leander refit and the conventional submarine refit going out to the wider tender that was promised after the successful experiment with a Leander frigate and one of the Oberon class submarines—two or three years ago. I very much hope that before long we shall see a further round of that type of refit work going out for general competition.

I suggest in particular to my right hon. and hon. Friends that it would be cheaper if all the RFAs went out to refit in the smaller commercial yards. I cannot believe that it is economical for that work to be carried out in Rosyth and Devonport. Indeed, 66 per cent. of the work carried out in the repair yards on the Tyne in recent years has been for the Navy, and most of the ships concerned have been RFAs won in competition.

I shall refer briefly to the role of the Merchant Navy. I believe that hon. Members of all parties are very concerned about the continual decline, not only of the British merchant navy, but of the merchant navies of the other western countries of the NATO alliance. The reasons have been well rehearsed on previous occasions on the Floor of the House, but I would just say that the development of the Channel tunnel can be expected further to reduce the number of ships available to us in an emergency. Both the Defence Committee and the Transport Committee of the House have reported in the past year and expressed their concern on this decline.

I welcome the action taken by the Government, such as the establishment of a merchant navy reserve and the assistance given with training. It is encouraging to note that twice as many cadets started training for the United Kingdom merchant navy in nautical colleges last year as was the case the year before. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done, not just by this country but also by the Alliance as a whole. In particular, in this country, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor should give more thought to measures that can be useful to British shipowners in maintaining ships under the red ensign. Certainly, that is what happens in other countries.

I was astonished when I pursued with one of our shipping companies a press comment that it had recently purchased a vessel to operate under the Belgian flag. The company replied that this was true and that there were savings of approximately US$500,000 a year as a result of registering the ship in Belgium rather than Britain. I have sent a copy of that letter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor as I believe it is an excellent example of the truth of what is said about the unfairness of the tax system in this country compared with the systems in countries competing with us. Much more needs to be done if we are to maintain a merchant navy of a reasonable size for the future.

In my judgment, the relaxation of tension between East and West in Europe is likely to continue. That will inevitably lead to a reduction in the level of front-line and forces in Europe, especially on the central front. This must mean that the reinforcement of Europe in a crisis will become more important than ever, and that Britain's role at sea will continue to be of great importance. It is a very important factor in deciding the priorities in defence that our warships, designed for their NATO role to help deter a world war, are available for and capable of a far wider role in the world as a whole in troubles that are not connected with East-West tensions but are far more certain to occur.

6.19 pm

**Mr. Bruce George** (Walsall, South): There have been remarkable developments in East-West relations over the last couple of years. I speak as a former general rapporteur to the political committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, who used to write gloomy reports on what was happening in East-West relations, and about the failure of arms control. When I look at those reports now they seem like historical documents—even though they are only three or four years old. Few people could honestly admit that they foresaw such dramatic developments in East-West relations.

Three or four days ago, as a member of a North Atlantic Assembly sub-committee on Eastern Europe, I was wandering around the T72s held by the Dukla motor rifle regiment in Czechoslovakia. I might have taken advantage of the offer to get inside a T72 but it is really designed for smaller people. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), who is the president of the North Atlantic Assembly, who was also present, could have got inside that T72. That experience was an indication of developments that could not have been anticipated.

We must still ask whether the threat has subsided. Has it gone away? Will swords be beaten into ploughshares, and, even after the remarkable developments that have occurred, ought we to be euphoric? We have experienced euphoria on several previous occasions. In the period after the Cuban missle crisis, when the new team of Brezhnev and Kosygin came to power, there were high hopes of great improvements in East-West relations, but they were dashed. Hopes were dashed again in the early 1970s, after the signing of SALT I. One only hopes that current developments are sustainable and that, in a few years' time, our enthusiastic response to arms control developments will not be seen historically as an illusion.

We must hope that the fundamental changes that appear to be taking place in the Soviet Union will be reflected in Soviet military doctrine, force levels and action —so that Soviet forces, to cite the comments of Mr. Gorbachev, are seen to adopt an unequivocally defensive posture. However, one recalls that Mr. Brezhnev consistently stressed the defensive nature of Soviet armed forces, albeit that that was greeted with extreme scepticism by NATO and by most analysts.

I am optimistic though cautious. To believe that the threat has been eliminated or is diminishing to such an extent that there is no requirement for a Royal Navy of any size or substance or for armed forces is premature and an act of self-delusion. There will be a requirement for a substantial Royal Navy for the foreseeable future, even if it is not the Soviet Union that poses a threat. One cannot be certain that Mr. Gorbachev's reforms will be sustained, so although the immediate threat has diminished, many other navies are emerging.

There has been a remarkable increase in the number of medium-sized naval powers. Right hon. and hon. Members should ponder the fact that the Soviet Union's naval construction industry produces far more vessels for export, with India being a major recipient of the Russian naval construction programme. With arms control breaking out and, one hopes, being sustained, the Soviet Union and NATO, too, will persist in exporting equipment—including naval equipment—to Third world states. It is unwise to presume that all threat has been removed just because the threat from the Soviet Union is diminishing.

One must always take into account that crises can emerge at any time. The case made by the Select Committee on Defence in its now famous report, "The Future Size and Role of the Royal Navy's Surface Fleet", clearly revealed a requirement for a substantial Navy in the future. Apparently, Select Committees are not the flavour of the month that they were for most of the post-1979 period. Government Departments are rather critical of them. The Defence Committee has produced a stream of well-argued and somewhat critical reports. The Government were not too pleased by the Committee's reports on the Westland affair, defence commitments and resources, and on business appointments. It remains to be seen how pleased the Government will be by our forthcoming report on the Gurkhas. Certainly the Government were less than euphoric about the Committee's report on the future size of the surface fleet. I am pleased that that report has been tagged for today's debate.

The Chairman of that Select Committee said that that report was not critical. Having re-read it, I am not convinced that his analysis is correct. It is a very critical report. A Select Committee does not exist to blow kisses at the Department concerned and to produce reports that will delight it. It exists to analyse objectively, and if a Select Committee's conclusions cause embarrassment, that is its job. It will praise where merited, but will also criticise where necessary.

The Government's response to the Defence Committee's report on the surface fleet was unfair. The Ministry either rejected most of its recommendations or made critical comments of what was said. The Committee confirmed the considerable over-stretching of the Royal Navy, particularly as we were in the middle of the Armilla patrol and of the Gulf operations. It reported the serious decline in the merchant marine and the detrimental effect that that would have on reinforcing and resupply from north America in the event of a crisis.

The Select Committee was sceptical about the strategy of forward defence. Paragraph 25 of its report comments:

"The aim of forward defence is to 'contain the Soviet fleet as far north as possible and thereby avoid or limit the amount of the threat which comes into the vast expanse of the Atlantic itself'. The Royal Navy would deploy early into the Norwegian Sea and then 'hold the ring'"—

in the words of the witness, Mr. Richard Mottram, from the Ministry of Defence—

"until the arrival of US carrier battle groups."

My great anxiety is that, if we participate in a forward maritime strategy with inadequate resources, and with ships that are not properly armed, the task of holding the ring

"until the arrival of US carrier battle groups"

could prove to be an exciting experience. I certainly would not wish to be on board any ship that, in the event of conflict, would be subjected to the greatest concentration of air and maritime power in the world—in a very difficult area, off the coast of Norway—if the Soviet Union was successful in taking some airfields in northern Norway. One must remember how close is the Kola peninsula and the vast concentration of Soviet naval power to Norway. I would be cautious about adopting an almost gung-ho attitude, in saying that the Royal Navy will deploy far forward and that its task will be to "hold the ring".

The Select Committee was also critical of the Government's aspiration to maintain

"about 50 frigates and destroyers".

I believe that it made a great contribution to the Royal Navy by pointing out the serious shortfall that existed and that that would continue into the future unless the Ministry of Defence embarked on a programme of ordering that would allow it to meet its objectives. Not long after that report was published—clearly, the Secretary of State for Defence did not wish to appear to have been bounced by the Select Committee—an announcement was made that further orders would be placed.

However, as the Committee pointed out, 2·6 ships per year must be ordered over a period of more than six years. Even if the Government make an announcement soon, they will have to move quickly and be more diligent than they have been so far if they are to meet their target of 2·6 ships annually—albeit three ships one year and two the next. We do not want to see the Government playing games by using ships that have reached the end of their natural lives just to keep the number of about 50 and thus preserve their credibility.

Under the 1980-81 plan, which was the responsibility of John Nott, as he was then, the intention was to dispose early of older ships and to accelerate the introduction of the type 23. That simply has not happened. The Government, whatever they decide, have much more to do if they are to maintain the credibility of the Navy. As a number of hon. Members have said, the key to flexibility is numbers that are large enough to be flexible with. If we allow the surface fleet to diminish to such an extent that flexibility is no longer possible, that will be to the disadvantage of the Royal Navy. If we are not able to keep 50 frigates and destroyers of reasonable quality, the Government ought to come clean and say that there are some functions that they are simply not able to perform. That would be very difficult for them to do, so I hope very much that they will maintain an ordering programme that will allow them to meet their own stated objectives.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that the Armilla patrol represented an increase in our commitments and that we have managed to deal with it?

**Mr. George:** The Armilla patrol consisted of three minesweepers plus frigates and destroyers on site, with three en route and three going home. That is nine out of 30, 40 or 45 frigates and destroyers—a very high percentage. As a consequence of that operation, many of the Royal Navy's other tasks, such as training, had to be abandoned. We were told, indeed, that some small countries were engaging in more NATO training and exercising than was the United Kingdom.

The crisis in the Gulf and the involvement of the Armilla patrol showed two things. First, it demonstrated very clearly that Europe had the will and the capability to

*[Mr. George]*

operate out of area—and I think that the decision of the Western European Union and the various navies will be seen as epochal in the emergence of NATO and of the WEU. Secondly, it showed that, when there is a crisis, it consumes a high proportion of naval assets. One might extrapolate and say that, if it took 25 to 30 per cent. of British naval assets to patrol the volume of shipping going through parts of the Gulf, it is mind-boggling to imagine how many frigates and destroyers would be required should there ever be a convoy system from north America to Europe. One should put that in perspective. In the Gulf the Navy was very over-stretched. One can only be relieved at the ending of the conflict, not just for the sake of the people who were involved directly, but because the Royal Navy will be able to pursue its peacetime objectives rather more efficiently.

Earlier, the Minister was rather soothing in his remarks about the potential crisis of the type 23s and about British Aerospace's Sea Wolf missiles not performing as they were intended to. Five Royal Navy type 23 frigates, when they enter service in the 1990s, will be unable to perform as was originally proposed. The cost of these ships is £700 million, yet, despite what the Minister said, I am not at all reassured that, should there ever be a crisis, they would be able to operate in a war environment. I say so because of the failure of the CACS 4 Ferranti system. It was quite wrong for a Conservative Member to tell the Opposition spokeman that he would have continued the CACS programme if he had been in office. Clearly the system was imperfect. This demonstrates the imperfections not only of the contractor, who was unable to meet the specifications, but of the Ministry of Defence, which failed to monitor the programme in such a way that the alarm bells could be heard.

In effect, the Government are saying that, although the British taxpayer has spent £700 million on type 23s, our sailors might be sailing, inadequately defended, into a vulnerable area. Neither the Government nor Ferranti comes out of this episode particularly brilliantly. I have heard rumours that one of these five ships may be sent off to the West Indies, where the threat is not particularly high. What a deplorable waste of very expensive and very scarce resources. It is only right that the Government should be embarrassed by what has happened.

I should like to ask a question—perhaps I will get an answer—about some suggestions concerning the stress on the type 42, batch 3, hulls. Some type 23s have had to have their hulls strengthened, and I understand that this has happened in the case of HMS Gloucester, a type 42. How many vessels have gone through the process so far, and what has been the cost? How many more ships will have to have their hulls strengthened? Is there not some basic design or other failure that compels the Royal Navy to have hulls repaired before they ought to have been subject to the stress that has had such an adverse effect upon them?

Are the Government giving consideration to what will happen to our carriers when they reach the end of their natural lives? I know that it is rather ironic, in the light of the delays being announced in replacing Fearless and Intrepid, to ask whether the Government are giving serious consideration to whether we will have carriers after the end of the lives—perhaps 25 or 30 years away—of our existing carrier force. But such is the expense and the magnitude of construction and design that we shall no doubt soon reach a stage where some initial thought has to be given to the matter.

Let me move on fairly briefly to consider the Soviet navy. We are all aware that it has developed remarkably since the 1950s—indeed, since the second world war. It has been transformed from no more than a coastal patrol fleet to one with a blue-water capability. We have to be careful in evaluating the size, missions and capability of the Soviet navy. The remarkable increase in Soviet ship construction in the 1960s, and up to perhaps the late 1970s, largely under the influence of Admiral Gorshkov, appears to have begun to slow down. Probably that started when Ustinov became Minister of Defence. The Soviet Union has some fine high-technology assets, but it has much that is obsolescent. Quite clearly, the building of new ships is slowing down, but it took us some time to realise that.

A couple of weeks ago I attended a conference at Greenwich. One of the papers, presented by an American named Baker said:

> "The size of the Soviet fleet—both in numbers and in total tonnage—has been acknowledged as shrinking".

It is true that the ships are now bigger and more complicated, but we must be careful not to argue that the inexorable rise of the Soviet navy is proceeding at the pace of the 1960s and the 1970s. In 1987, for example, the Soviets launched five submarines, three of them nuclear-powered. They launched two destroyers and one frigate, apparently for the KGB. I suppose that, like me, many people did not realise that the KGB operates ships in quite large numbers. All of this does not indicate a continuing massive build-up.

There are encouraging signs, over and above the slowing down in the naval shipbuilding programme. Clearly, the Soviet Union is not operating out of area, as we understand the term, to the extent that it was. As was mentioned earlier, there are far fewer operations in the north Atlantic. Any conclusion that that might encourage us to reach that the Soviet navy is retreating to become once more a coastal patrol would be premature. I am not arguing that the Soviet navy does not pose a potential threat; all that I am saying at this stage is that we should not paint a picture more fearsome than the reality.

Convoying and the defence of the sea lines of communications play an important role in the security of NATO, affecting not just the British Navy but the Portuguese. Before any hon. Members interrupt to ask what that has to do with a debate on the Royal Navy, let me make it clear that there is a connection. The Portuguese navy is critically important in the Iberlant area between the Azores and western Europe: in fact, Portuguese ships are the only NATO ships operating permanently there. Because of straitened financial circumstances, the Portuguese have entered into a liaison with most NATO countries for the provision of three frigates, to be built by Blohm and Voss in Germany. Those ships will be handed to the Portuguese, although they will be making a substantial contribution over the next few years.

German and American contributions have been enormous, and even tiny Luxembourg has made a generous contribution to the construction and equipment of the three frigates. Our contribution, however, has been miserly. Initially the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) announced a contribution of £5 million. Inflation has been serious and over a period of some years

the sum has been raised to just over £6 million, but in my view that is inadequate to cover the possible provision of a helicopter for the Portuguese frigate programme.

**Mr. Sayeed:** Luxembourg contributes 1·2 per cent. of her GDP to defence spending; we contribute 4·7 per cent. of ours. We provide far more than Germany, which spends 3 per cent. of GDP. It is about time that others started to spend a bit more.

**Mr. George:** I do not wish to focus on Luxembourg's deficiencies. I am simply saying that for a tiny country it makes an infinitely larger contribution to the Portuguese frigate programme than we do, despite our 600-year history of liaison with Portugal.

Westland hoped that the £6 million could be used for the purchase of one Lynx helicopter, and that perhaps the Portuguese would purchase another four. Recently the United States topped up its aid to Portugal following Portugal's criticism of its military, or security assistance, programme. A remarkable package including F16s for the Portuguese air force also included the offer of helicopters, which might be placed on the Meko 200s.

Unless the Government make a much improved offer to the Portuguese, Westland will run a considerable risk of not being able to make one of its helicopters, which the MOD will pay for, and then sell the rest. The Portuguese may be making a mistake, in that although they would get the helicopters for nothing, the cost of upgrading and altering the Mekos will make the offer eventually quite expensive. I hope that the MOD will reconsider its rather miserly offer—not just for the sake of Anglo-Portuguese relations or because of Westland, but because we owe it to ourselves, to the Portuguese and to NATO. The offer should be set against the offers made by the Dutch, the Canadians, the Americans, the Germans, the French and virtually everyone else. It is not a question of pouring money down a hole: money spent on helicopters for the Portuguese navy will directly benefit the security of the United Kingdom.

Disarmament at sea is not a subject that we in the West have been particularly keen to pursue, for a number of reasons. One is our superiority in naval forces. Most Western nations are by definition maritime—geography compels them to be—but the Soviet Union, despite making enormous strides in the 1960s and 1970s in building up its navy, is still basically a continental power.

Some of Mr. Gorbachev's offers on naval arms control were made rather truculently. As I tried to suggest to my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), they were not his best and most genuine offers. He extended them in Vladivostock and again in Murmansk, arguing for, among other things, parity in the Mediterranean. That is nonsense, because the sixth fleet is linked intextricably to the defence of Greece, Turkey, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and the whole of the Mediterranean. It is the glue that binds the geographically dispersed members of our Alliance in the southern region.

To withdraw the sixth fleet, or to drop it to the level of the Soviet Mediterranean squadron, would have widespread repercussions. Moreover, the Soviet Union could still deploy its forces in the Black sea and, by virtue of its surge capability—as long as it remained consistent with the Montreaux convention—could, over a period of weeks, supplement its diminished force in the Mediterranean to a level much easier to achieve than that of the United States.

The fact that the Soviet Union has been rather disingenuous in that respect distracts us from more serious proposals. We should give more consideration to naval arms control, on which the Soviet Union has issued many proposals, most of which seem detrimental to NATO. It proposes zones of peace, nuclear-free zones, an ASW-free zone, safe SSBN havens and, as I have mentioned, parity in the Mediterranean. We should also give more thought to naval confidence-building measures. Confidence building is not a substitute for arms control, but it is a useful supplement, and the Government should think more about enhancing confidence between the two alliances.

This is the first defence debate since the Labour party began a serious review of its defence commitments. The policy review will be completed in April and later put to the party conference—and, I hope, approved, if it contains policies different from those for the 1983 and 1987 elections. I do not say that because it would be more intelligent electorally. It has been known in parliamentary history for policies to be changed for purely electoral reasons, but they are the wrong reasons. Policies should be changed because they will be more relevant when changed.

I was saddened by the collapse of consensus on security matters in the 1980s. I consider it important—indeed, almost incumbent on Governments and Oppositions—to adopt security policies that will survive the passage of one Government or another. Such consensus exists in many countries. It exists in Norway but not yet in Denmark, although it is improving there. It is being re-created in the Federal Republic, although, I suspect, not for reasons that some would particularly like. It has virtually always existed in France. It exists in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, America, Turkey and even Greece. We think that the fracturing of the consensus exists everywhere because it exists here, but that is nonsense.

There is no way in which Governments and Oppositions will agree on every aspect of policy or in which the Labour party, at a general election, will have a defence policy that is identical or close to that of the Government. But there is progress and we may be on the way to re-establishing the consensus. To re-create the consensus, some Government concessions will be required. They must not simply wait for the Labour party to move towards their position.

With a mixture of multilateral, bilateral and unilateral proposals—whatever the formula is—I hope that the Opposition will be able to devise a defence strategy that will meet the desires of party members and of potential supporters. That will be an enormous task and I wish the policy review process the best of fortune in the months ahead. There will be many crises and problems, and some people in the Labour party will not like the abandonment of unilateralism. It is sad for some when policies change, but if such change makes possible a greater consensus on defence and makes it possible for the Labour party to have policies on the Navy, the Army, the Air Force and nuclear weapons that will be viable internally and externally, then so be it. Although some party members may dislike such change, the overwhelming majority of potential Labour voters will endorse such a policy if, as I hope, it emerges from the policy review committee.

6.51 pm

**Mr. Jonathan Sayeed** (Bristol, East): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). He is the one not so small voice of sanity within the Labour party. However, although I have great respect for his powers of persuasion, I do not believe that he will necessarily be wholly successful in returning his party to some form of sane defence policy.

I want to follow the hon. Member in a discussion of East-West relations and also on the treatment of the Select Committee by the Ministry of Defence. Peace is apparently breaking out in East-West relations, with glasnost, perestroika, the intermediate nuclear forces treaty and the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Some people appear to be suffering from the delusion that it is now safe to relegate defence spending to the second division, but at a time when the Warsaw pact forces have a 3:1 superiority over NATO in tanks and artillery and a 2:1 superiority in tactical aircraft and attack helicopters, when the Soviets are deploying Fulcrum, Flanker, Foxhound, the T81 tank and Typhoon and Oscar class submarines, the suggestion that defence spending no longer matters damages the ability of the Alliance to negotiate and the cause of peace.

Despite Soviet rhetoric, in every sphere of weapons—nuclear, chemical and conventional—there continues to be a numerical imbalance in favour of the USSR. The Russian bear's growl has become a grin, but it has not lost any of its teeth. At a time when we require a new battle tank, when Jaguar and Phantom aircraft need replacing, when the defences of the northern area are under strength and when we lack maritime strength, in depth, we should not demonstrate a faltering determination.

We cannot be wholly confident that President Gorbachev will be able to surmount the entrenched self-interest, to overcome the bureaucratic inertia that is inherent in the Soviet system or to control the danger of anarchy which follows when a hint of freedom is offered to the oppressed. Although it is our fervent hope that he will be successful, we must acknowledge that such a success will be a first in the history of the Tsarist or Communist Russia. We cannot afford to let our hopes blind us to the possibility of President Gorbachev's failure or its consequences.

With all that is happening in East-West relations, and with defence inflation outstripping the retail price index, there is understandable concern about defence spending, and those concerns are shared throughout the Alliance. Yet I detect in certain members of the Alliance a simplistic approach to complicated questions, an over-optimistic assessment of Soviet intentions and a willingness to permit short-term political expediency to determine long-term policy.

Many of us welcome the United States Defence Department report "Allied Contributions to the Common Defence," which was published in April 1988. It is an important part of the burden-sharing debate. There is much to commend in the document, although I would criticise its emphasis on input rather than output—on the amount spent rather than what is achieves—and even when it deals with outputs, its concentration on quantity rather than quality damages the report and is regrettable. Although we must acknowledge the 340,000 United States troops who are permanently stationed in Europe, the United States reinforcement commitment and the nuclear guarantee, we should also recognise that those are in the interests of the United States. The defence of America starts in Europe, as well as in the Pacific basin. Washington is closer to Europe than it is to Anchorage in Alaska or than San Francisco is to Japan.

We in Europe are not freeloaders on the whole. In conventional terms, we provide 90 per cent. of the manpower, 85 per cent. of the tanks and artillery, 80 per cent. of the combat aircraft and 65 per cent. of the major warships. Yet within Europe, there is considerable disparity of commitment. As I pointed out earlier, 4·7 per cent. of our gross domestic product is committed to defence, whereas Germany and Belgium contribute only 3 per cent. and the latter does not even participate in the common European air defence system. Italy contributes 2·2 per cent. and Denmark only 2·1 per cent., although it has one the highest per capita incomes in Europe. Spain's figure is 2 per cent. of GDP and it has enforced the withdrawal of the United States 401st tactical fighter wing. Luxembourg—and I know that it is small—contributes a paltry 1·2 per cent. of its GDP to defence.

The United Kingdom has 67,000 men permanently stationed in Europe. Our defence expenditure has increased by more than 20 per cent. in real terms since 1979. We have nothing to fear and everything to gain by opening up the burden sharing debate. We must persuade other European countries that it is in their interests to accept a fair share of defence costs; otherwise, the United States budget deficit and the ever present middle America isolationist pressures may persuade Congress that the United States withdrawal from Europe would be justified and Europe's own fault.

We can and should question how we allocate the massive, but finite, resources that we individually and collectively devote to defence. I would argue, as would other hon. Members, that the least likely line of Soviet advance is through central Europe, the most heavily fortified region in the world. I wonder whether such a concentration of defence spending does not have more to do with assuaging German sensibilities and fending off United States isolationist pressures than with providing the best value for money in defence terms.

Despite an earlier incarnation, this is not a Navy versus Army debate, but a question of how we provide the greatest assistance to the NATO Alliance, while retaining the essential out-of-area capability. If we are to deter through strength, we must acknowledge that our sea lines of communication are vulnerable and that the likely line of any Soviet action would not be on land through Europe, but at sea via the northern area. Yet our policy of forward defence in that area is clearly deficient. First, it commits nearly all NATO maritime resources well forward, but the lack of towed array ASW frigates, maritime patrol aircraft and forward repair ships, which act as force multipliers, results in our being unable adequately to fulfil even current NATO policy.

Secondly, it is clear that, as our air, surface and submarine forces would be more than fully stretched fulfilling their ASW role in the forward area, there would be no spare assets to provide strength in depth and to protect our lines of communication and resupply. Up to one third of Soviet maritime forces are deployed south of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap at any one time. With no allowance for attrition, with a decline in the NATO merchant fleet and with a ship, however capable,

not being able to be in more than one place at a time, the policy of forward defence in the northern area soaks up all our assets. It is fallible and dangerous to rely on it.

I have a few specific questions for my hon. Friend. During Exercise Teamwork, I saw on HMS Illustrious that they were using a coastal chart first published at the turn of the century. It is true that there had been minor corrections. Have we full access to all the sea-mapping data that the United States navy has been compiling since 1957 in the northern area? I have been advised by a senior serving Royal Navy officer, experienced in ASW, who has often liaised with the United States, that the United States continues to keep secret from us some submarine charts of the northern area.

From the number of vertically launched Sea Wolf missiles that have been ordered, it seems likely that the Ministry of Defence intends to order eight type 23 frigates in the medium term. Yet, as we know, those frigates will be commissioned without a command system that will integrate the weapons carried and permit the frigates to be effective fighting units. I agree with the hon. Member for Walsall, South: I have absolutely no confidence that those ships will be able to operate in a hostile environment until they have an effective command and control system. Recognising the complexity and the interaction of current weapons systems and those that will be fitted, there is no chance of sending men to sea in those ships and keeping them safe in any hostile condition until the type 23 command system is fitted.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister of State give any estimate of when he expects the command system for the type 23 frigate to be installed? How is Sea Wolf to be fired? I understand from the meeting that I had with British Aerospace two weeks ago that, as soon as the trials are finished, it intends to take off the control mechanisms. Can my hon. Friend provide an indication of the likely ordering pattern of the type 23? The answer will probably be no, as it has been to the Select Committee on Defence on numerous occasions. I will ask anyway; if one does not ask, one never gets anywhere.

Will my hon. Friend tell me how the Government intend to honour their commitment, given in 1981, to dispose early of old ships? We have in operation one batch 1 Leander, four batch 2 TAS Leanders, three batch 2 Leanders, five batch 3 conversion Leanders and two batch 3 broad beam Leanders—a total of 15—and six type 21s. There is no doubt that the batch 1 and batch 2 ships require replacement very soon. It does not matter how frequently the weapons systems are updated: the hull itself gets tired and noisy and is more vulnerable to submarines. Those ships are a danger to those who serve in them.

Can my hon. Friend tell me whether there has been any change in our offensive mining capability since he last spoke? It was extremely poor and out of date. Can he tell me whether the Ministry of Defence has done anything about it?

I want to deal finally with the relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the Select Committee on Defence. One might have hoped that the Ministry of Defence would have welcomed the Committee's inquiry into the surface fleet, but its response to questioning and to requests for information made it seem that at times we were conducting a dialogue with the deaf. It may be a naive hope to expect the MOD to recognise that we are all on the same side, but I would have hoped that, after the report had been published and the Select Committee had indicated its wish to continue to monitor the position, the MOD would not have continued its policy of obstruction and obfuscation.

I shall give the House an example. On 2 November 1988 the Select Committee wrote to the MOD requesting information that would enable us to keep tabs on what was happening to the surface fleet. Seven weeks later, on 19 December, just before the Recess, it replied, acceding to some of our requests but saying that information on the key area of interest was not held centrally. On 21 December—we move fast in the Select Committee—we wrote back, asking that we be given a copy of "The Fleet Operating Programme", a document already produced monthly, that covers nearly all the essential points of which we wished to be regularly apprised. It is true that such a document is not held centrally at MOD but at fleet headquarters at Northwood, but the Minstry's answer was pure semantics.

I have a clear impression that some officials in the Ministry are less than helpful. I believe that to be counter-productive. It is the House of Commons that has to authorise expenditure for the services. It is the House of Commons that set up the Select Committee on Defence to monitor defence expenditure, policy and administration. It is unacceptable that the attitude of a few officials within the Ministry, in their dealings with a Committee of the House, should border on dumb insolence.

I feel sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends do not believe that their Department encompasses the sum of human wisdom on defence matters. I have no doubt that my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome contributions from those outside the Department. What would the attitude of my hon. Friend the Minister of State be if he were treated by his officials in the way the Select Committee has sometimes been?

I have been somewhat critical of our maritime policy and our ability to fulfil even current objectives. I have urged Ministers to encourage other NATO countries to pay their full share of defence costs. I have asked specific questions and I have requested that it be made clear to those few civil servants within the Ministry of Defence who do not understand that it is to Parliament that their Department is ultimately responsible.

I want to end on a happier note, because I recognise that my right hon. Friend and his Ministers are struggling valiantly to provide the defence that we need at a cost that we can afford. A service debate gives us the opportunity to write an end of term report on MOD endeavours. My assessment of the progress of my right hon. and hon. Friends is, "Heart in the right place; doing well, but could do better."

7.9 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): On these occasions, few speeches fail to mention the professionalism and commitment of our service men and women. On this occasion I believe that we can claim that those who serve in our Navy are among the most dedicated and professional. An eloquent example of that is the success of the Armilla patrol. We know that our Navy has a proud tradition, which is still properly maintained, even in times of great technological change. However, we should be guilty of grave injustice to that tradition if we did not match the dedication and skill of those who serve in the

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Navy with proper equipment and, if necessary, with a level of expenditure that allows them adequately to fulfil their responsibilities.

The equivalent debate to this one was on 3 March of last year. The *Official Report* on that debate repays reading again, because virtually all who contributed to it—with the exception of those who spoke on behalf of the Government—were concerned about the numbers of the surface fleet. Since then we have had the sixth report of the Select Committee on Defence, which has been referred to as challenging rather than critical, and then a little later in the debate, as critical rather than challenging. I shall leave others to form their own judgments as to its proper characterisation. I hope to show, however, that a number of issues and concerns raised by that report have still not been answered.

Following the printing of the report on 21 June 1988, on 11 July there was an announcement in the House of an order for three type 23 frigates. If one looks at the terms of the report and then the terms of the announcement, one is left with the suspicion that there may, in fact, be some substance in what one always thought to be the logical fallacy, post hoc propter hoc. On 19 and 20 October last year we had a debate on the defence estimates. On the first day of the debate the chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), who has already spoken, said he would not change a word of the sixth report of his Committee in spite of the Government's response. Although he may have described his attitude this evening as being challenging, it is clear that he still would not change a word of that sixth report.

On 26 October last year, Admiral Sir Julian Oswald —soon to be the First Sea Lord—told the Press Association that the Royal Navy had reached the absolute minimum of destroyers and frigates necessary to meet its commitments. We know that since then, commentator after commentator has been critical of the Government's candour on this matter, and that commentator after commentator has been critical of the consequences to our responsibilities. Almost every day the belief is gathering strength that what was not achieved by the 1981 review is now being achieved by stealth or by indolence.

When the Minister began his contribution he gave a hint, as it were, of good news to come, but in truth that turned out to be no more than a hint—it was a hint and not a matter of any substance. I refer especially to the issue of the size of the surface fleet. I welcome the announcement about the repair and refit of HMS Southampton and the fact that that is to be put out to competitive tender—those who are good enough to win the tender will deserve to have the work. However, one is entitled to ask what is our precise approach to the surface fleet. Do we determine our numbers by our strategy or are we determining our strategy by our numbers? That is an issue what will not go away.

As the debate has shown, the Select Committee's concerns have not been removed, nor, indeed, have its questions been answered. I shall remind the House of some of those concerns and questions. The first point made by the Committee was that there was no coherent long-term plan for the Navy. Secondly, it said that there was a need to order—not to put out to tender—two to three ships each year. Thirdly, it said that the capability of the frigate force has suffered because of the extension of the operational lives of the Leander and type 21 vessels—bringing with it additional demands on manpower—and possibly resulting in more applications for premature voluntary release. Finally—and in the context of all that the Committee has said, possibly its most perceptive observation—there was the Committee's concern that the wartime objectives place too heavy an emphasis on forward maritime strategy to contain Soviet forces in the Norwegian sea, resulting in prejudice to the task of defending transatlantic shipping.

None of those concerns has been properly answered. The root of them all lies in the building programme. Until the Government tackle that programme, the weaknesses will remain; and, unless they tackle it, the weaknesses will be exacerbated. The Government must tackle that programme in a systematic way, with a clearly published programme of work. That will be essential for companies such as Yarrow, which was a beneficiary of the announcement of 11 July last year. It is at least as important for companies such as Swan Hunter, which wants to tender, but is forced to take major decisions about capacity and employment with no proper information about the future of the market place. It is in the interests of the Ministry of Defence to makes its intentions clear; otherwise the competitive base may be eroded and it will find itself negotiating with a monopoly supplier.

I say with some regret—I include those in today's debate—that Ministers are wholly unconvincing about the numbers of destroyers and frigates available. The very words "about 50" are imprecise and misleading. Why not say, "Not less than 50"? Why not say something definite and specific? Let us suppose that the Minister went to purchase a motor car. He asked the salesman, how many previous owners that it had had, and the salesman replied, "About two, sir." Would he be satisfied with that reply? Would he not regard it as the kind of imprecision which should put him upon his guard? I ask hon. Members whether they would buy second-hand frigates from Ministers.

How can it be that five of the new type 23 frigates will be unable to operate effectively vertical launch Sea Wolf missiles? For that I rely on the authority of *Jane's Defence Weekly* of 11 February 1989.

The CACS 4 system has been rejected. The Under-Secretary was at his most felicitous, his most reasonable and almost, I suppose, his most charming. He verged on, but perhaps did not achieve, the necessary blandness of the salesman. What he did not tell the House and what he gave the House no undertaking upon is how that will be prevented from happening again. He was not able to tell the House when the necessary command and control system will be installed. A Minister who learned that the command and control system was insufficient in quality or range would have been foolish to press ahead with it. The House is entitled to know whether those lessons have been learnt and whether steps have been taken to ensure that the same difficulties do not occur again. Who takes responsibility for the circumstances which have arisen?

The Minister made no mention of any further orders for auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels. As further frigates are built there will be a need for more AORs. Is it the Government's intention to order more? If they did, that would give much encouragement to the shipbuilding

industry in all parts of the United Kingdom. I do not recall any mention of the NFR 90—indeed, other hon. Members have raised this issue earlier. Perhaps the Minister will give us some up-to-date information. There was no mention either of any consideration by the Government of the use of smaller vessels, such as those of corvette size that may be ideally qualified to perform tasks related to national security in and around the United Kingdom, such as dealing with gun running and drug trafficking.

As I have said already, the Minister gave some hint of largesse or generosity to come but, when examined, it was no more than a hint and was of little substance. The mobilisation of NATO would require a thousand transatlantic sailings by cargo ships in 30 days, over and above normal traffic. Just as the Select committee on Defence felt it necessary to ask, we too must ask how it is possible to defend these movements and to maintain the forward maritime strategy of bottling up the Soviet fleet in the Norwegian sea on the figures available of the numbers in the surface fleet.

Running through this whole issue is a conflict of priorities caused by a paucity of resources. The Government must ask themselves—and, if not, the House undoubtedly will—how that conflict is to be resolved. There are two alternatives. We may choose one course of action at the expense of the other—that is to say, establish and adhere to priorities; or we may provide sufficient resources to meet all the desirable strategic requirements. The second of these alternatives is the more desirable militarily. It will have financial consequences, but these cannot be ignored if we are to ensure that the Navy is in a position to fulfil the responsibilities which we impose upon it.

The Navy has been charged with the most awesome military responsibility of all, because strategic nuclear weapons fall under its responsibility—now Polaris but soon to be Trident. A consensus seems to be growing that, by the time of the next general election, the Trident programme will be so far committed that its outright cancellation will be neither practical militarily nor financially advantageous. For that, I need do no more than echo the words of the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), speaking in the debate on the defence estimates to which I have already referred. He told the House then that, by 1992, 60 per cent. of the expenditure of the Trident programme would be committed and that cancelling the Trident programme in 1992 would allow savings of only between £1 billion and £3 billion, depending on the interpretation of the terms of the contract.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** (Denton and Reddish): Will the hon. and learned Member agree that one of the dangers of the whole Trident programme is that, once it is nearing completion, those involved with it will suddenly discover all sorts of other expenditure which must be incurred to make it work? It is a little dangerous to assume that the cost will stay fixed once the thing nears completion.

**Mr. Campbell:** The experience has been that the cost has gone down since the first estimates were made, assisted to some extent by advantageous rates of exchange but also, no doubt, by a degree of advance and of technical innovation. I accept that there may be what I think the hon. Member is referring to by implication—hidden costs—but any cost directly recovered from the cancellation of the programme would not be such as to justify cancellation at the point at which any new Government might have the opportunity of making that decision.

We must all accept, therefore, that Trident will be in place, or effectively in place, and that the decisions about defence which any Government elected in 1992 must take will be conditioned by the fact of its existence. No one now argues that one should take the strategic nuclear deterrent, or the submarines which would be the means of delivering it, tow them into the middle of the Atlantic, open the sea-cocks and hope that they will simply sink to the bottom.

**Mr. Sayeed:** I should like to be absolutely certain what the latest Liberal party defence policy is. Would its members pledge themselves to maintaining Trident submarines and the weapons that go with them for the forseeable future?

**Mr. Campbell:** Yes. I hope that a monsyllabic answer does not take the hon. Gentleman unawares.

One thing is certainly true, that any strategic nuclear deterrent is justified only as long as it contributes to the peace. The current independent deterrent has done so. But we would be quite wrong to take the view that there is some intrinsic merit in strategic nuclear weapons. Their value is only in the consequences that they bring about or, perhaps, putting it another way, in the consequences that they prevent. If the time ever came when the United Kingdom's independent nuclear weapon turned out to be an obstacle to arms reduction, there would be no case for its retention.

While it is not possible to say precisely when such a moment might arise, what one can say in this context is that the events of the past two or three years would have been entirely unpredicted during the Brezhnev years. One can also say that any agreement which involved giving up the independent nuclear deterrent of the United Kingdom would have to be part of an arrangement involving us and our allies and not as part of some purely bilateral deal with the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union itself recognising that that particular offer or any kind of arrangement based on an offer of that sort would be entirely unsuitable and, to them, unacceptable.

In relation to our defence policies we should be seeking to create an atmosphere in which each side feels confident that the other will not attack it, in which the interests of one side become the interests of the other.

With some important variations, this debate could have been held last year because the concerns about ship numbers remain the same, the questions which had not then been formulated perhaps as precisely as they have now been by the Select Committee on defence remain the same and, sadly, the answers remain, for some of us at least, on both sides of the House, equally unconvincing. On that matter, if nothing else, this debate has produced a consensus.

7.26 pm

**Mr. David Martin** (Portsmouth, South): I am grateful for the chance to contribute to this debate, having sat through two days of the defence debate last October without succeeding in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or the eye of Mr. Speaker or Madam Deputy Speaker. It is an extra-special pleasure to speak on behalf of people in Portsmouth on such a crucial matter as the

*[Mr. David Martin]*

future of the Royal Navy, particularly when we have just heard the news that HMS Southampton is to go out to tender for repair of the damage that it sustained last year, and to be refitted at the same time.

The news that it will be leaving Portsmouth for that purpose will go down like a lead balloon in my constituency, because HMS Southampton was already in for refit from September of this year until November 1990. Some very anxious people will be wondering what is to be put in place of that work which was scheduled by the Ministry to be done at Portsmouth.

The supply of warships, their maintenance and their repair depend crucially on the public money available. We all understand that, and we all understand that we must get the best possible value as well as the best quality of work. But since 1984, with the rundown of Portsmouth dockyard and the creation of the fleet maintenance and repair organisation, the naval and civilian work force have shown great ingenuity: there is flexibility between the trades, financial management and control are sound, and the organisation is running as efficiently as possible. It specialises in the very type 42 work that is required on HMS Southampton.

The track record of the fleet maintenance and repair organisation in Portsmouth bears repeating because it is vital that further work should come to replace that which was expected from HMS Southampton. HMS Newcastle was refitted in 1987; the work was completed two weeks early and it came out at £2·4 million under budget. HMS Cardiff was returned to the fleet just before Christmas 1988; the work was completed five weeks early and it was about £2 million under budget. At the same time, in 1987-88, HMS Birmingham came from Rosyth—where a certain amount of work had been carried out—and the fleet maintenance and repair organisation at Portsmouth was amazed at just what was required from those who knew what they were doing with type 42s to sort out HMS Birmingham before it could be returned to the fleet.

At present, the work force is halfway through its work on HMS Exeter. Excellent progress is being made and the work is also running under budget on labour and material. Therefore, the news that the planned refit of and repairs to HMS Southampton will not now take place in Portsmouth is most disappointing and will not be well received in Portsmouth.

The results of the Killick report are anxiously awaited and it is understood that the report finds that work at Portsmouth—particularly that on type 42s—is carried out in the most efficient way. We understand that the report recommends a small diminution of the work force but, for the foreseeable future, I am somewhat reassured by what my hon. Friend the Minister said about the continuing major role that is intended for the fleet maintenance and repair organisation. However, a ship in the port is always worth two in the mind of the Minister. As soon as possible, we want some alternative work in Portsmouth to take the place of that which, disappointingly, we shall not have. Of course, we understand that value for money must come first.

The morale of those who work at Portsmouth is crucial. We could easily lose specialist labour and expertise, and we do not want further redundancies of skilled men. We shall, perhaps, need to take on those same men or others in the future when work is brought to the port. In the meantime, we do not want unnecessary job losses which would not only cause unhappiness for the families of these people, but would not make the most efficient use of manpower in the future. If HMS Southampton is not to be refitted and repaired in Portsmouth and no replacement work is found, any substantial further rundown at Portsmouth would be met with blanket dismay. I repeat that I was somewhat reassured by the Minister's earlier remarks, but we need the delivery of some alternative work as soon as possible.

Portsmouth lost the work on HMS Southampton because competitive tenders were sought elsewhere. Therefore, in the future, the Ministry of Defence must devise a method to enable Portsmouth to compete with the commercial yards. There is now enough information to bid properly but, at present, whether Portsmouth is cost-effective or competitive relies on the say-so of the Ministry of Defence.

I believe that it was Humpty Dumpty who said in "Through the Looking Glass":

> "When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

For Portsmouth the word "competitiveness" means what the Ministry of Defence says it should mean, neither more nor less. Portsmouth must be able to compete properly. The port loses work to those who are said to provide better value when refitting and repairing ships of the Royal Navy. By all means let us have value for money, but we must allow Portsmouth to provide that value for money. We shall meet any challenge given to us fairly, and we want to remain one of the prime ports serving the Royal Navy in so many ways.

I plead the case for Portsmouth not solely because of the hundreds of years of fine tradition of unmatchable service to the Royal Navy, but because of the proven efficiency and commitment of the service and the civilian work force to continuing a major role at the dockyard.

The concept of tradition brings me to my second topic—HMS Victory and the future of the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief, Naval Home Command. HMS Victory is not only the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief but also the flagship of the Royal Navy and the nation. It is the oldest commissioned ship in the world. Many people do not realise that it is actually in commission and not merely a tourism or public relations exercise—although it plays a tremendous role in naval public relations both internationally and nationally. In Portsmouth, emotions run deep over the future of HMS Victory.

Why should I raise the matter of HMS Victory in this debate? It has a ship's complement—including the captain—of about 10 and has about 14 full-time equivalent guides who serve in the Royal Navy or the Royal Marines and show people over the ship, lending it a vital air of authenticity. In addition, the enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge of those naval personnel when showing people over the ship are germane in helping recruitment and the image of the Royal Navy, which it is so important to promote.

Last year the rumour was that it was intended to give the guides' jobs to civilians and have the ship run by the heritage project at the naval base. I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces who, in his usual courteous way, set out the up-to-date position. Someone has said that having asked for bread we were offered a stone. I

would not accuse my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of that, but the letter on the future of HMS Victory's guides contained stony features that were well disguised as bread. It stated:

"In the case of the Victory guides, the naval authorities decided last year that the guide billets would be withdrawn by 1st April 1990 and the outgoing personnel deployed to operational duties elsewhere."

That is a great pity.

We have a field gun crew which cannot be said to carry out a particular task for a modern up-to-date Navy, but it performs an irreplaceable role. As I have already pointed out to the Minister, outside Buckingham Palace we could have civilians in fancy dress on wooden horses, but it would not be the same, as far as our traditions are concerned. It is important to consider tradition and factors that add to the gaiety of the nation, if nothing else. I use the word "gaiety" without its modern connotations particularly so that it may keep its old and much more understood sense. We must continue some of these traditions because they add something to this country's forces which is quite irreplaceable and which no one else in the world can provide.

It may sound as though I am going over the top and one might ask why I am so excited about 14 full-time equivalent guides being removed from HMS Victory. However, it means that the remaining 10 of the ship's complement, including the captain, will have lesser tasks to perform and will become more isolated. The time will perhaps come when people will question what they are doing on board HMS Victory, because they no longer control guides but seem merely part of the tourist project. Once removal of the guides and the fact that they do not provide a vital role in the public relations of the Royal Navy is accepted, a further diminution of the role played by HMS Victory will follow.

That is why I raise the point in this debate and I hope that I can join any rearguard action to keep those guides serving in the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines. Perhaps we can get the Wrens to help us, too, if necessary.

It is fitting that I should have mentioned Wrens. In my maiden speech in the defence debate in October 1987 I asked whether it was not time for the Wrens to be given the opportunity to serve at sea. I suggested that it should at least be part of their training to be ready for such service, and that that should be a goal for the 1990s. I under-estimated the zeal and speed with which Ministers can occasionally gratify the wishes of Back Benchers. Within a year, in September of 1988, the headlines read:

"Twelve Reservists become first Wrens to serve at sea".

The major maritime and amphibious exercise Teamwork 88 mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) involved a dozen reservist Wrens serving in merchant ships—so we are on our way.

Of course this is a sensitive issue: there are practical difficulties involving accommodation and head arrangements. One always hears about the difficulties of toilet facilities if women are to go down the mines or into the ships of the Royal Navy, but we can overcome such problems, given the political will to do so.

In the period of increasing manpower difficulties during the 1990s, I want Wrens who volunteer for these duties to be fully trained for combat roles, including tactical signalling, which proved deficient at the time of the Falklands war. Women serve in these roles in many navies all over the world. We may not describe them as combat roles, but combat roles are increasingly difficult to distinguish from non-combat roles. Ships in supporting roles at sea increasingly have to be armed and ready to play vital defensive and offensive roles merely to stay afloat in the water, so I cannot see an argument for distinguishing between the roles for serving Wrens in future—or for saying that other navies have found that this does not work. I know of no navy that has found that.

We must be much more positive about the future of women in the service. I do not accept patronising objections to women being trained for combat roles; such objections have been overcome in foreign navies. I do not accept the excuse that husbands will not like serving wives to work alongside men or that wives of serving men will not like them to work with women. These days, many service wives work alongside men ashore, and many husbands of civilians work away from home alongside women. I question the traditional attitudes. Let us use Wrens as much as we possibly can in the modern Navy.

Arising out of operation Teamwork 88, I was a little concerned to see a quotation in *The Daily Telegraph* from a Commodore Brian Turner of the joint British-Netherlands force:

"I doubt Nelson would have turned in his grave. He was something of a ladies' man after all."

The trouble is that, if all sailors have as amorous a service life as Nelson did, we shall pander to those who say that women cannot serve in the Royal Navy because their role is to remain on shore.

I have spoken about Portsmouth and some of the wider interests of the Royal Navy. At the head of my list is the future of Portsmouth, which serves the Royal Navy in the wider sense, including the maintenance and repair of ships. I hope to be reassured as soon as possible that Portsmouth will have enough work to carry it forward and keep it in the forefront of serving the Royal Navy.

7.45 pm

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** (Denton and Reddish): I am sure that the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) would not expect me to follow the arguments deployed in his special pleading for his constituency. I want to use the debate to question the possession by the Royal Navy of nuclear weapons, and our possession of an independent nuclear deterrent.

Whenever the Prime Minister or any other Minister is challenged about Trident, he or she trots out the standard reply that nuclear weapons have kept the peace in Europe for the past 40 years. That bland statement covers a multitude of sins. It ignores the fact that millions of people have died as wars have been fought out by proxy in Korea, Indochina, Central and South America, Africa and more recently Afghanistan. It also ignores the fact that there is not a shred of evidence that the United Kingdom's independent deterrent has had any effect on the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe.

I shall not rehearse the arguments about the morality of our possession or use of these weapons. Instead I shall discuss their utility. I say to my hon. Friends, one or two of whom seem to be nuclear fanatics, that before they try to persuade the Labour party to change its policy on nuclear weapons they should carefully examine the lack of credibility in the systems being proposed.

As long ago as 1962, although it took another 17 years before it was made public in 1979, in a speech to NATO Ministers Robert MacNamara said:

*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]*

"relatively weak nuclear forces with enemy cities as their targets are not likely to be adequate to perform the function of deterrence . . . In the event of war, the use of such a force against the cities of a major nuclear power would be tantamount to suicide, whereas its deployment against significant military targets would have a negligible effect on the outcome of the conflict. In short, then, weak nuclear capabilities, operating independently, are expensive, prone to obsolescence and lacking in credibility as a deterrent."

What better description of the United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent could one find than "expensive, prone to obsolescence and lacking in credibility"?

I want to mention another aspect of this lack of credibility—command, control and communications. We should all know that to possess any credibility a deterrent force must meet the criterion that those one hopes to deter understand that one can use it successfully. That is not true of the independent use of our nuclear deterrent, and I am pretty certain that the Russians know that. Command and control communications are complex and sophisticated, for good reason. No one in his right mind would want to unleash these weapons lightly or by accident, because the consequences of their use are unimaginable. So political control of them must be absolute—but therein lie a number of technical problems.

We have no early warning system of our own; we depend firmly on the American system at Fylingdales and on the Americans' commitment to pass on information. We should not take it for granted that, if we wanted to use the weapons independently, they would pass it on. Although considerable resources have been devoted to increasing the potential firepower and invulnerability of the independent nuclear deterrent by purchasing Trident, little has been spent on updating or improving the communications system for submarines carrying missiles. That is the key issue, and probably a major weakness in the whole philosophy.

Communicating with submarines is extremely difficult, and follows a simple rule: the easier it is to communicate between shore and submarine and the more reliably the message is transmitted, the more vulnerable the submarine becomes. This country, unlike the United States and France, has no TAMACO-type facility for aircraft to make these communications. We appear to be wholly committed to vunerable, onshore-based transmitters. Even low frequency transmitters consist of vast ground aerials that can transmit messages only slowly, while other forms of communication such as long wave, medium wave, high frequency, very high frequency and ultra high frequency require the submarine to surface to receive the message or to be very close to the surface.

The transmitters are extremely vulnerable to attack and to electromagnetic pulse effects. It is not inconceivable that a single megaton nuclear device exploded at 100 km above the United Kingdom would so severely damage the transmitters as to make communication with the independent nuclear deterrent fleet impossible without compromising the safety of the submarines. Where is the credibility of an independent nuclear deterrent that cannot be given the order to fire? Do the Government expect the Trident submarine commanders to decide themselves whether or not to fire?

The Minister has dodged questions repeatedly, but he must answer the question whether he is relying on submarine commanders who turn on a wireless to listen to Jimmy Young on the radio. If they cannot pick up Jimmy Young, should they assume that Britain has been attacked? There is no credibility to the system unless the Government can convince the House and everyone else that there is a way of instructing Trident commanders whether to retaliate.

The Government seem to be well aware of the problem. They have at last committed themselves to building a trial transmitter for the extremely low frequency band. A transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland would have some advantages. At least the submarines could stay submerged. It is much harder for a submarine to be identified. The disadvantage lies in the extremely long wavelengths that are involved. The transmission of data is very slow and it takes several minutes to transmit a message of three or four letters. Clearly there are problems with the system that the Government have not addressed —first, how much money will be spent?

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) from the Democrat Bench claimed that by the time the next election came round the Trident costs would be committed. But once the system has reached that stage all sorts of extra costs will arise. I hope that the Government can tell us how much they expect the extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest will cost. When will the system be operational? The Government, in parliamentary answers, talk about building the transmitter, assuming that planning permission will be granted, in 1991 and 1992. But it would not start operating until 1993. The transmitter would be only experimental. It is questionable whether it could be used or would be merely a prototype and a larger device would need to be built, if the system was to work at all.

There is the question whether it would stand up to electromagnetic pulse effects. There is a danger that most of our radio transmission systems for any system of command and control, and a series of other micro electronic processes, would be greatly affected by it. I notice that the Minister dodged that question once again last Friday. Perhaps the Minister could explain whether such a transmitter would just communicate with Trident or whether it would have some wider role. There is also the question whether it would cause more damage to the environment than it was worth.

If the whole point of putting missiles in submarines is safety and that they will survive a first strike and make retaliation possible, there is little sense in making submarines vulnerable to attack when communicating with them. It is a bit like putting something on British Rail. It is about the only organisation that does not know where it is going.

Putting missiles on submarines has a useful political purpose. It keeps them hidden from public view and makes it much harder for people to mount protests against them. It bears out the old adage "out of sight, out of mind". The oft-stated reason for buyng Trident is to ensure that British bombs can penetrate the Galosh ABM system around Moscow. The same reason was given for updating Chevaline and Polaris.

Yet this counter-value policy cannot be described as credible. I return to Robert MacNamara's remarks. He has described that view as "tantamount to suicide". He described the effect of such a force on NATO's policy of controlled escalation as follows:

"Such a failure in co-ordination might lead to the destruction of our hostage—the Soviet cities—just at a time at which our strategy of coercing the Soviets into stopping their aggression was on the verge of success."

A counter-force strategy for the United Kingdom independent nuclear deterrent is of course ridiculous, given its size. We must ask what it is really there for. The crazy logic of the deterrent theory is that British missiles would be indistinguishable from American ones to their most likely recipients. One suspects that the real purpose is not to deter the Russians but to blackmail the United States and to make sure that they do not withdraw their nuclear guarantee for NATO.

Instead of us having a nuclear commitment to make an impact on deterring the Russians, the policy is designed to make sure that the United States is tied in to giving us a nuclear umbrella. If that is its real purpose, we must make certain that such a deterrent is genuinely independent of the United States. Is there much point, when it is really there to blackmail the United States? We are dependent on the United States for early warning, as received at Fylingdales. Ought we not to have our own early warning system if that is the idea? In fact, we shall not really be effectively able to communicate with our submarines, although that is not stated publicly by the Government. We shall need to rely on the United States TAMACO system.

Again, does that really give us an opportunity to blackmail the United States? It means that we can use the deterrent only with their permission. Therefore, it becomes only a minor part of NATO's response rather than being genuinely independent. If we are really trying to persuade the Americans to commit their nuclear forces rather than to deter the Russians, we must face up to the fact that it might be in the interests of the United States and the Russians to stop us using our independent deterrent.

That raises the question how far we are totally reliant upon the United States for the supply of technology for Trident. We are totally committed now to returning the missiles to Georgia for servicing. I suggest to the House that it is crazy for us to be pouring £9 million or £10 million of public money into Trident when we do not have a command and control system that would convince the Soviet Union that it was genuinely independent. Its real purpose is to blackmail the United States into maintaining a nuclear umbrella. Surely we could do that with a far cheaper system than Trident. We could do it without committing ourselves to a nuclear strategy.

We could do better for this country by abandoning the whole concept of Trident and the nuclear deterrent that goes with it. We could save the money to make sure that we have a proper conventional defence force. The way in which the Navy is being steadily eroded has been well illustrated in the debate. Perhaps, better still, we could spend far more money on the education and health services and to make sure that British industry had the research and development that is needed to make it competitive in the world.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will find a few minutes in which to convince me and the House that we have a credible system of political command and control over Trident. I suggest to the Defence Select Committee that it is important for it to ask whether we can produce the missiles to go into Trident. It is equally important for the Committee to ask whether there is command and control over the system. Unless that can be established, the policy has no credibility. We should be far better to get out of the nuclear rat race.

7.58 pm

**Miss Ann Widdecombe** (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. I shall make a brief contribution, perhaps somewhat briefer than I had intended, because my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) has already made my essential point, doubtless more eloquently.

My remarks concern the women's armed services and, especially today, the position, training and opportunities for women in the Royal Navy, for the WRNS.

The statement on the defence estimates shows that women as part of the cadet forces have risen substantially between 1982 and 1988, as indeed they have increased in other services. There are many reasons for that, doubtless including the very attractive programme of training and opportunities that has been given to our cadet forces, and on which the Royal Navy and the other services, and the Government, are greatly to be congratulated.

Women find the cadet services attractive because there is little distinction between the opportunities open to them and those open to their male counterparts. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is considerable enthusiasm among women for the cadet services.

It is a different story when it comes to the recruitment and retention of women into the main branch of the service, the WRNS, because, whereas the cadet forces as a whole are declining and the women's element is rising, in the main service the women's element is declining, with a minor decline in the number of officers but a sharp decline in the number of service women.

Why, if we can attract young people into the cadet branches of the service, do we fail to attract more mature women into the main service? And having attracted some, why do we have such a problem retaining them?

It is not surprising that in the Royal Navy, as in the other services, many women leave for reasons of marriage or pregnancy or both—that is an insoluble problem facing the women's services—but there is a substantial rise in the number of women leaving either because they wish to leave at their own request prematurely or because, on reaching the end of their immediate contracts, they do not wish to renew. Having let the period of notice run out, they leave. Those last two reasons suggest that women do not find the service as attractive a long-term proposition as we would like. Is that due to the disparity of opportunities between the male and female branches of the services?

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South highlighted the fact that women do not go to sea. I cannot join his enthusiasm that at long last we have 12 reservists at sea. The numbers will have to be greater before we can welcome it as a significant advance.

Women in the OTCs can learn to fly and have training at sea, but the same does not apply when they go into the service proper. That must act as a discouragement to women. If they cannot get the same training and adventure opportunities, not to mention the same scholarships—it is significant that all the flying scholarships in the cadet corps, like the sea scholarships, go to men—they will not be encouraged to take it as a serious career option.

Women are more likely to be retained—particularly those who know that in the long term they will leave

*[Miss Ann Widdecombe]*

anyway, to marry—at least in the short term if they are given the sort of training and grounding for future civilian life that will create later opportunities for them. In that connection, a glance at the qualifications that are gained —not only academic but craft, driving and technician qualifications—makes it clear that there is a substantial disparity between male and female achievement.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South said, we have declining manpower in the services. Some of that is due to straightforward rationalisation and some to giving certain tasks previously performed by those in uniform to civilians. But much of it is due to failure to retain. It is therefore vital to capitalise on the willingness and enthusiasm of women—as exemplified by their willingness to join the cadets, the OTCs and so on—by making special endeavours to retain them. Not only could they do the sort of jobs to which my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South referred, but they could take part in a wide range of roles.

I appreciate the reluctance of the Ministry to pour resources into training women for roles which could be defined as essentially combative and therefore not likely to be a long-term investment. We are not yet ready as a society to see women in combat roles; on that score I disagree somewhat with my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South, but as he rightly pointed out, there are many ancillary combat roles which involve what might be described as real work rather than simply ground and civilian-type work. If women cannot feel that they go into the forces equal with males, we shall not retain them in the armed services. We are not doing so at present and we are certainly not retaining women in the Royal Navy as successfully as we might.

We must examine why that state of affairs exists and try to prevent reaching the stage when women are as little represented in the Royal Navy as they are in this House.

8.6 pm

**Mr. George Galloway** (Glasgow, Hillhead): I spoke in the debate on the Royal Navy last year immediately following the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), which I suppose shows that neither of us has moved up the pecking order, at any rate in the last 12 months. She spoke eloquently then, as she did this evening, but I hope she will forgive me if I do not follow her down the path which she took.

Before coming to my main remarks, I wish to make a comment mainly for Labour party consumption, flowing from a statement which was made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). I want the Labour party conference to change its defence policy in October. Indeed, I voted for it to do so last October.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South does not make it to the rostrum at the next Labour party conference, for if the kind of inflammatory and reckless statements that he make today are made there, I fear that that will bedevil our chance of modernising the Labour party's defence policy.

My hon. Friend made what I can only describe as an extraordinary contribution, on two counts. First—I appreciate that this was popular with Conservative Members, judging from the acclamation with which it was received—he pined for the days when we had a consensus on what he called security matters with Conservative Members and, even more extraordinarily, with our United States allies.

Anyone who imagines that the Labour party can ever again have—if it ever did have—any sort of consensus on security matters with the Conservative Government with their attitude to official secrets and the security services, and the use or abuse of them, is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman's comments about the remarks of the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) because one finds when speaking to members of the forces that any of them who have spoken to the hon Member has faith that at least somebody in the Labour party understands what their job is all about. Indeed, the hon. Member for Walsall, South tends to describe himself as a missionary of, rather than a spokesman for, the Labour party. I should have thought that if we needed a consensus on anything, it was to assure the personnel in the armed forces that they have the support of Members in all parts of the House.

**Mr. Galloway:** I was intending to speak about the armed forces, as I did last year. Perhaps I should remind the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) that he is talking to a former lance bombardier of the Royal Artillery battery II of the Army Cadet Force. I am no "pinko pacifist", or any kind of pacifist, and I pay tribute now, as I did last year, to the outstanding work of the Royal Navy. It happens, of course, also to be a big customer of the major engineering employer in my constituency, which is a second reason for saluting it on the occasion of the Royal Navy debate, but I would do so in any case, as an admirer of our senior service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South made a fundamental error in imagining that there can ever be a consensus on defence matters, let alone security matters, between us and the party opposite; and even less between us and the United States of America, because, to quote a Communist, albeit a dead one, and an Italian one at that —they are usually regarded as fairly pale pink—without having MI5 put on my tail, if indeed they are not already there, Togliatti said that defence policy is the daughter of foreign policy. If defence policy, as I believe, is the daughter of foreign policy, if we had the same defence policy as this Government, we would have to have the same foreign policy. The chances of that are, I hope, remote, because our view of the world is very different from theirs: they have had to be dragged, screaming and kicking, by the Americans into a perception that the world is changing.

It is because the world is changing that I want to see the Labour party's defence policy changing. I am sure I am teaching my grandmother to suck eggs in advancing this argument to our spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who I know will do the job very well, but I hope that that is the basis he will concentrate on in the Labour party in changing our defence policy, as I hope it will be changed.

In opening the debate, the Minister reminded us that it is 123 years ago today since the Royal Navy outlawed grapeshot as ordnance. At the very first whiff of the smoke detector which was let off behind him, he ducked and

bobbed and weaved in such a way as to put in question his steadiness under fire, and frankly, his contribution from then on was downhill all the way.

Sitting through the whole of the Royal Navy debate last year, I assumed that, as a new Member, I was simply not picking up the information which I assumed would be forthcoming. However, having sat through it all again this afternoon and this evening, I have to say that the Minister's speech—I hope it will be redeemed in the wind-up—was bereft of any military and strategic discussion of the reason for the Royal Navy and its role in the world, or of any news at all about procurement. There were some vague hints on procurement, some misleading hints on procurement, and a deafening silence on other important issues of procurement to which I wish to come.

Many hon. Members have talked of the Government's complacency over the size of our surface fleet. We used to be committed to a surface fleet of 50 ships, which then became "about 50"; I learned last year, and it has been confirmed again this evening in information from such unquestionable old salts as my hon. Friend from Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South who seemed to be popular enough with those on the opposite Benches, that in fact our surface fleet is somewhere between 28 and 43.

Even at its high point, that estimate of 43 is not "about 50"; at its low point it is only just over half of 50. I went to the library to look up the Oxford Dictionary definition of the word "about", and here it is:

"very nearly or not many more or less".

Now, I concede that if the Minister were to say that he was going to give me 50 apples and actually only gave me 43, I would probably be satisfied enough with that not to make too much of an issue of it, but when we are talking about a Navy with worldwide responsibilities, with responsibilities to protect our shoreline—our senior service, in the front line of our defence posture—not to come within at best seven, and at worst a good deal less, of 50 does not qualify by my understanding of the English language as "about 50".

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I did say that the number of destroyers and frigates that we had was 49. That seems to me to be very nearly 50.

**Mr. Galloway:** That of course does not take into account those that are out of service, are being repaired or are unavailable for one reason or another.

This Minister who has just intervened made an extraordinary intervention earlier in saying that we had managed with the Armilla patrol when something came up. However, the Armilla patrol, with which our Royal Navy did a wonderful job but which was a long way from our main military commitments of defending our own shores or playing a role in NATO, occupied a third of our available surface ships. That was an extraordinarily risky undertaking, for if anything else had come up while a third of our surface ships were all those thousands of miles away, we would very definitely have been in queer street. The Government really have to do better on this question of "about 50". If the Oxford dictionary is right, "about 50" has to mean very nearly 50, and that is not what we are deploying at the current time.

To digress from this question for just one moment—this is a barb aimed not at the Government but at the yawning acres to my left, where the nationalist parties might be—I was astounded—perhaps the Minister did not see the programme—to hear the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) say on "Question Time" on Thursday night that in the independent Valhalla to which he is committed Scotland will have its own army, navy and air force. As someone very interested in defence procurement, I would have told him if he had been here this evening—I tell him anyway in the hope that he will read the record—what an extraordinary proposal that is.

I am not sure how big an army, navy and air force we are going to have. Scotland has 3,000 miles of coastline, which presumably the Scottish navy is going to patrol. That is going to need a hell of a lot of Scottish navy boats. Yarrow might do rather well out of it, but when one begins to calibrate the cost to the Scottish exchequer of such a navy, not to mention the air force and army, I think the plans of the Scottish National party for independence require a little more scrutiny. Perhaps I should wait until the SNP Members are in the Chamber before taking that matter any further, but I put it down as a marker.

The Secretary of State, who is not with us this evening—I must have missed his excuse; I presume it is a good one or much would have been made of it—was at Yarrow, which is my constituency, just three weeks ago. In his absence, I congratulate the Secretary of State for Defence on his accessibility. He is always ready to meet constituency Members of Parliament with an interest, and always ready to meet the work force too, which is somewhat less usual. I convey to him the gratitude of the work force at Yarrow for his kindness in meeting them at very short notice and in being very frank with them about the business of defence procurement which is now in front of us.

When he was at Yarrow, the Secretary of State will have seen the outstanding work which is being done there. It is the leading yard in the production of type 23 frigates. he will have seen the skill of the work force and of the management. He will have seen the new module hall which places it in a strong position in the tendering processes to come. He will have seen at first hand the skills and commitment of that work force.

The Secretary of State will also have heard from them that there have been substantial redundancies at Yarrow despite winning the order for three frigates last year. That is a result of the ordering pattern which has created a dip in the work load, leading to substantial redundancies, including the redundancies of workers whom it will be hard to get back into the yard because they have been dispersed.

The Secretary of State will have seen the extraordinary deal which has been struck between the Yarrow work force, the trade unions and the managers, which gives for the first time in any British shipyard complete flexibility of labour. Outfitters are now doing welding and other tasks which hitherto would have seemed unbelievable and impossible in trade union practice in shipyards. The work force has signed a deal with the management of complete flexibility. The Government should acknowledge and welcome that, as the Secretary of State did, in private at least, at that meeting.

How many type 23s will be tendered for this year? Will it be three or four? Can the Minister assure us that there will be competitive tendering? Will he guarantee that the job will go to the yard which can produce the ships most efficiently and economically at the right price and at the right time? Will he look at the serious problems created by dips in the work load at yards such as Yarrow?

*[Mr. Galloway]*

The Minister talked about the aviation support ships. He said that the tenders for those would be required by July. That is welcome news, but is there any possibility of Ministry of Defence assistance at the design stage? Yarrow would be required to spend £500,000 on the design work required for that tendering process. That gives hon. Members an idea of the scale of the task. I understand that other privatised companies have been given financial assistance from the Ministry of Defence for the design stage for tenders on work as important as that. Can a similar advance be made to Yarrow?

Last year there was almost deafening silence from the Government on the NFR90, to which other hon. Members have referred, but at least last year reference was made to the NFR90. I think that the Government conceded that they had agreed a procurement definition, but this afternoon, the Minister did not even mention the acronym NFR90. Given that the Ministry of Defence has put the British FFG90 proposal firmly in the icebox, the Minister has a clear responsibility to tell us when he replies about the Government's current posture on the NFR90.

Are we still committed to the procurement definition? Have we moved on in the past 12 months from that posture? Are we to cater for next century's surface ship needs by building the Euro-frigate in a collaborative project? Will 50 such frigates be built? Will Britain get the 12 that we were supposed to get? What will be Britain's share of the design work if and when the NFR90 project goes ahead? Many people's livelihoods and Britain's defence needs dictate that the Government give us some idea of their thinking on that.

Only two years ago, in Yarrow's drawing office, there were 360 of the most skilled draughtsmen and technical workers in Britain. That number is down to 160 and falling, despite the yard winning the three frigate orders last year. That is, first, because we are not building enough ships—we need about 50 rather than the obfuscation that we have had—and, secondly, because of the timing of the work. Workers in the drawing office of a place such as Yarrow are highly skilled and competent. If they are left, like sand in a tray, to blow and scatter in the four winds out of the industry, out of the city—out of the country, many of them—because of the redundancies they have suffered, their skills cannot easily be reassembled. In some cases it would be impossible to reassemble them. I hope that the Government can announce a procurement policy which avoids the peaks and troughs which have led to that situation.

8.25 pm

**Mr. Robert Banks** (Harrogate): I believe that during the debate a consensus has emerged from all parts of the Chamber on the need for Britain to maintain a strong, effective and modern conventional Navy. Where the Government differ from the Opposition is over the use of nuclear forces in the deterrence role which the Navy is at the forefront in providing.

I listened most carefully to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). He made a well-reasoned contribution, speaking with all the knowledge and experience that he has accumulated over many years, particularly in his service on the North Atlantic Assembly. I thought that we might be able to move to a wider consensus, but the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) spoke of wishing to see the Labour party change its defence policy. I must ask—from what to what? I am unclear about what the policy is now. It has not emerged from the debate and it will be interesting to see where it moves to. We shall look forward to having that explained to us.

During a period of peace and relatively little strain in the armed forces, it is always difficult to maintain a sense of tightness and efficiency and, as has been said, the Navy deserves great praise for what it has achieved in efficiency and its capability. The nation can be proud of the Royal Navy, and, more especially, of its reputation worldwide. With the Royal Navy I must include the Royal Marines. They are always included in our debates on the Royal Navy, but not a great deal is said about them. They do a job every bit as important and they do it as efficiently as our service men in the Royal Navy.

Conditions have improved enormously and that has been important in maintaining a peacetime force. We can take some pride in the fact that over the past 10 years our ships have been well equipped. A great deal of thought goes into their design for the comfort of the seamen who serve in them. I can say with some feeling that conditions have improved dramatically since the time when I served in a coal-burning ship of the Royal Navy many years ago.

**Mr. Frank Cook** (Stockton, North): Good God.

**Mr. Banks:** I thought that someone might say that, but it is true.

The Royal Navy has a special role in NATO and on the international scene. Its role is to guard the Atlantic approaches and secure our supply and reinforcement traffic lanes and ports of entry. Our minds tend to centre on Europe as the central theatre and the flashpoint for any conflict that is likely to occur. That is probably a mistake, because the flashpoint could occur on the northern flank just as easily as on the southern flank, though some may argue that that would be a more likely place for trouble to arise. Nevertheless, the width and scale of protection which the Royal Navy has to maintain necessitates an immense amount of work in covering both the northern and the southern flank and accepting our international responsibilities on the global front.

I wish to pay a brief tribute to our seamen who man the ships that guard the Falkland Islands. The seas in that part of the south Atlantic are dark, inhospitable and rough, and it is no easy task to spend long periods of time in a ship in those unfriendly seas. I hope that events will soon enable those ships to be taken off station, because we now have an airfield established on the Falkland Islands for rapid reinforcement. Given a more sensible approach from the Argentine Government to the problem of the Falkland Islands, I hope that we shall be able to reach some agreement which will reduce the tension between our two countries.

The Navy must therefore be multi-purpose, with fast destroyers and frigates, aircraft carriers and mine-laying, mine-sweeping and mine-hunting abilities are needed. I do not want to get deeply into the argument about the 50 destroyers and frigates which we aim to maintain—or thereabouts, or almost, or whatever expression we like to link with it. I feel tempted to break ranks regarding the general views that have been expressed today and say that we should have a 55 or 56-ship destroyer-frigate Navy.

Looking at the size and strength of the Soviet fleet and bearing in mind our role within NATO, I believe that there would be justification for taking the Navy up to those numbers. But I certainly stand by Ministers in their desire to maintain about 50 frigates and destroyers as the complement we need to maintain within our Navy.

The debates on arms control have centred chiefly on ground forces and nuclear forces in central Europe. I certainly would like to see negotiations on conventional armed forces succeed. We should all like to see that. It would reduce tension and enable us to reduce our defence budget.

I believe—this is another factor in our debate—that there may be opportunities for us to take an initiative in trying to bring the Russian Government to the table to negotiate on naval arms and forces. I do not think that it is feasible to negotiate on the basis of maintaining forces at certain levels in different parts of the world, but there is a very strong case for looking at the numbers and types of ships and the armaments they deploy and working towards limiting arms. If there is an opportunity of doing that, we should be very unwise not to take it, but we should do it from a position of strength, not weakness. So until those talks can be promoted we must maintain the strength of our Navy and of our other armed forces in their naval application.

Since the 1970s the Russian Government have been spending about 50 per cent. more, in real terms, on defence. Those are figures which we cannot escape. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) asked why the Russians had this enormous navy at their disposal, which they deploy on a strategic basis. We do not know the answer to that question. It can be used to influence and it can be used aggressively. Let us hope that, through patient negotiation, we shall be able to reach at least some modus vivendi for reducing the numbers and systems that are deployed.

By the middle of the 1990s, the entire Soviet strategic nuclear force will have been replaced since the 1980s by newer, modernised systems. That is another factor which should ensure that we maintain a modernised nuclear stance. I am very pleased that we have mantained the Trident building programme. It is worth recording that —much to my surprise—the estimates of the total cost of the system have now been reduced. It will cost something like £9·09 billion on today's estimates, which is a saving of £1 billion on previous estimates. When we decided to go ahead with Trident I believed that the estimates would prove to be on the low side, and I congratulate Ministers on achieving this cost saving.

How are we to take some sort of initiative over an approach to the Soviet Union to seek to reduce the amount of weaponry deployed by our respective navies and within NATO? I believe that the North Atlantic assembly has a role here in making a detailed study, such as it has at times already undertaken, which can be used by member Governments of the strength and deployment of Soviet forces and in making suggestions for an initiative.

Our Navy is the largest in western Europe. We have the ability to deploy some 200 vessels of all classes. We have spent about £3 billion on modernising equipment in the past year, and similarly in previous years. So we have a very good record, but we must ensure that technology is incorporated in the new systems with which we equip our ships. It is hugely important to have ships that are technologically more advanced in the methods of deploying and using their weapons and to rely on the accuracy of those weapons rather than on numbers of ships. We must remember that satellites are a very sophisticated surveillance technique and will make a very great difference to the way in which ships can hide from the threat of opposing ships. I do not think that there is any doubt of our ability to use this technology, because the people serving in the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines have the necessary skills.

The concept of a NATO frigate is certainly in the doldrums. I regret that, because the object of the exericise is to produce a standard vessel which can be used by all NATO navies, and that is something we should aim for. The specification of that vessel is the current difficulty and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will give some thought to the matter and to what we can do to propel the project forward. The purpose of NATO is to ensure that we work more closely together, and if we build a common frigate, at a lower cost, with all the advantages of interoperability of equipment, which we all operate and understand, we shall be better equipped.

**Mr. Sayeed:** I am certainly surprised that my hon. Friend believes the project to be stalled. Perhaps he has some other information, but I had understood that it was in the project definition stage, that the Government had agreed that it should go ahead, that it was being discussed in Europe and that we should expect later this year some findings from the group that is looking at the project.

**Mr. Banks:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention because the most recent information that I have is that there is still great difficulty in deciding on the project definition. I hope that the matter will be clarified.

Finally, the role of the reserves provides important insurance, and I much appreciate the new numbers for the service that have been included in the complements. They are to be welcomed. I particularly welcome the advertisement in *The Times* today, which lists a number of companies that give active support in enabling people to serve as reservists. It is the first time that I have seen such an advertisement. The number of companies that support our reservists is impressive. We should not under-estimate the value of the reservists' work or the enormous reliance that we should place on them in time of war.

8.40 pm

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): I am puzzled by the questions on Labour party policy that have been put by right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Benches. Our defence policy is roughly the same as that of Canada. It is that we shall remain members of NATO but refuse the right of any country to have nuclear weapons on our soil. I have not noticed the Prime Minister or Government supporters criticising Canada—or Norway, which was visited by the Prime Minister without any criticisms being made of its defence policy. I am not sure what is meant by modernising Labour's policies. They are already extremely modern, and are aimed at removing the threat of nuclear annihilation from our planet—which is the most morally sound and modern policy one could have.

Getting rid of Trident, which costs about £10 billion, would allow us to meet the claims made by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House for an adequate conventional surface fleet. We could also use some of that

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

money to improve the National Health Service and to replenish the wilting coffers of local authorities, which are hard-pressed to provide adequate services because of central Government cutbacks. Schools in my constituency could be rebuilt, and if Trident were cancelled and its funds transferred elsewhere, the effects of capital expenditure cuts of local authorities could be immediately remedied.

The Government's policy of possessing nuclear weapons is also puzzling. Currently, the Government are breaking diplomatic relations with Iran, and they are right to do so. They are taking that action because of Iran's threat against only one person. However, the Government, through their deployment of Polaris and their expensive increase in nuclear firepower in the form of Trident, threaten the lives of millions of people. That is a curious moral juxtaposition. The Government are outraged at a threat to the life of one person, but maintain the threat of mass extermination with a cool indifference that is breathtaking.

I remind the House that even Polaris, which is to be phased out, offers each submarine that carries it more firepower than was used by both sides in the 1939-1945 war. Nevertheless, the Government are spending billions of pounds to extend that firepower. As I pointed out to the Minister earlier, not only is £250 million being spent annually on maintenance, but such expenditure deters supporters of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The Minister disagreed with me, but then had to correct himself, when he suggested that the United Kingdom does not support that treaty. We are signatories to it. One hundred and thirty three non-nuclear nations have said—this is an implicit part of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty—that nations that do not possess nuclear weapons undertake not to manufacture or deploy them, provided that the nuclear nations which are signatories to the treaty—and the United Kingdom is one of them—negotiate in good faith to remove their own nuclear weapons.

The only country that is in breach of that,which is ratting on its international obligations, and which is breaking its word to at least 133 nations—and to the two nuclear nations of the Soviet Nation and the United States—is the United Kingdom. That is what the Government are doing. As we are bound by that treaty to negotiate away our nuclear weapons, we should not be embarking on the expensive folly that is the £10 million Trident.

When we get rid of Trident, we shall join other NATO countries that will not tolerate nuclear weapons on their soil. Such a thing is not so startingly radical that Conservative Members should raise their eyebrows. Rather, I am a little startled that some of my own party raise their eyebrows at such a modest proposal, which is practical, sensible and morally superior. It happens to be wrong to threaten to exterminate civilisation on a scale that would make Hitler and Pol Pot put together look like boy scouts. I repeat my argument. Given the Minister's glazed look, perhaps I may spray it on his eyeballs. Each Polaris submarine carries more firepower than was used by both sides during the 1939-1945 war.

Ultimately, the Government must be prepared to use that deterrent, because otherwise it is no deterrent. It is an interesting question to put to the Government as to whether they are only pretending about using the nuclear deterrent, or are serious. The Government will say, of course, that they are serious. It is a highly immoral situation, and nothing on earth will persuade me that the deployment of nuclear weapons is a moral or justifiable act.

In case the Minister suggests that the nuclear balance is such that Britain must negotiate from a position of strength—and increase its strength from Polaris to Trident, whose firepower can be as much as 10 times greater—I draw to his attention page 230 of the current volume published by the Institute of Strategic Studies, headed "The Strategic Nuclear Balance". That reveals that the total number of launchers deployed by the United States under the strategic arms limitation talks is 2,002, whereas the number deployed by the Soviet Union is 2,503. It may be thought that the Soviet Union has more launchers, but Soviet technology is not as good as that of the United States, so Russia does not MIRV its nuclear weapons as effectively as the West does. As the Minister will know, the figures for the United States do not include existing launchers on Polaris or projected launchers on Trident.

The figure given for the number of nuclear warheads deployed by the United States under SALT is 14,637, but for the Soviet Union it is only 11,694. That means that the Soviet Union has fewer than the United States and the United Kingdom, which are consequentially already negotiating from a position of strength. But apparently, we are still to increase our nuclear firepower by as much as 10 times, to negotiate from a position of strength. That does not make much sense.

If one redefines nuclear capacity under the strategic arms reduction talks—START—one finds that United States' warheads total 9,789, while those of the Soviet Union number 10,595. As the Institute for Strategic Studies points out, the actual bombing capacity of both sides is greater than that—10,585 warheads in the case of the United States, as opposed to 10,455 in the case of the Soviet Union. But that does not include Polaris.

So, on every conceivable count, the case for getting rid of nuclear weapons is all-powerful. It will revive the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the wilting belief that the United Kingdom Government are going to do something about it—and they are signatories. It will release massive resources for the things that people need and want. They do not want extermination, as they have shown over the years by continuous demonstrations, campaigns and expressions of concern. I will argue this case with any Tory Minister or Back Bencher on any public platform he wants to provide. The truth is that, after a couple of years of arguing the case, Tory central office told Conservative Members not to engage in the debate because they were losing, because the case is so overwhelmingly powerful.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** If the case is so overwhelmingly powerful, why do 65 to 70 per cent. of the people of this country feel that we should have our own independent deterrent?

**Mr. Cryer:** When questioned about their belief in Mr. Reagan, Mr. Bush and Mr. Gorbachev, an overwhelming majority put greatest faith in Mr. Gorbachev. In that respect they line up with the Prime Minister, who believes that Mr. Gorbachev is an outstandingly "bold and

courageous leader"—they are her words. Why should we marshal all this massive nuclear power against a nation that has the admiration and support of the Prime Minister—so much so that when he had five minutes at Brize Norton, for refuelling, she rushed out to the tarmac with a cup of tea and a bun? This was to ingratiate herself with a man because of whose threat we are spending enormous sums. Either she is schizophrenic, or she believes he is a bold and courageous leader. Actually I believe the former and it makes me apprehensive that she has the nuclear keys around her neck.

I want to conclude because there is someone else wanting to speak and in any case I do not want to be too controversial about this issue. The fact of the matter is that we have in the services personnel who are trained and who can be called upon to use the keys to fire nuclear weapons. Whether they do so is another point. Frankly, I doubt whether they would. Nonetheless, we have those people, and we have in the Government people who can unleash this massive firepower and have their instructions so to do.

I think that we ought to give the personnel in the armed forces some say in the organisation and in what goes on in those forces. Since nearly all Tory Members are absolutely besotted by the Common Market, we should take a leaf out of the book of some other Common Market countries and give the right of association to members of the armed forces—in this case, the Navy. In 1984 there was a report of the European Assembly—PE 84688/final/annex 2—in which the service men of a number of nation states were given the rights of professional organisations. They are able to be consulted but have no negotiating rights. The states were Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Denmark, which is a loyal member of the EEC, with full negotiating rights.

The document points out that, in the Netherlands,

"as in the federal republic of Germany, officials and servicemen are not entitled to take part in negotiations. However the association *must* be consulted when the legal status of servicemen is affected by ministerial rulings etc."

That exactly fits the circumstances of being required to carry out orders to embark on a policy of mass extermination.

"A central consultative committee has been set up for this purpose with the Secretary of State as chairman. It meets twice a month and discusses all legal conditions and provisions which affect servicemen and the policies, guidelines and general principles of the personnel programme. There are subcommittees dealing with matters relating to the army, navy and air force which meet once a month."

The document goes on to say:

"There is freedom of the press including the right to distribute broadsheets."

If the Governments are so sure of their case why do they not adopt the policy of the Netherlands and allow broadsheets to be distributed in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force?

"There is no right to strike, but soldiers in uniform may stage demonstrations when they are not on duty."

In the Federal Republic of Germany,

"The right to form associations to safeguard and improve working and economic conditions is guaranteed to everyone and to all trades, occupations and professions . . . The right to form associations is therefore a fundamental right under the constitution. This right may not be restricted for soldiers by laws concerning military service".

In Luxembourg, service men

"are allowed to organise or join non-political unions. The majority are members of the Syndicat professionele de la force publique, which is part of the Conféderation générale de la function publique."

Lastly, in Denmark,

"Servicemen therefore have the same negotiating rights and the same right to conclude agreements as all the other government employees. There are various groups of professional organisations for serving officers, reserve officers and serving soldiers. These associations negotiate on general pay and working conditions with the Minister of Defence. They voluntarily renounce the right to strike."

If these rights are good enough for other EEC member states—and we are continually being told that there is a lot in respect of which we have to align ourselves with the EEC—why not give these rights to our service men and women, whom both sides in this debate have praised, and on whose shoulders such a heavy task has been placed as a result of the mistaken, befuddled, immoral policies of the Government?

8.58 pm

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (Dorset, South): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) who, by gabbling his words at the end, gave me a little time to speak. I must admit, however, that I should have preferred to hear more from the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). I hesitate to praise the hon. Gentleman, because he may end up being deselected. However, I have to say that when listening to the hon. Gentleman one gets the impression that he has actually studied the subject and understands what it is about. He makes some extremely logical and sensible suggestions, to which I think the House would do well to listen.

Last year I had the wonderful opportunity to be the guinea pig on the new armed forces parliamentary scheme set up by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who took a few years to persuade Ministers and others of the good sense of getting Members of Parliament out with the armed forces to learn at first hand, at the sharp end, what the forces were all about. Although I spent 40 days with them last year I am not suggesting that I am an expert, but at least I understand the questions that should be asked in the armed forces about what we are doing.

I pay tribute briefly to the whole company of HMS Newcastle, the type 42 destroyer on which I was looked after for several days. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has just left, because I agree with him that consulting everyone in the armed forces—I know that such consultation takes place informally—gives an excellent idea of what they really think. Morale in our forces, from the lowest rank to the highest, is second to none, and those people wish to express their opinions for the good of the service, not for their own good.

I pay tribute also to the men and women at the royal naval base at Portland and on HMS Osprey, who have looked after me on many occasions. They, of course, are based in my constituency. I also have the honour to represent many of those who work at the Admiralty research establishment who back up the work of the Royal Navy, and the sea systems controller and others involved in procuring capital equipment.

Let me deal first with manpower. The Royal Navy and all the country's forces—indeed, all its industries—realise that they are sitting on a time bomb. The birth rate has fallen enormously, and there will be considerable competition for the good-quality manpower, of the right age, that we need to join our forces. I can certainly say that

*[Mr. Ian Bruce]*

I have worked in no service or industry with such good-quality manpower at its call, and I believe that we must think carefully about the retention of staff.

The message getting through to the Government seems, unfortunately, to be "Let us put up salaries to retain staff." People's main worry, however, concerns the amount of shore leave that they will be given in which to see their families. It was interesting to hear two of my colleagues mention the possibility of more jobs being changed so that they are done by Wrens. That, unfortunately, would mean fewer shore billets and less leave. Unless we decide that women should go into combat zones and perform combat duties, we would, I feel, be foolish to do away with shore billets.

My overall impression from talking to people in the service is that we seem to have the idea that in the armed forces, particularly the Royal Navy, we are training every man jack to become First Sea Lord or Chief of Defence Staff. Constant training and retraining means that almost everyone has less than 12 months' experience. In high-technology posts the average length of experience is often only a year, which is not sufficient. Once someone has acquired good expertise in one job he is promptly swapped into an entirely different job. We should be trying to retain that knowledge. I know that variety is necessary if people are to remain interested in their jobs, but I think that we have gone too far in the wrong direction.

Having been on Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Navy vessels, I feel that there is a difference of philosophy on training. Accidents happen with high-capital equipment: on HMS Southampton a bit of bad driving ended up with a vast amount of equipment going almost to the bottom of the sea. Whoever is on the bridge at any one time may have little sea experience, and we still cling to the idea that for 24 hours a day, week in week out, one man is ultimately responsible for running a ship.

Out at sea, as I was for a fortnight, the captain of a vessel can often be seen becoming more and more tired. Is that the right management philosophy on board ship? The captain should be able to have a proper rest so that he can think clearly. During a meal or conversation in the captain's cabin a message may come over the Tannoy: a junior officer is on the bridge and wants to know whether to steer left or right. It is amazing that our captains are able to make decisions in such circumstances, and to be constantly aware of what is happening to the ship—to know from the sound of the air conditioning whether there is a fire problem, for instance. We should look carefully at how we utilise our manpower.

The Navy seems to vacillate between carrying out repairs on shore and having enough equipment to do so on board ship. I have been on a number of vessels much of whose equipment could not be repaired because the right spares were not available. Perhaps there was one spare circuit board. Often, having grabbed a circuit board and popped it into a piece of equipment, someone will find that it is a circuit board that was sent back three months ago with a spurious fault. The repair people did not find the spurious fault and it was still there when the circuit board came back.

We have heard much about the number of ships in the Royal Navy. Having been to the conference a week ago to which the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) referred, I am a little concerned about what we are told by the experts and whether the story we are given in the "Statement on Defence Estimates" is the story that we should believe. What concerns me more is not that Back Benchers are given a spurious story, but that Ministers are not given the correct story. When one hears defence analysts from academic and defence backgrounds talking about the Royal Navy and the American navy versus the Russian forces, one receives a wholly different picture.

**Mr. Frank Cook:** I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman, in developing his theme, would care to comment on the view expressed by Dr. Robert McGeehan, the spokesman for the Pentagon, at the official seminar for opinion leaders at the NATO defence college in October last year in Rome. He said that the tacticians and military strategists should deprive elected politicians of the best intelligence—meaning information—and that it should be kept away from politicians because of the way in which they had abused it in the past. Will the hon. Gentleman express an opinion on what kind of democracy that would be?

**Mr. Bruce:** That would be a threat to democracy and it is important for us, as Back Benchers, to harangue Ministers constantly and to ask whether they really have the facts. It may be that we do not want certain facts to go into the public domain, but I have the uncomfortable feeling that the captains of our vessels and even people within the higher echelons of the forces have information kept from them. The story of the 50 or thereabouts escorts is a moveable feast. The subject is constantly being churned around and as long as it is moved around and people are not allowed to focus, it will be difficult to make decisions. In my year with the Royal Navy, I have felt that the Ministry of Defence, Ministers and the people in charge have not necessarily had the right information. I shall do my best to ensure that they and all of us have that information.

The debate about the number of ships misses the point to an extent. The number of ships does not matter unless we define their role first. The question of 50 or thereabouts escort vessels is a sacred cow. If one goes out on an escort vessel and says to the captain that he has 200 people under his command and that the ship can defend itself, and if one then asks, "What do you have within the vessel to sink anybody else?", one finds constantly that surface vessels, in particular, are sent to sea to defend themselves and have little offensive capability.

We have gone away from the debate that we should be having about surface vessels versus submarines. We should be considering the role that we expect our escort vessels to play within the Norwegian sea and we should ask ourselves the correct question about whether they are a survivable force or the best force. I believe that if there is money to be spent either on submarines or on surface vessels, the hunter-killer submarine must come out ahead of surface vessels. I spent only two days with submarines in the north Atlantic. On exercises, HMS Illustrious was sunk with the greatest of ease. Submarines are credible machines of war in the conventional sense.

When I consider our frigates and destroyers, I question whether they have much firepower in a NATO role. We have to examine carefully what we use the conventional Navy for out of area. We have a strong role out of the NATO sphere. Since the end of the second world war,

there has been an enormous development in what we have had to do. We must ensure that the escort ships have a credible role out of area in the conventional sense—not that they are protecting themselves against the incredibly sophisticated missile systems that Russia could send at them, but that they have more firepower to go into Third world areas where there may be lots of bush fire wars in the next 20 or 30 years.

Almost all service men who have had guns fired at them have been given a campaign medal. In Armilla we have a group of people who have been steaming up and down what are probably the most dangerous waters in the world for almost a decade under incredibly bad conditions. Because no one has fired at them and because they have had a peacekeeping role, we seem to have forgotten that they should be recognised in the normal way. I hope that the Ministry of Defence will make a recommendation through the normal channels for a campaign medal for those who have served in the Armilla patrol.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State would be surprised if I did not mention the sea systems controllerate. Our capital equipment procurement needs to be improved. Many people in my constituency, and in Portsmouth and Bath, are committed to doing a good job for the Royal Navy. Unfortunately, for years we seem to have been writing reports about reports about reports. For the last 18 months we have been locked into a debate about the red herring of centralisation. That will probably continue for three more years unless a decision is made to cancel collocation and to get the three sites working efficiently for the good of the Navy so that the staff can get on with the good job that they are doing.

9.12 pm

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) told us that the new SLD defence policy was to retain Trident in service. That will come as a considerable shock to many councillors in my constituency who are ardent supporters not only of his party but of CND. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Many of us are not certain where Mr. Gorbachev and his policy of glasnost are taking us. Now that NATO for the first time will face battle-hardened troops as a result of the war in Afghanistan, the Royal Navy's nuclear deterrent is more important than ever.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister of State for allowing me to visit the Royal Navy's hydrography department at Taunton. I look forward to visiting Northwood tomorrow morning. I particularly enjoyed my trip in a nuclear submarine. My visit to the hydrography department was very interesting. It was everything that I was led to believe it would be.

However, there are matters of concern to which I should like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend. There has been considerable discussion about aggregate dredging and seabed depletion. I understand that it is part of the hydrography department's duty to advise the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on territorial limits and the Crown Commissioners on seabed surveys. The issuing of licences in that respect needs to be tightened considerably. I am pleased that HMS Gleaner is working currently in my constituency and that coastal surveys are being conducted.

I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) saw in use on a Royal Navy ship a chart dated 1908 of the north Norway coast. However, I am surprised to find that the commercial interests in hydrography and chart making have to be filtered through to the Department of Transport as a matter of priority. While much has been done in the Hydrographer's department to make it more commercial and more enterprising, I believe that it could explore many more avenues. It has a number of original charts, some of them going back to the days of Captain Cook. If it was removed from a cash-limited budget, I believe that it could venture into areas of commercialism that would produce a considerably enhanced income.

I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that he explores the requirement for electronic charts that would be of considerable use not only to yachtsmen, but to merchant sailors throughout the world, because they would solve the problem of having to update manually the existing chart service.

I am puzzled to know why the meteorological centre at Bracknell can put its information directly into shipping broadcasts, yet navigational warnings cannot be promulgated by navtex direct from the Hydrographer's department at Taunton. I hope that my hon. Friend will seriously consider that matter, especially as we are still issuing daily navigation warnings in printed form that must consume a considerable amount of money, expense and effort.

I should like to record my appreciation of the reception given to me by the Hydrographer's department and the way in which it answered my many questions. I hope that at least part of its functions might yet be lifted from the cloying hand of the Treasury and be created into an agency. After all, after 1990 the Navy will no longer have to use the Property Services Agency, and I wonder whether my hon. Friend has considered the position of the teams of divers and engineers whom the Department of the Environment currently maintain for the inspection of Navy underwater structures. Will the Minister continue to use that service in-house, or will he put it to an outside agency?

Having Hifix in my constituency, I hope that I may have the Royal Navy as an ally for the replacement of the Decca chain with the Loran C system, in addition to the new geosatellite system which, of course, is once more back on its way after the Challenger space disaster.

Today's news makes my concern about the GEC-Siemens bid for Plessey especially topical. The £1 billion Spearfish programme has been open to competition, and it is only Plessey which is offering any serious competition in the market. Should it be taken over by GEC, that competition would be removed.

As my hon. Friend will know, Plessey has succeeded in beating GEC with its bids for naval radar, and the 996 has been an especially successful naval radar. I understand, however, that when West Germany requested information on this radar system, it took two years to obtain the permission, which was then only given for an outline specification. Should Siemens be successful in bidding for Plessey, that would beg two important questions—one of national security and the other of competition.

Of course, on the Isle of Wight we have the only working model of a non-rotating radar MESAR system, which I understand has some considerable potential for naval purposes.

I am pleased to participate in this, my first debate on the Navy, having in my constituency at East Cowes the site of

*[Mr. Barry Field]*

the first naval college, where I believe our much loved and sorely missed Lord Louis Mountbatten embarked on his naval career. On the other side of the river, we have the only yacht club in the United Kingdom to fly the white ensign.

I conclude by telling my hon. Friend how much we, as an island community, look forward to the arrival of the royal yacht and the guardship at Cowes week every year. If any hon. Member ever doubts the benefit of the Royal Navy goodwill visits, just let him speak to any of my constituents. I ask my hon. Friend to send a signal to the fleet to tell it how welcome it will be again this year at Cowes. I hope, too that HMS Sandown may eventually visit Sandown, Isle of Wight.

9.19 pm

**Mr. Roland Boyes** (Houghton and Washington): I would like to join those who have thanked the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy for their sterling work in the past year. Hearing the list of exercises, visits and events taken by or forced upon the Navy I am struck by the breadth of activity that Britain expects of its senior service. This was made apparent to me in my recent visit to the Falkland Islands, where, in the vastness of the oceans under British naval protection and the inhospitability of the land, the naval forces there continue to work with determination and great humanity, never forgetting the complexities of the political, economic and social factors that have given rise to the need for a military presence.

May I also add my tribute to those of the Ministers and of my hon. Friends on the return of the Armilla patrol after the brilliant work that was done in the Gulf.

I am, however, struck by the audacity of the Minister in applauding the achievement of the Navy in the past year while apparently failing to understand or even recognise the depth of despair in some sections of our naval forces, which is evident in articles about the problems of naval procurement, of shortages, morale and manpower and the increasing cost of Trident and its impact, notably in the squeeze on resources, on the remainder of the service. To this end, I would like to make a few comments about naval arms control.

In the past year we have seen that reducing the offensive elements on either side is a confidence-building measure. This has been recognised in conventional stability talks in Vienna. It was also recognised in the Stockholm agreement of 1986. Why should the same principle not apply to naval forces? In the past year the Soviet Union has made the running in naval arms control, one of the most neglected issues on the agenda of the super-powers. There are only five multilateral agreements dealing with maritime issues and they concern mainly nuclear not naval weaponry or strategies.

For our purposes today let us remind ourselves of the unilateral initiatives for naval arms control proposed by the Soviet Union. President Gorbachev has proposed anti-submarine weapons-free zones, notably one in the Barents sea, anti-submarine warfare-free zones and an SSBN sanctuary policy. He also supports a ban on sea-launched cruise missiles and has repeatedly stated that the Soviet Union will not enter a START agreement without some type of limit on long-range land attack SLCMs. The United States has, however, refused to include these in the START talks. The United States has about 4,000 of them, and they allow the United States to negotiate through strength, as well as giving it the enormous military advantage of spreading its military strike capability from 13 aircraft carriers to 190 ships and submarines.

Rear Admiral Studemann of United States Naval Intelligence also notes that the Soviet Union is paying increased attention to international proposals for naval arms control and constraints on naval operations. Since 1986 Mr. Gorbachev has proposed mutual withdrawals of United States and Soviet naval forces from the Indian ocean and from the Mediterranean; limitations on naval activity in the Pacific, possible Soviet withdrawal from the naval base in Cam Ranh bay in return for United States withdrawal from the Subic bay complex in the Philippines; the creation of a nuclear weapons-free zone in Northern Europe; restricting naval activity in the Baltic, north Norwegian and Greenland seas, including special limitations on anti-submarine warfare weapons; prior notification of naval exercises in the presence of observers of such exercises; and the complete prohibition of naval activity in areas such as international straits and major shipping routes.

These proposals would, if implemented, undoubtedly result in a reduction of NATO's maritime superiority, which is based on bottling the Soviet navy in the Kola peninsula. This has been seen by many as an offensive maritime strategy.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury) *rose*——

**Mr. Boyes:** No, not just at the moment. Tory Members have taken too long.

All we can say about maritime strategy is that it is based on the view that there will be a Warsaw pact attack on Europe and that Western Europe needs to meet that attack with reinforcements. These will have to be escorted across the Atlantic. The Soviet fleet will be prowling around and must be restrained. The scale of these reinforcements is phenomenal and farcical. It is phenominal because in the first 30 days it is anticipated that 300,000 men and 100 air squadrons would cross the Atlantic. After 180 days 1·5 million men, 8·5 million tonnes of freight and 3 billion gallons of fuel would have come across in a total of over 3,000 ship sailings and 28,000 transatlantic flights.

It is farcical because United States-led NATO offensive forward maritime strategy is likely to result in swift retaliatory responses from the Soviet Union's SSBNs. Experts differ, but a war in Europe may not last long enough for there to be reinforcement from across the Atlantic. Time, tide and war wait for no one. However, these are only proposals, open to negotiation. As unilateral initiatives, they show the importance of not relying only on multilateral negotiations and moves. In a global climate in which economic forces are pushing for political initiatives and the authority and stability of the current Soviet leadership may well be at stake, it is important to comprehend the nature of Western responses. The response of the United States and NATO to these recent Soviet overtures has been positive in respect of the negotiation of confidence-building measures and overwhelmingly negative towards proposals such as SSBN sanctuaries, nuclear-free weapon zones in the south Pacific and Nordic regions, and US sea-launched cruise missiles.

Does the Minister recognise that if Britain does not hunt submarines, that will give the USSR more confidence with its SSBNs in the Barents sea? In return, the USSR must agree not to hunt United States or British submarines off the United Kingdom or United States coasts. Does he agree that the British Government could take a fundamental and important confidence-building step if they so wished? This confidence-building measure hands a big verification problem to the Soviets. It is much easier for the West to use its highly sophisticated tracking technology to close in on the Soviets than for them to do the same to us.

As the House will know, naval confidence-building measures include information exchanges between super-powers, observation/inspection agreements and operational constraints. The Atlantic Assembly report notes that confidence-building measures generally reduce the risks of confrontation by demonstrating the peaceful and defensive intent of naval operations. As such, they would enhance stability and decrease super-power tensions.

Given these benefits, will the Minister reaffirm the Government's commitment to confidence-building measures? The incidents at sea agreement, which is praiseworthy, already exists, but we need to go further. Will the Minister reassure us that when he next speaks to his United States counterpart he will note the House's anxiety that the United States navy appears to reject confidence-building measures? While we may understand that such measures may be seen by the United States navy as infringing United States naval operations, we urge the Minister to ask the United States Defence Secretary to locate naval policy more in the promising framework of current international security, and less in the old days of crisis management.

The United States and NATO have been stonewalling on discussions affecting maritime strategies. That manifests itself in the same way as other defence-related double-talk: we are told that it is necessary to have more efficient, lethal and sophisticated weapons, and then we can have less.

How dare we call this rational? It is nothing of the sort. It is the game played by politicians, military personnel, industrialists, bureaucrats and even, at times, diplomats. Do exercises in arms control control weapons procurement? Arms control talks may be a super way of meeting one's opposite number, but do they achieve anything else?

The Labour party likes to call a spade a spade, and digging, digging. We apply the same rules to political language. After all, the offensive role of the United States navy, which may enable it to have political kudos and higher resource allocation in the United States, should be of minor concern to us as an independent country.

As an independent country—with, as the Government so frequently boast, its own nuclear deterrent—and as a member of NATO, we must take note of factors affecting global security. Since last year, there has been a sea change in international relations. In the light of this different economic and political atmosphere, will the Minister accept the view that Trident must be included in stage two of the strategic arms reduction talks?

I note that the defence estimates state that, if United States and Soviet strategic arsenals were substantially reduced,

"we would want to consider how we could best contribute to arms control in light of the reduced threat. But the US and Soviet reductions would have to go much further than 50% before we could consider including the British deterrent in arms control negotiations".

How much further do super-power reductions have to go before Trident can be included in START? The defence estimates note that, even with a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic arms, greater stability in Europe will not be achieved without reduction in the Soviets' conventional weapons and a ban on chemical weapons.

In the light of this statement in the defence estimates, will the Minister consider the following? In the past months, the Soviet Union has reduced its forces in Europe by 500,000 troops, 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces and 800 combat aircraft.

Before becoming President, Mr. Bush twice used his tie-breaking vote in the Senate to support the modernisation of the United States chemical weapon programme. At the Paris conference on chemical weapons in January, the Soviet Foreign Minister announced that the Soviet Union would begin to destroy chemical weapons. Meanwhile, the final budget of the Reagan Administration increased spending on binary weapons production from $9·7 million in 1988 to $60·7 million in 1991. Does the huge economic, political and military cost of continuing the Trident ultimately depend on international affairs or on an image that the Government like to create? Is the Government's policy——

**Mr. Brazier:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

**Mr. Boyes:** No, I will not.

**Mr. Brazier:** The hon. Gentleman does not want a debate.

**Mr. Boyes:** Is the Government's policy to include Trident in reduction talks if the super-power talks result in strategic reductions of more than 50 per cent.? There is a ban on chemical weapons, and the Soviets are reducing their conventional forces.

To answer the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier): I gave up time to allow two Conservative Members to speak, one of whom spoke for longer than I shall have done by the time I sit down.

I should like to say a few words about procurement. Sometimes the latest weapons technology in the most sophisticated, efficient, accurate and expensive hardware just does not work. The necessity to develop new weapon systems, if only to compete in international markets, accounts for about half the military budget. NATO's 16 nations spend $400 billion a year on their weapons and armed forces—half the world's total of such spending. The British defence budget for 1988-89 amounted to £19·2 billion, with 95 per cent. going to Britain's NATO commitments. Of total expenditure, £2·8 billion is allocated for the development and production of sea equipment.

To put this in perspective, since 1979 Government spending on defence has risen in real terms by 17 per cent., while education has achieved an increase of only 10 per cent. Spending on housing, transport and overseas aid has declined in real terms. Yet this military budget is said to be too small. The loudest protests to that effect come from some Conservative Members, some military personnel and people working in the industrial complexes that continue to lean on military contracts.

*[Mr. Boyes]*

What happens to this huge military budget? The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" notes:

"We have adopted a more commercial attitude, exploiting the best practices to obtain long-term value for money . . .

Our fundamental aim remains unchanged: to buy for the armed forces the equipment they need to the required quality, at the right time and at the keenest price . . .

Whenever possible, we express a requirement in terms of specified criteria, such as performance and reliability, and leave it to the contractor to decide how to meet them."

How does that proclaimed procurement policy square with this year's quota of Government-inspired fiascos?

The Minister mentioned the ongoing contract with Ferranti to develop the computer-assisted automated command systems for frigates. We must remember that the first contract, with impossible-to-reach specifications, has been scrapped at a cost of £17 million. This is an incredible and unpardonable waste of taxpayers' money. Even though the statement on defence estimates notes:

"we place responsibility and risk with the contractor, providing him with the incentive to deliver equipment at the agreed time and at the agreed price",

we know that Ferranti's first contract was written off.

Why is it that, having made changes in procurement practices, this Government—always boasting of efficiency—still preside over messes? In a world in which the major powers are attempting to reach some sort of global security which does not totally rely on the might of the military, it ill behoves the United Kingdom Government to order weapons systems and then keep changing the specifications and mismanage the ordering. Will the Minister give an accurate figure to the House of how much taxpayers' money has been written off by original over-specified orders?

The Trident D5 is another example of a complex weapons system searching for a justification. We are told of the costs of Trident being reduced: is that really true? The "World in Action" team last week uncovered overcharging—or gold-plating—on Trident contracts. As the Trident procurement management is meant to be the tightest of any procurement project, why are people like Sir Ronald Mason, former chief scientific adviser to the MOD, saying the management has to change? Perhaps that explains why design work on a new class of hunter-killer submarine is under way.

The remaining three Trafalgar class hunter-killer submarines are being completed at Barrow. Another order for the generation of SSNs is likely to be placed in the near future. Are these hunter-killer submarines to be used as protection for Polaris or Trident in future? Can the Minister enlighten the House? Does this mean that RAF Nimrods and hunter-killer submarines and anti-submarine frigates are being deployed to protect Polaris? If so, is that not yet another unallocated and unspecified cost of the Trident programme, and of maintaining strategic nuclear weapons? The House should be told the real cost of Britain's nuclear deterrent. What are the opportunity costs of the forces patrolling with and protecting Trident?

On the subject of miscalculations, I draw the attention of the House to the fiasco of the torpedoes. As we all know, due to procurement problems with modern torpedoes, the Belgrano was sunk with 1940s technology. Modern technology was not reliable enough for the job. Do we take this as a lesson and continue to use tried and tested technology? Why should we spend money at all if we need a lot of 1940s torpedoes?

With this in mind, because of dissatisfaction with Marconi torpedoes, is it not true that Sir Peter Levene has been examining the possibility of acquiring torpedoes from other producers, including producers abroad? Is it not true that torpedo testing has shown success rates as low as only 16 per cent. from some models?

Also, Sir Peter Stanford, the former Commander-in-Chief, Naval Home Command wrote an article in the United States Naval Institute's journal in January 1989, in which he drew out the main issues. He noted how important is the service fleet, especially in the Atlantic in supporting, even the 600-ship United States navy. He wrote:

"it takes no great depth of perception to expose the gap between the Thatcher Government's rhetoric and the reality of their naval policies."

He added:

"the Government's claim to maintain a fleet of about 50 destroyers and frigates is becoming a standing joke. In the eight years after the British Government's target for surface combatants became about 50 destroyers and frigates, the orders actually placed with ship builders to sustain the rolling programme amounted to no more than seven. Four other orders were made to replace battle losses in the Falklands and these are of no account in this calculation."

It is clear that the Government's procurement policy has cost the taxpayer millions of pounds, yet our services have not had the equipment that they deserve with which to carry out the tasks that we ask them to do on our behalf. We expect the Navy to ensure the security of the United Kingdom. For it to do this we need to ensure that our military forces have the quantity and quality of equipment to undertake such a task. The Royal Navy must also play a part internationally, but this must be for security rather than to be provacative. The Government are not giving the Navy the necessary tools so that it can carry out the task that we require of it.

9.37 pm

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton):** This has been an excellent debate. I must admit at the outset that I had an almost surreal feeling when listening to the Opposition. One had to ask what had happened to the Labour manifestos of 1983 and 1987. One had to ask whether the unilateralist dog had ceased to bark. But of course, it did not take long before the House was reminded by the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that unilateralism is still alive and well in the Labour party today. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) has a difficult task ahead of him in reconciling the differing views of Labour Members. I doubt whether he will get unanimity on almost any defence policy that he manages to dream up. I am not certain that there is even a vague consensus.

Of course, it is not just the Labour party that is working on defence policy. We must ask how the SLD is doing. It has shaken off the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), whose views on defence have always been robust. I think I heard the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) say that cancellation would be neither financially nor militarily prudent; when asked whether he would maintain Trident, he answered unequivocally yes.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) , I must ask what has happened to all the Liberals who are members of CND and so on. Are they suddenly going quiet, and will they not have any stake in the future policy of the SLD? It strikes me that many arguments have yet to come and that it will be good spectator sport, at any rate for Conservative Members.

A number of issues have been raised during the debate and I shall try to cover them. Concern was expressed, understandably, by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) about the future of the fleet maintenance and repair organisation. As a result of the decision to seek competitive tenders for the combined repair and refit of HMS Southampton, we are examining what work can sensibly be rescheduled or reallocated to make the most cost effective use of the resources of the FMRO during the original planned period of the Southampton refit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) spoke of the future of merchant shipping. The decline in the British registered merchant fleet has continued over the last year, but our national defence requirements can still be met and there are welcome signs that we may now be entering a period of relative stability. The industry has returned to profitability, orders for new ships have risen sharply and cargo rates are also rising.

The House will recall that we introduced a number of measures last year to help the industry. The Merchant Shipping Act enabled us to provide financial assistance for the training and travel costs of British merchant seamen and to set up a merchant navy reserve. The Finance Act changed the foreign earnings deduction rules to enable more seamen to benefit. Business expansion scheme arrangements for shipowners have been expanded to encourage investment. The full effect of these measures has yet to be seen.

On the NATO front, the continuing shortage of vessels for transatlantic reinforcement remains a matter of concern, but nations are working together to increase the availability of vessels for this and other purposes. The study on the supply and demand for merchant shipping by NATO in crisis and war is well under way.

The hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol. East (Mr. Sayeed) spoke of concern about CACS 4 and the successor system to it. I remind hon. Members of what the Under-Secretary said on this matter earlier this year:

"The lack of a command system will restrict the co-ordination of the weapons and sensors although each weapon and sensor will be capable of independent action. Without the full integration of the weapons and sensors the overall effectiveness of the ship will be reduced, particularly in a demanding multiple threat situation. Despite this, however, the type-23 will provide a very much more effective contribution to our maritime forces than the Leander class frigates that it will replace"—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1989; vol. 144, c.*60*.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth and a number of other hon. Members spoke about our amphibious capability. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) was worried that tenders would not be invited for the aviation support ship until July. In fact, tenders have already been invited and responses from industry are due in July.

As for the capability of the assault ships Fearless and Intrepid, the feasibility studies into a replacement which were under way at the time of the last debate on the Royal Navy, last March, have now been completed. Their results, as well as the possibility of extending the lives of these ships, are now being evaluated. In the meantime, Fearless is currently undergoing a major refit.

No Navy debate would be the same without the great discussions that we always have about whether the surface fleet numbers about 50. I should have thought that to have 49 ships—destroyers and frigates—was quite good when we have talked about 50, and I make no apology for 49.

It is important to put the debate in context. We are in danger of giving the impression that the Navy is composed of only about 50 ships. That is not so. The Royal Navy deploys some 200 vessels of all classes. The figure of about 50 destroyers and frigates reflects the Government's judgment of what is the right contribution for us to make, taking into account the contribution also made by other surface ships, submarines and aircraft and the forces of our NATO allies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East spoke about the aging fleet, but that is quite a wrong impression to give. The average age of our escort fleet is about 12 years and compares favourably with equivalent fleet ages of our major allies and the Warsaw pact. Moreover, we expect the average age to fall as newer and more capable ships enter the fleet. Many older vessels were originally expected to have a long life and are, in fact, highly capable ships; it is perfectly sensible to run them on. The Armilla patrol has been carried out by, among others, type 42 destroyers and the less modern Leander class frigates. They have been capable of meeting the singular requirements of the patrol at least as effectively as more elaborately equipped vessels deployed by some other Western navies. We must also bear in mind the fact that it is reckoned that a United States navy cruiser costs around $1 billion, and our Royal Navy crews reckon they do the job just as well, if not better.

The hon. Member for Walsall, South asked about the cracks in type 42s. A study in 1988 showed that four batch 3 type 42 destroyers could experience problems if operated in exceptionally severe sea conditions. Preventive measures, consisting of external strengthening, are being undertaken; they have been completed on HMS Gloucester, are in hand on HMS Manchester, and are scheduled for next year for the other two ships involved. I will write to the hon. Gentleman about the cost of those modifications.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East will not be surprised that I will not give him a precise undertaking on orders for type 23s. I will say, however, that our plans provide for sufficient orders of type 23 frigates to meet our target of about 50 ships. The orders placed last July for three type 23s underline this commitment, and we expect to hold a competition for a further batch later this year.

My Department holds regular meetings with ship-builders to ensure that, within well-established guidelines, the industry is well informed on the Department's policy towards the size and shape of the fleet and the likely pattern of future requirements. The aim is to assist shipbuilders to judge their future work load and prospects in a competitive market.

**Mr. Boyes:** I have been given to understand that the Government have placed a limit of £105 million on the tender for a new helicopter carrier. A few minutes ago the Minister was talking about HMS Fearless; could he put a price on the work that was done?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a price for that, but the £105 million is a guide price for the aviation support ship, and, of course, we have given industry a number of options on what to come up with for that, including converting an existing merchant hull, which may be an answer to the problem.

**Mr. Galloway:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I asked him five questions and he has not answered any of them, though he has answered plenty of other people's questions. Can he answer one point for me on the tendering for the type 23s? Will he give a guarantee that the decision about where those orders will be placed will be made on the basis of competitive tendering and that the yard that makes the best offer in terms of economy, quality and price will get the job?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Clearly, all the criteria that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned will be taken into account when we decide who gets the order.

I must respond to the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East about the attitude of Ministry officials, who cannot defend themselves, to the Defence Committee. I assure my hon. Friend that each and every response to the Committee was made on behalf of Ministers and approved by Ministers, so if he has any complaints I hope that he will address them to me, because I am paid to respond to them. I hope that he will also accept, on reflection, that the Ministry's response to the Defence Committee has been very helpful. We are providing classified raw data about fleet activity regularly. We made no difficulty about that, but we needed to be clear precisely what the Committee required; that was not clear at the outset. Perhaps my hon. Friend will agree it is sometimes necessary to clarify requests for information rather than setting in hand unproductive work for no purpose. I do not call that an exercise in semantics.

**Mr. George:** I have been a member of the Select Committee on Defence for 10 years, during which time relations between the Committee and the MOD have generally been good, but in the past six months they have dropped to a level the like of which I have never known. It is one thing to criticise the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), but his views are shared by every member of the Committee and I hope that the Minister will do more to develop relations with the Committee so that we may do our job just as the Government do theirs. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I do not make that point maliciously, but simply because relations have deteriorated to an all-time low.

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is clearly not the unanimous view of Committee members. I simply say that if my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East has any complaints I should like him to address them to me, and not criticise officials who are only acting on instructions from Ministers.

Several hon. Members have asked about the NATO frigate NFR90. The United Kingdom remains committed to that important NATO collaborative project which could eventually meet the Royal Navy's requirement for an anti-air warfare escort coming into service at the end of the century to replace the type 42 destroyers. The contract for the project definition study was signed in January this year and work has begun. It is expected that that will take about two years to complete. The next milestone will occur later this year when all eight member nations will review progress and consider the alignment between the programmes for the ship and its major weapons systems.

My hon. Friends the Member for Portsmouth, South and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) asked about making greater use of the WRNS, and they were right to do so. *[Interruption.]* There is almost no phrase that one can use in referring to the WRNS that cannot be misinterpreted by the dirty-minded. I fully acknowledge that they make first-class recruits. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone expressed reservations about having them in a combat role. We have to bear in mind that these days 70 per cent. of the Royal Navy goes to sea. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) said that if we were not careful we would end up with fewer shore billets.

At the moment we use the WRNS as weapons analysts and helicopter ground crews and they go to sea in that capacity. However, difficulties arise if they are at sea for too long. One of the difficulties is the effect that that has on the wives and girl friends of sailors who may be suspicious about what they might be up to. However, the position is being reviewed by the Navy and we expect it to come up with some recommendations.

The hon. Members for Clackmannan, for Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and for Walsall, South suggested that the western Alliance was being left behind by President Gorbachev's arms control initiative. It was suggested that the time was right for NATO to take an initiative in maritime arms control. The Government's view is that, following the successful negotiation of the INF treaty, the priorities in arms control should be to pursue agreements on strategic arms control, the elimination of chemical weapons and reductions in conventional forces in Europe. Those reflect our concerns in particular with the Warsaw pact's capability for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action on land.

It is necessary for the maritime balance to be seen in the light of NATO's dependence on long sea lines of communication, whereas the Warsaw pact is structured for offensive action with short internal lines of communication. Therefore, maritime forces around the world must be viewed in a global context—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks). It is self-evident that it would be difficult to consider them within regional arms control agreements.

However, naval forces are not excluded from talks on confidence and security-building measures. The United Kingdom will be participating fully in these talks to identify measures that will help to reduce misunderstandings. I would, however, remind the House that in doing so, we shall ensure that such measures will not give away the freedom of action at sea which may be crucial to our ability to maintain our security.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) mentioned the armed forces parliamentary scheme. The scheme is designed to enable a small number of hon. Members each year to learn about the role, make-up and activities of the armed forces in some depth. For the pilot scheme my hon. Friend was attached to the Royal Navy, in particular to the flag officer, sea training, at Portland. Using this attachment as a base, he was shown a wide range of Royal Navy activities, giving over 30 days, spread throughout the year, to the scheme. I am very grateful for

his help in the pilot. The scheme has now become a permanent feature of the MOD's relationship with the House.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement referred to the role of the Royal Navy. I should like to focus on the reasons why we must continue to maintain and improve our naval capacities.

The Soviet Union still maintains a massive naval force which in a conflict could seriously threaten NATO's vital supply and reinforcement routes across the Atlantic.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** Throughout the debate we seem deliberately to have dodged the whole question of command and control of Trident.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Yes, I have deliberately dodged the question of command and control of Trident. In repeated answers to the hon. Gentleman I have told him that this is classified information. We do not intend to reveal to him how we communicate with our submarines or how we intend to do so in future. That information would be of enormous use to the Soviet Union. Obviously, it would very much like to know how we are able to control Trident in the future. That is not information which we could ever allow into the public domain. We have not done so in the past and we will not do so in the future.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan referred to the problem of the Soviet fleet being iced up on the Kola peninsula. I have checked up, and I do not think that the Soviet fleet has ever been iced up in any circumstances.

There have been reports that since 1985 the Soviet Union has been restricting its global naval activities and speculation that that shows a reduction in the threat. This, too, was raised by the hon. Member for Clackmannan. I remind the House that throughout the 1980s the Soviet navy has continued to expand—it has undergone an "enormous expansion", in the words of the hon. Member for Attercliffe. It has a submarine force of some 350 vessels worldwide—the largest in the world.

The proportion of nuclear-powered submarines in the Soviet fleet is increasing, and recent designs emphasise improved quietening, speed and weapons versatility. The new Akula class of nuclear-powered attack submarine, for example, is assessed to be the most capable attack submarine yet developed for the Soviet navy. Conversions of the older Yankee class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines continue, some probably related to the long-range sea-launched cruise missiles programmes—the SSN21—which we believe is now operational, and the SSNX24, under development.

That is coupled with a trend in Soviet major warship construction towards larger units with increased firepower and more sophisticated sensors. A number of my hon. Friends referred to that fact. Production of the Kirov nuclear-powered and Slava class of guided missile cruisers continues, as does production of the Sovremennyy and Udaloy classes of guided missile destroyers. Only recently the third unit of the Kirov class, Kalinin, deployed to the Soviet northern fleet, together with the fourth unit of the Kiev class of VTOL aircraft carrier, Baku, with its improved sensor and weapon fit.

The Soviet naval aviation order of battle has increased by over 20 per cent. in the 1980s. Numerous qualitative improvements have also been made, including the introduction of the Bear F Mod 4 ASW aircraft, two new naval combat helicopters and the Fencer E reconnaissance aircraft. Backfire medium-range bombers have now joined naval aviation forces in the Kola. A new 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier is due to begin sea trials later this year. That ship will improve Soviet tactical aviation capabilities significantly beyond the range of land-based air defences. My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said that their activity may be down, but their quality is up, and that is absolutely right.

We believe that the Soviet navy will continue to allocate many of its forces to its priority missions of SSBN protection and defending the Soviet homeland. It seems unlikely that it will be affected by the new defensive doctrine to the same extent as other services of the Soviet armed forces. The Soviet navy is placing increasing emphasis on qualitative as opposed to quantitative factors, which may enhance its overall capability—certainly to pursue its priority missions. Therefore, it is imperative that even in the current improving East-West relations, we should not allow our guard to drop.

The Soviet Union has drawn attention to the fact that NATO's principal naval forces normally located or based in the north Atlantic outnumber those available to the Warsaw pact. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood said, we must not confuse the intentions of the Soviet Union with its capabilities, because intentions can change. Nobody knows what will happen in the Soviet Union in years to come——

*It being Ten o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

## Wood Treatment (Pesticides)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10 pm

**Mr. Martyn Jones** (Clywd, South West): No doubt the Minister is aware of my early-day motion 143. That briefly puts the case and, with supporting amendments, now has the signatures of more than 117 right hon. and hon. Members. The toxicity of lindane and of pentachlorophenol is well known and well documented in this country and abroad. I quote from information supplied by the Royal Society of Chemistry on lindane alone:

"Lindane—or to give it its proper name: the gamma isomer of hexachlorocyclohexane . . . sometimes called benzene hexachloride—produces signs of poisonings that resemble those produced by DDT, ie tremors, ataxia, convulsions and prostration, with stimulated respiration. Violent tonic and clonic convulsions occur in severe cases of acute poisoning. Fatty changes in the liver and kidney tubule degeneration have been noted in fatal cases."

As to lindane's carcinogenic, teratogenic and mutagenic properties, the society comments:

"Epidemiologic studies have not demonstrated associations between DDT exposure and cancer in humans. There was a review in 1976 of the program on the evaluation of the carcinogenic risk of chemicals to humans of the International Agency for Research on Cancer . . . Ten of the ninety-four chemicals, which the agency had determined to be carcinogenic on experimental animals only, were pesticides. These included Lindane."

As to systemic toxicology,

"In animal tests, Lindane causes convulsions. In a study in 1976 this effect was produced by a single topical application of 1 per cent. Lindane on weaning rabbits. Since topical Lindane is used in treatment of scabies, the production of convulsions by this route of application is of significance. Lindane has also been reported to have an effect on host defence mechanisms."

On toxic responses of the immune system, the Royal Society of Chemistry comments:

"Insecticides examined for immunotoxicity in rodents can be grouped into three general classes. Lindane belongs in the general class of the organochlorine insecticides."

There is also some evidence that lindane affects female reproductivity.

For those reasons, many countries have restricted lindane, and the United States of America has banned its use in the home. In 1976, it cancelled permits for products containing lindane in vapourisers for indoor usage, such as smoke fumigation devices. America also cancelled registrations and denied applications for registrations of lindane-containing products for all uses unless labels giving statements for each application are used. In addition, at least 16 countries restrict lindane's use. They include Argentina, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, West Germany, Finland, Hungary, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore and Yugoslavia. France has also almost banned PCP.

The connection between aplastic anaemia and lindane is perhaps circumstantial, but it was mooted as long ago as 1965 in an American study entitled, "Aplastic Anaemia Following Exposure to Benzine Hexachloride (Lindane)". In cases involving an eight-year-old girl and a 52-year-man, a connection was established between the use of lindane in smoke pellets, which is a use within the home, and a high concentration risk. I believe that that certainly had a bearing on its prohibition in America.

Aplastic anaemia is a rare disease, but all the textbooks relate its occurrence to exposure to radiation and one exotic chemical or another, and at least one authority quotes lindane as possibly such a chemical. I have had letters from many people throughout the country who suspect they have suffered from the effects of these chemicals—anecdotal evidence, but taken together, constituting weighty circumstantial evidence.

I submit that, as many countries have already banned or severely restricted the use, of lindane, it is anomalous for us to continue to permit its use. It is not that there are no alternatives. Several large timber treatment firms have already responded to public and medical concern by abandoning pentachlorophenol lindane and another suspect chemical—TB 10—in spray treatments. They use permethrin or cidomethrin, a pyrethrin-based compound, which is currently considered the least suspect chemical. I say "least suspect" because all these treatments are, after all, designed to be harmful to some form of life. This one is perhaps not so long lasting, and, at present, building societies insist on 30-year guarantees. I am sure that the industry would prefer not to have to offer such a lengthy guarantee, because it forces them to use chemicals that remain in the environment too long.

One way of putting the matter right might be for the building societies to be discouraged from making such environmentally damaging demands. I submit that it would be more sensible to have a 10-year guarantee and relative safety. I at least believe that people are more important than the protection of investments.

It was the very insistence of building societies that drew the problem to my attention in the first instance. In my constituency a young boy was subjected to this chemical after his parents' house, which was bought with a mortgage, was sprayed by a firm that used lindane and PCP. The boy was affected after three or four weeks, and it was only later that his parents realised that his condition had been caused by this chemical. Fortunately he survived the experience, although he is still ill. His is not the only case that I know of. The only reason he is not in worse health—and I hope that it will continue to improve—is that he was moved out of the house. Of course, that caused problems for his parents. They now have to live apart, which imposes a financial burden on them.

The Under-Secretary of State for Employment will be replying on behalf of the Government, although I suspect that his Department is not necessarily entirely responsible for this matter. That is another facet of the problem, for, while the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 covers workers in this and other situations in which these chemicals are used, it specifies that people working with them should have respirators and gloves.

It specifies also that when wood treated with the chemicals is used for fabrication, the chemicals should be allowed to evaporate in the open air for a number of weeks. If these rules are properly enforced, the people who work in the industry are probably at little risk, but that does not help the poor residents of houses that have had remedial woodworm treatment. They have no protection and are exposed to very high levels 24 hours a day. Indeed, the Building Research Establishment has discovered that maximum levels are reached after four weeks. It is fair to assume from that that the high levels are maintained for a matter of months, and it is certainly not safe for people to enter after two days, as woodworm treatment packages recommend at present. I am sure that the Minister has

considered that point, and I hope that he will be prepared to exact some action from his colleagues in other Departments.

This loophole desperately needs plugging. It is ludicrous that lindane cannot be sprayed when bats are present because, not surprisingly, they die, while humans can legitimately be exposed for indefinite periods to chemicals that are extremely dangerous to susceptible individuals.

I have a wealth of material on the subject with me and could go on for hours, but I will leave it at that and allow the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) to add his comments.

10.10 pm

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) for allowing me five minutes of his Adjournment debate. He has made an extremely powerful case.

I became involved because a constituent of mine, Mr. Eric Riley, died in January 1988 in tragic circumstances. The Rileys bought an old pub in Kings Lynn called The Old Town Wall House, in Wyatt street. The Elizabethan building required a tremendous amount of work. Being DIY enthusiasts the Rileys did much of it themselves, but they also called in professionals to treat the timber beams. The professionals applied lindane and PCP.

Within days both Rileys began to feel ill. They suffered from headaches, flu-like symptoms and stomach upsets. Eric Riley, as well as working in the house, was sleeping in a room whose beams had been recently treated. The professionals who treated them had said that it was perfectly in order for the couple to move into the room within a week or so, so that is what they did.

About four months later, in April, Mr. Riley was no better. He collapsed from an epileptic fit, after which his health deteriorated steadily. He also suffered from appalling memory loss. The sad saga—a catalogue of health deterioration—culminated in his death in January 1988. All the evidence points to his having died as a result of exposure to lindane and PCP.

Like the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West I have received many letters from people throughout the country who have heard about our EDM and the enormous concern felt by hon. Members. Those who have written have related similar cases—similar incidents, a similar pattern of health deterioration and in some instances death.

We should like these products to be banned as they are in other countries. As the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West pointed out, there are alternatives on the market. One company, Cuprinol—based in Frome—has removed lindane and PCP from its manufacturing process, substituting other products. It is not as though those chemicals have to be used in wood preservatives.

If my hon. Friend the Minister feels that he cannot act to ban these products, they must be withdrawn pending a full investigation. I also urge my hon. Friend as strongly as I can to play a part in bringing in a centralised system to co-ordinate reports of pesticide poisoning. We also need an independent body to monitor such poisoning: at present we have no such mechanism.

The problem cuts across a number of Departments. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, at present the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food answers for the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, which, I understand, is carrying out a report on lindane at present. The Department of Health is involved, as is his own Department, through the Health and Safety Executive. It is regrettable that there is not one Minister to co-ordinate or control these matters. If the Government are to be taken seriously in terms of concern for consumers, concern for the environment and concern for green issues, they must get a grip of this problem.

We are not discussing salmonella or listeria, from which the weakest in the community may die, but healthy young people who have died as a result of exposure to these chemicals. The medical evidence is overwhelming. I urge the Minister to play a part in trying to make some of the running on this issue. If he feels that he cannot go as far as I would like, he can, at least play a part in bringing in the measures suggested by the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West which are reasonable and which the Minister could co-ordinate and see through. I support the hon. Gentleman entirely and hope that a senior Minister will soon stand up and announce positive action.

10.15 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls):** I want first to thank the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) for the way in which he introduced the debate. He has brought before the House a matter of great seriousness, which was reflected in the support that his early day motion has attracted. I am grateful for the opportunity to put the facts before the House.

We have been given a somewhat alarming picture of death and disease, but on present evidence, wood preservatives used in this country, providing they are used in the correct way, do not present a hazard to health. All pesticides are, by their nature, active against living organisms and hence their use can pose a potential risk both to health and to the environment. It is therefore particularly important that all users follow the required safety precautions. Provided that this is done, there is no evidence to suggest that the wood preservatives in use generally present any threat to human health.

First, I want to set out the measures that the Government have introduced to control pesticides and that will explain to the hon. Gentleman why it is appropriate that I should be standing at the Dispatch Box even if, as an Under-Secretary of State for Employment, my relevance is not immediately apparent.

Under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, wood preservatives and other pesticides require approval before they can be advertised, supplied, sold or used. That is given jointly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and Ministers in five other Departments, including the Department of the Environment. My right hon. Friends are advised on this by the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides. It consists of a number of eminent scientists and experts drawn from research establishments, universities and medical colleges. Before approval, all productss have to be thoroughly tested using recognised scientific procedures and the data from those tests are then assessed by the committee.

Approval to put a product on the market will be given only if it can be used without risk to people, livestock, domestic animals and the environment. All products must

*[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]*

be properly labelled, setting out the correct conditions for use, which include appropriate safety precautions and warnings. The way in which these products are then used is invariably subject to the general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. That means that employers have to ensure that employees carrying out the work are safe. Employees have to follow the instructions of use carefully and take all possible precautions to protect others who may be affected. Those are powerful and wide-ranging provisions.

I recognise that there has been considerable publicity in recent months over wood preservatives. The Health and Safety Executive has been looking into cases reported in the media where allegations have been made of ill health caused by wood preservatives. I am sure that hon. Members will understand that, before a judgment can be made on such incidents, all the relevant scientific information—including possible exposure to other hazardous substances—must be available, but it is not always easy to ensure that.

However, where it has been possible fully to establish the facts, no firm evidence has emerged of properly used wood preservatives containing lindane, PCP or TBTO causing harm to human beings. The executive's inspectors and doctors in its employment medical advisory service carry out investigations into all individual cases of suspected pesticide poisoning which are notified.

The results of those investigations are considered by the pesticides incident appraisal panel, entered into a national computer database and published annually. The advisory committee on pesticides is currently considering whether there are any ways in which the system of reporting pesticide incidents may be further co-ordinated or improved.

The hon. Member particularly mentioned the tragic case in his own constituency of a local schoolboy who developed aplastic anaemia. That case is distressing and clearly the possible causes of the serious condition must be investigated. I know that it has been suggested that the condition might have been caused by the treatment of his house with wood preservatives. But again I have to tell the House that the weight of scientific knowledge does not support the case that lindane, an ingredient in wood preservatives, is the cause of aplastic anaemia.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) made a powerful contribution, drawing on knowledge of a case in his constituency concerning the Riley family. I appreciate the concern that he feels for his constituents. If I heard him aright, he said that medical evidence overwhelmingly points to the fact that people suffer in the way he described because of pesticides. I do not know about the case of which he has spoken. If he gives me details I will look into it. When he said that the overwhelming medical evidence is that these pesticides are causing the types of illness that he described, my understanding is that the medical evidence does not point in that direction.

Lindane has been extensively used in agriculture, medicine, forestry and wood preservation on a worldwide basis for almost 40 years. It is one of the most widely studied of all chemicals and the weight of evidence suggests that wood preservatives containing lindane are safe if used in accordance with the required conditions of approval. The possibility that is may cause aplastic anaemia or other blood disorders has been studied by a number of national and international expert committees, but none has been able to identify a clear relationship.

The advisory committee on pesticides reviewed all the scientific evidence on lindane in 1981. It concluded that current evidence did not confirm that is should be considered carcinogenic and recommended that is should continue to be approved as an ingredient in wood preservatives. However, due to public concern about the risks to human health. In 1988 the committee recommended that all uses of lindane should be reviewed again. That review has now started.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West also referred to PCP, another active ingredient in wood preservatives. It has also been widely used in wood preservatives for many years. Concern has been expressed about the dioxins which may be produced during the manufacturing process and which may be present in PCP as impurities. In fact, PCP is not manufactured in Great Britain, but all PCP used here is required to comply with a detailed specification which strictly controls the level of dioxin impurities. The available evidence does not justify greater restrictions being placed on PCP than at present, but it is now being looked at again within the European Community. Of course the Government are taking a full part in those discussions.

In recent years there has also been international evidence indicating that TBTO, used in anti-fouling paints on boats, could seriously affect marine life and aquatic systems. Strict controls have therefore been placed on the use of TBTO in such paints. Although there is no clear evidence that the use of TBTO in wood preservatives presents a threat to human health, the Advisory Committee on Pesticides is nevertheless undertaking a review of this substance.

I know that environmental groups have expressed concern in the light of recent studies which have indicated that wood preservatives containing lindane are toxic to bats. The Advisory Committee on Pesticides is examining the issue of wood preservatives and bats in greater detail and a working group of scientists will be reporting to the committee. In the meantime, the Health and Safety Executive has specified that timber treatments containing lindane must be labelled "Dangerous to Bats".

The hon. Member has raised the question of the health of those employed to treat timber in situ using wood preservatives. Again I concede that it is a very important issue. Although the precautions to be taken when using a wood preservative appear on the container label, the Health and Safety Executive has also prepared a guidance note on the subject. It reinforces the precautions and gives general advice to professional users, including builders, on all aspects of the safe use of preservatives. The executive plans to publish that in the next month or two.

The note outlines the need for a thorough site survey and gives advice on the selection of the treatment necessary, which may not always involve the use of pesticides. If wood preservatives are needed, the note suggests that assessment is necessay to select which approved pesticide should be used. The choice should be based on that which offers the lowest risk to the health and safety of users, members of the public, domestic animals, wildlife and the environment generally.

The note also advises on the training necessary for professional users of wood preservatives and identifies the

hazards which may arise in the workplace when wood preservatives are used. In particular, it gives advice on the control measures necessary to protect users and the actions which should be taken to protect the occupants of any premises being treated. The hon. Gentleman also referred to the standard of controls elsewhere. He is, of course, right to say that where other countries have placed restrictions on the use of certain substances we should take note and assess whether we should take similar action ourselves. On the other hand, if we consider that more stringent controls than those currently in place elsewhere are necessary, we should not hesitate to take the lead in introducing them.

The House should know that most European Community countries allow both lindane and PCP to be used in wood preservatives, subject to certain restrictions. The exception is France, which is not thought to place any restriction on wood preservatives whatsoever. In the United Kingdom, of course, our restrictions are set out in the regulations to which I referred earlier.

Another very important step is that the Government have approached the European Commission with a proposal that controls on the use of wood preservatives should be standardised throughout the European Community. Those proposals are currently under discussion.

**Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse** (Pontefract and Castleford): Does the Minister appreciate that in a recent answer, I was told by a Minister that in excess of 200 people a year—including many young people—were dying of aplastic anaemia? Are there any records available to identify whether among those 200—including a young, fit man of 19 in my constituency—were people working with the chemicals to which the hon. Gentleman has referred?

**Mr. Nicholls:** I cannot recall having given that answer myself to the hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]* I am grateful to him for clarifying that my memory on that point is correct. Obviously, it is a point that he will want to take up with the right hon. or hon. Friend of mine who gave him that answer. Tonight I am trying to set out the known medical position. Clearly, if he takes the matter up with my right hon. or hon. Friend, he will receive an answer.

In conclusion, I would emphasise that many of the allegations about wood preservatives in current use are anecdotal and on examination prove to be groundless. Nevertheless, as I have said, there is already an extensive control regime in operation in the United Kingdom, and the advisory committee on pesticides is further reviewing lindane and TBTO.

Discussions about PCP are taking place within the European Community, and the Government have proposed across the board controls on the use of wood preservatives throughout the European Community.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and to my hon. Friend for providing the opportunity for this debate.

Of course, it would be premature to judge the outcome of the reviews being undertaken by the advisory committee on pesticides or the European Community. Nevertheless, the Government will continue to keep the situation under review and will make their decision based on a scientific assessment of the facts.

We shall not hesitate to take appropriate action if any new and significant evidence becomes available.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 1 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## SCOTLAND

### Business Premises (Valuations)

1. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to make a statement on the progress being made by the Scottish assessors in their talks with the Inland Revenue valuers about harmonisation of valuation practices for business premises.

**The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang):** Good progress is being made in the discussions between the Scottish Assessors Association and the Inland Revenue valuation office on harmonisation of valuation practice. These discussions are expected to result in significant progress towards harmonisation for the vast majority of subjects in 1990.

**Mr. Worthington:** That is the sort of waffle that we have had for months on end when we ought to have a statement about the progress being made. Does the Minister agree that there will be a widening difference in business rates between Scotland and northern England after 1990 and that we shall continue to have a situation in which a marina at Largs pays five times as much as a similar marina in Hampshire? Does the Minister agree that the uniform business rate for Great Britain, which includes Scotland, will not be implemented until 1996 or after?

**Mr. Lang:** The hon. Gentleman calls it waffle because he does not like the fact that we are making progress on this. The Labour party contributed to the situation through high local government spending and when the Labour Government were in office they did nothing to put it right. We are making progress step by step. I have already said that a large measure of harmonisation will be introduced in 1990. Further progress will be achieved thereafter and we expect to achieve close harmony within a short time.

**Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** Can my hon. Friend offer any comfort to those with business premises, including farmers, food processors and other small businesses in relation to water charges in the coming financial year? Is he aware that in Grampian the charges are increasing by nearly 100 per cent. and are a heavy burden on industry in the area?

**Mr. Lang:** As my right hon. Friend knows, these are matters for the regional councils, which have decided on the formula to apply. We have sought to ensure that the cost of water is borne more directly by users in relation to the cost of its delivery. That has meant substantial savings to many small businesses around the country.

**Mr. Lambie:** Is the Minister now able to make a positive response to the recent representations that he received from the Chemical Industries Association about industrial valuations?

**Mr. Lang:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, most of the plants are valued on the contractor's principle. As a result of an appeal, the decapitalisation rate has been reduced for many such subjects. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment have taken powers to prescribe a common decapitalisation rate if they so wish. If that is done, it will also be an advantage to the chemical industry.

**Sir Hector Monro:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, because of indexation, the business rates for the coming year will be substantially less than they would have been in normal circumstances, bearing in mind that local authorities have increased expenditure by vast amounts —perhaps up to 30 per cent.—which would have made business rates exorbitantly high this year?

**Mr. Lang:** My hon. Friend is right. The average increase in spending planned by regional councils is 14 per cent. for next year and it is much higher for district councils. We have given the business community the protection that it needs from the depredations of high-spending local authorities. It would have been a considerable advantage if it had had that protection over the past five or six years.

### Rating Reform

2. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has had concerning persons with Alzheimer's disease paying the poll tax.

**Mr. Lang:** I have received a number of representations about this issue, including a letter from the director of Alzheimer's Scotland.

**Mr. McTaggart:** I note what the Minister says, but does he agree that people suffering from Alzheimer's disease who wish to rebuild their lives in the community should be given every encouragement to do so? The additional pressure to find extra money to pay the poll tax from their already meagre and stretched resources will mean that many of them will end up returning in desperation to the hospitals that they recently left. Would it not be a small price to pay for that already vulnerable group to be exempt from this immoral and unfair tax?

**Mr. Lang:** Because of the gradual onset of the disease, many people suffering from degenerative disorders seek to play a full part in the community, which includes contributing to the cost of local government. If they are entitled to a rebate on financial grounds, they will be eligible to claim that rebate and I expect that many of them will do so.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** As the Minister defends his decision not to grant exemption on the ground that there are difficult medical choices to make, is he aware that there

are two principal benefits for which medical and clinical judgments are the only criteria? I refer to mobility and attendance allowance. If such criteria are good enough there, why cannot the Minister show at least some compassion for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease?

**Mr. Lang:** I have great compassion for people suffering from that disease. That is why I do not seek to make political capital out of it. The disease has a gradual onset, leading to a progressive decline in all aspects of mental functioning. The difficulty is one of diagnosis to establish precisely at which point any exemption should be made. During their last five years in office, the Labour Government made no attempt to exempt people in that condition from domestic rates.

**Mr. Dewar:** Does the Minister accept that many people such as those in the Alzheimer's Disease Society regard it as offensive that an arbitrary distinction is being made between patients who, in practical terms, present the same level of disability, some of whom are being excluded simply because in their case the root cause is Alzheimer's disease? If the Minister is arguing, as I understand that he is, that general practitioners cannot be expected to assess the degree of impairment in patients with Alzheimer's disease, will he at least consult general practitioners or their representatives before slamming and locking the door in such an inhuman way?

**Mr. Lang:** Our attitude is not just to Alzheimer's disease but to all degenerative brain disorders of that kind. We have given careful consideration to representations from several sources, including medical interests. The balance of medical advice that we have received is that it is impossible to establish a method of assessing precisely at which point an exemption could be granted without creating more anomalies than would be removed.

## COSLA

3. **Mr. Andrew Welsh** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the president of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities; and what matters he intends to discuss.

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** I hope next to meet representatives of COSLA on Friday 28 April, to start consultations on the revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91.

**Mr. Welsh:** Given that today is the tenth anniversary of the referendum on devolution, will the Minister, through COSLA, organise a genuine referendum giving people a choice between the status quo, devolution, or independence within Europe? Why is he afraid to offer the Scottish people any real choice in their constitutional future?

**Mr. Rifkind:** One thing that COSLA has not wished to discuss with me or with my hon. Friend the Minister of State at any previous meeting has been the subject to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

**Mr. Robertson:** When the Secretary of State next meets the president of COSLA, will he ask Councillor Milligan about the recent trip to Brussels and the European Community institutions and what was the reaction to the idea of an independent Scotland? Is he aware that the temporary attractiveness of that deluded scenario has been caused only by the Government damaging the real needs of Scotland and that credence for that pantomime will continue only if the Government continue their high-handed indifference to the real needs of the people of Scotland?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I am indifferent to the second, and I disagree with the third.

**Mr. John Marshall:** When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets representatives of COSLA, will he talk to them about the benefits of competitive tendering in local government services? Will he remind them that that process offers the opportunity to provide better local government services at less cost to the community charge payer, and that it is an opportunity that they should grasp firmly?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is correct. The whole point of competitive tendering, whether in local authorities or in the National Health Service, is that it enables the same quality of service to be provided to the public and releases resources for other services. I believe that that is why people are increasingly seeing the validity of that approach.

**Mr. Maxton:** When the Secretary of State meets the president of COSLA, will he explain why he has failed to ensure a debate in the House on the order that he laid some weeks ago about exemptions from poll tax, or is he afraid to allow us to discuss it in view of his uncaring and unfeeling attitude to people suffering from Alzheimer's disease?

**Mr. Rifkind:** As the hon. Gentleman well knows, debates in this House are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and for the usual channels to discuss.

I know that the hon. Gentleman is unwilling to accept this, but the Government's position on Alzheimer's disease is based on the medical advice that we have received. Had the medical advice been that it would be a straightforward matter to create a specific exemption, as the Opposition have suggested, we should not have been insensitive to such an approach.

## Forestry (Conservation)

4. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many conservation projects are currently being promoted by the Forestry Commission.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton):** The Forestry Commission is currently promoting more than 170 major conservation projects on its own land. In addition, each of the 65 forest districts has a conservation plan which tyically indentifies a wide range of sites where smaller conservation projects are in hand.

**Mr. Soames:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the Forestry Commission plays a vital role in the conservation of our wildlife and should be wholeheartedly encouraged in that role?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. He may be interested to know that projects which the Forestry Commission is currently supporting include regenerating native pine woods,

constructing ponds, erecting bat boxes, managing rides for butterflies, creating clearings for lizards, planting broad-leaves for diversification and even building homes for otters.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** If a mere commoner may be allowed to interpose himself in this somewhat aristocratic exchange, may I ask the Minister to give the House a categorical assurance that the Government have no plans to privatise the Forestry Commission during this Parliament?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government have no plans to privatise the Forestry Commission.

**Mr. Adley:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the Forestry Commission owns large tracts of land in my constituency, much of which is in an area constantly eyed by property developers who seem to have cash registers in place of eyes? Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that in future when the Forestry Commission is approached directly by property developers seeking to buy land he will instruct the Forestry Commission to make the relevant local authority aware of the approach and give it the opportunity to acquire the land in the first instance?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Sales of Forestry Commission land are governed by guidelines laid down by the Secretary of State in a letter to the chairman of the Forestry Commission on 28 May 1981. That letter was published in the Forestry Commission annual report, which is available in the Library. Planting must be carried out in an environmentally sensitive way. Contentious planning cases are ultimately referred to Ministers for decision.

## Scottish Assembly

5. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to introduce a Bill to create a Scottish assembly.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Government believe that the present constitutional arrangements provide for Scotland's interests to be fully respected and recognised. The Government therefore have no plans to introduce legislation to create a Scottish assembly.

**Dr. Bray:** Is the Secretary of State aware that the Government cannot continue to introduce legislation which is plainly contrary to the wishes of the people of Scotland and that if he replies by saying that Scotland is a part of the United Kingdom he will be inviting dissolution?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his point of view, but he sits in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, in which there is a majority in support of the Government elected by the electorate of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Steel:** Does the Secretary of State recall his excellent speech in the House in December 1976 in support of a Scottish assembly? What facts in that speech have altered since then?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I have always believed that any system of devolution or decentralised Government which does not apply throughout Great Britain is bound to weaken rather than strengthen the Union. What has changed in the past 10 years is that I and many others allowed ourselves to believe that there was an irresistible demand from the people of Scotland for a devolved system of government whereas the referendum showed that the people of Scotland were as divided on the issue as the House of Commons is and always has been.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the long-standing farce surrounding the so-called "constitutional convention" has been a joy and a delight to all those who like a good free laugh on a continuing basis? Does he further agree that those shenanigans have shown merely—and overwhelmingly—that there is no consensus against the Government on constitutional reform?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is correct. We had always assumed that the so-called "constitutional convention" would end in tears, but we never expected that it would begin in tears.

**Mr. Canavan:** Given that in the referendum 10 years ago the proposals for a Scottish assembly were supported by a majority of those who voted—including, we are led to believe, the Secretary of State himself—what has happened since then to buy him off?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman will recall that two thirds of the people in Scotland did not vote in favour of the Scotland Bill. I recall saying in public on the day after the referendum that I believed that there was not sufficient support in Scotland for devolution, given that two thirds of the people of Scotland had either voted against or abstained. That was my view the day after the referendum and it has remained my view ever since.

**Mr. Sillars:** Is the Secretary of State aware that what has changed in the past 10 years has been the Scottish people's 10-year experience of what "unionism" really means and of what the price of unionism really is? May I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for the legal definition of Scotland independent within Europe that he gave in 1984 and refer him for legal reading to the 1978 Geneva convention on the succession of "states"—in the plural?

**Mr. Rifkind:** What has changed in the past 10 years is that the hon. Gentleman has moved from his second party to his third. The hon. Gentleman chose to refer to my remarks about Greenland's status some years ago. I am somewhat astonished at the comfort that the hon. Gentleman takes from that incident as on that occasion Greenland was involved in three years of difficult negotiations with the Community, and the end result was not independence in Europe but independence outside Europe. If that is of comfort to the hon. Gentleman, it shows that he is easily satisfied.

**Mr. Gerald Howarth:** Given the confusion between the Socialists in the Labour party and the Scottish National party on this issue, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that only the Conservative and Unionist party offers the people of Scotland a sensible and coherent policy and delivers the results?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is correct but it is not only the Conservative party that describes itself as "unionist". The Labour party, the Democrats and the Social Democrats are all unionist parties. The nationalist party is

outside the Scottish consensus, which overwhelmingly believes that Scotland's interests are best served by full participation within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Dewar:** May I begin by thanking the Secretary of State for his concern and assure him that my cheeks, at least, are not tear-stained?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I bet they are not.

**Mr. Dewar:** The Secretary of State will no doubt be aware that dinners have been arranged in London and Edinburgh to celebrate—if that is the right word—the fact that 10 years ago, despite a majority "yes" vote, the Scotland Bill was not implemented. May I congratulate him on not attending those functions, which is a welcome sign of grace on his part?

If it were established beyond reasonable doubt that public opinion in Scotland wanted a constitutional change and that there was an irresistible demand for that, is not ministerial opposition now so entrenched that, irrespective of what Scotland says, there would be no move towards an assembly so long as the present Government have an overall majority in the House?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I believe strongly that if those who are unionists, like the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, want constitutional change in the United Kingdom, that matter is of common interest to all parts of the United Kingdom. Such a decision cannot simply be based on a diktat from any one part of the kingdom, be it England, Scotland or Wales—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that there are no tears on the hon. Gentleman's face as a result of the ending of the prospects for an all-party constitutional convention. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman could barely suppress his delight at that outcome.

The hon. Gentleman was correct in saying that I shall not be attending tonight's dinners in London and Edinburgh, the main reason being that I have not been invited.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that throughout the United Kingdom—in the regions of England, in Wales and in Scotland—there is no demand for an additional tier of government? In fact the move is towards single-tier local government rather than regional government. It would be a disgrace if we spent even more money on even more levels of government which would end up being subsidised by the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Although some interest in constitutional change is evident in certain parts of the United Kingdom, my hon. Friend is right that it is impossible to point to any strength of opinion which would justify the constitutional upheaval implied by the proposals.

## Scottish TUC

6. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss employment prospects in Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am due to meet the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress and a number of his colleagues on 13 March.

**Mr. Eadie:** When Scottish Labour Members met the Secretary of State this morning to discuss the coal-burn dispute and the South of Scotland Electricity Board, the right hon. and learned Gentleman made optimistic noises suggesting that the matter was likely to be resolved in the boardrooms rather than in the courts. As he is aware, the STUC is taking a lead in the issue because up to 6,000 jobs in Scotland could be lost if the deep-mining part of the coal industry were obliterated.

Is there any significance in the fact that the Secretary of State is meeting the STUC on 14 March, which is Budget day? Is there any significance in that? Shall we then hear an announcement of more employment prospects for the Scottish people?

**Mr. Rifkind:** There is no significance in the date, as it is on 13 March and not 14 March that I am meeting the STUC. The meeting is taking place at the request of Mr. Campbell Christie, general secretary of the STUC, and I look forward with interest to hearing the points that he wishes to raise.

**Mr. Hind:** When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the general secretary of the STUC, will he point out that 16 major Japanese firms now in Scotland plan to create 2,500 jobs there? It was interesting to note that in the last quarter of 1988 4,160 new jobs were planned by a large number of firms in Scotland. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the general secretary that the reason for those jobs being planned is that Scotland is part of the United Kingdom and a member state of the EEC, and that any withdrawal from the United Kingdom would put the jobs in danger?

**Mr. Rifkind:** There is no doubt that Scotland is seen as a prime location for inward investment by both the United States and Japan, and that that choice has been made because of the market that is available throughout the European Community for products manufactured in Scotland. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I should point out to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who is shouting at me—which in any case is unmannerly—that he reserves the right to be called at Defence Question Time and on other questions as well.

**Mr. Norman Hogg:** When the Secretary of State meets the general secretary of the STUC, will he discuss his concept of—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The whole House is interested in Scotland.

**Mr. Douglas:** This is a farce.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Will the hon. Gentleman contain himself, please?

**Mr. Douglas:** It is a farce, and you know it.

**Mr. Hind:** On a point of order Mr. Speaker. It is bad manners of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) to insult Conservative Members such as myself who are interested in Scotland and take the trouble to attend Scottish Question Time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman has been insulted; if anyone has been insulted it is me.

**Mr. Hogg:** I think that I have forgotten my question —*[Laughter.]* When the Secretary of State meets the

general council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress will he try to explain his concept of competition by comparison with the electricity supply industry? Does he believe that that council is likely to agree with me that that is as daft a concept as an independent Scotland in Europe?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am rather sorry that the hon. Gentleman remembered his question. It is clearly desirable in any system of near monopoly that the industry in question should be exposed to comparisons, which enable the consumer and the regulator in the public interest to be satisfied that either the tariffs being levied or other practices of the industry are fair and acceptable in the circumstances.

## CBI

7. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am in frequent touch with the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland on a range of matters affecting the Scottish economy. I look forward to a continuing exchange of views.

**Mr. King:** I am grateful for that reply. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the state of the Scottish economy is such that, in the past two years, there has been a 84,000 reduction in unemployment and that, in the past 10 years, the rate of productivity in the Scottish economy has been the highest of seven major OECD countries? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although it is pleasant for the Scottish people to bask in some kind of Socialist ideals, it is great to have the strength of Tory economics behind them?

**Mr. Rifkind:** That is so. It is interesting that the CBI's latest survey shows that business optimism in Scotland remains firm although it has diminished elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is a mark of the growing strength of the Scottish economy.

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** The CBI may talk about business optimism, but will the Secretary of State discuss with it its attitude and his attitude to Shell's proposal to construct a pipeline from Grangemouth to the midlands of England to export the ethylene manufactured at Mossmorran? If Scottish jobs go down that pipeline are we not entitled to expect that the first Scottish job to go should be the Secretary of State's?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that helpful observation. As I understand it, there is a pipeline from Grangemouth to England already and the proposal is for a second pipeline. That proposal will involve a planning application and therefore it will be for the planning authorities to consider the merits of it.

**Mr. Graham:** When will the Secretary of State discuss with the CBI how many jobs it thinks will be lost as a result of the declared redundancies at the Bishopton Royal Ordnance factory? When will the Secretary of State offer a genuine lifeline to those folk who are desperate to work and who have sent letters to him asking for work? Will he ask the CBI to find out how many jobs will be lost as a spin-off from those redundancies?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We all share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the loss of jobs in Bishopton. The Scottish Office stands ready to make available the normal support in an area of high unemployment to assist those who wish to create new employment or to seek alternative employment in that locality.

**Mr. Andy Stewart:** Has my right hon. and learned Friend discussed with the Scottish CBI what would happen were there ever to be another Labour Government who implemented their alternative to rates—that is, a property tax and a local income tax—and how damaging that would be to Scottish industry?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Only the Labour party would propose to replace domestic rates, which is one unpopular tax, with two unpopular taxes.

**Mr. McLeish:** Does the Secretary of State agree with Mr. Bill Hughes, chairman of the CBI in Scotland and one of the Government's industrial advisers, who said at a recent meeting of Conservative students in Edinburgh that the Scottish Development Agency had failed to do anything about Scottish business?

**Mr. Rifkind:** During the past few years I believe that the SDA has made an important contribution to the Scottish economy and I believe that it has a continuing role to play in line with the Government's proposals in the recent White Paper.

## Scottish Firms (Contracts)

8. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish firms have gained contracts from *(a)* the Channel tunnel project and *(b)* recent Scottish public works contracts; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** Twenty Scottish companies have so far been successful in gaining contracts worth about £65 million from Translink, the contracting consortium for the Channel tunnel. Information is not held centrally on Scottish public sector contracts.

**Mr. Brown:** I understand from members of the Neath and Edinburgh chambers of commerce—august members of the capitalist system—that, in the main, Scottish contractors have been ignored for both the main and the smaller contracts. Is that not a disgrace? I say that not because I am anti-English but because clearly Scottish jobs are involved. If the tunnel is to mean anything, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the contracts should have been made available to Scottish contractors on a competitive basis? There has been discrimination in this matter and the Scots people have a right to be annoyed. Once the tunnel is completed it will have a hoover effect on enterprise, business and companies. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that not only Scottish companies but companies in the north of England will suffer?

**Mr. Lang:** The hon. Gentleman must have framed his supplementary question before he heard my answer, in which I told him that 20 Scottish companies have so far been succesful and secured contracts to the value of £65 million. That is a higher proportion of companies than from any other part of the United Kingdom. Howdens, for example, gained the contract for the four boring machines and, as a result of that, has gained another contract for

tunnelling machines in Denmark. As for the hon. Gentleman's comments on the capitalist private sector, I must point out that the Channel tunnel is being built and funded by the private sector.

**Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** Is it not to the credit of Scottish enterprise that so many contracts have been gained—*[Interruption.]* Is it not to the credit of Scottish enterprise that it has won these contracts, which will be of enormous benefit to the Scottish economy in the short-term? Will the Minister also consider the longer-term benefits? Does he agree that it is essential that we have the best possible transport links, in particular rail links, between Scotland and the Channel tunnel? Will he put pressure on British Rail to continue the electrification of the east coast line beyond Edinburgh to Dundee and Aberdeen?

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The whole of Scotland benefits from the contracts. The north of Scotland benefits in the form of Brown and Roots Survey and R. B. Farquhar Ltd., PSS Ltd., Racal Survey UK Ltd., and others. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to emphasise the importance of rail transport. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I had a meeting with the chairman of British Rail and I have also had meetings with the general manager of ScotRail to underline that important point.

## Civil Service (Dispersal)

10. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the progress made since 1979 in transferring Civil Service posts from London and the south-east to Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Since 1979, 1,930 Civil Service jobs have been relocated from the south-east to Scotland, which represents 35 per cent. of the jobs moved. Six weeks ago my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced that a further 430 jobs would be relocated to Glasgow.

**Mr. Ingram:** At least the Secretary of State appears to support the idea of moving Civil Service jobs to Scotland, unlike the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) who said that London can keep its civil servants. Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the past 10 years, less than 6 per cent. of jobs above executive officer level have been located outwith London? Does he agree that one way to redress the imbalance between the south-east and Scotland would be to move 600 policy posts out of the 700 posts in the Overseas Development Administration in London to the administration offices in East Kilbride?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Specific proposals are obviously a matter for the individual Departments concerned. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that more than 34,000 posts in various Government Departments are being reviewed for location or relocation away from the south-east. Clearly, Scotland, as well as other parts of the United Kingdom, hopes to obtain a proportion of those posts. I believe strongly that jobs that do not need to be in the centre of London should be moved outside it. Scotland, particularly East Kilbride, is an attractive and suitable place in which to establish a new post.

**Sir Russell Johnston:** The Secretary of State for Scotland gives us the impression that he favours a regional policy. Does he agree with the recent speech at Chatham house by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said that there was no place for regional policy, either in the European Community or domestically?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am not aware of the Chancellor having made such a remark. The Government have a regional policy and intend to continue having one.

## Child Care

11. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with outside bodies and their representatives since June 1987 on child care provision in the public and private sectors.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Scottish Office officials have undertaken extensive consultations with external interests on a wide range of issues relating to the provision of services for children, including child care law and measures to protect children from abuse.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** Has the Minister any plans to ask the Scottish Office to pay an agency to conduct a telephone survey of Scots women in their homes to ask them whether they have ever had any experience of child care provision in the public sector, or is he frightened of the answer that those women might give him?

**Mr. Forsyth:** No, we have no such plans. The provision of services for children under five is a matter for local authorities. If the hon. Lady is criticising the conduct of Labour-controlled local authorities in Scotland, I suggest that she takes that up with them.

**Mr. Ernie Ross:** Did the Minister take the opportunity while visiting Hungary to study its child care provision? Did he note that Hungrary provides significant child care services for children aged up to three, that it allows mothers to stay at home with substantial child care allowances and that it provides five months' maternity leave for women who want to return to work? Does he know that 78 per cent. of three to five-year-old children in that country attend kindergarten and that 80 per cent. of the creches are state-run? What does he intend to do to help the women of Scotland to be provided with that sort of service?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I took the opportunity while I was in Hungary to discuss developments in education there. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that the Hungarians expressed considerable admiration for the emphasis that we place on increasing competition in our education system, and that their plans include greater emphasis on provision by the private sector and on competition.

The hon. Gentleman may know the Hungarian statistics, but he does not seem to be aware of those in Scotland, where 80 per cent. of children under five are given some sort of pre-school provision.

## South of Scotland Electricity Board

12. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board; and what subjects were discussed.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board on 6 February and discussed progress on the Electricity Bill and other matters relevant to the Scottish electricity industry.

**Mr. Strang:** Does the Minister acknowledge that the remarkable expansion of profitable opencast mining in Scotland in recent years has been facilitated not only by the Government but by the Labour party, whose councillors—often in the face of strong local opposition—have facilitated planning permissions on the basis that opencast mining will help to sustain the deep-mining industry? Does he recognise that the optimism on this subject that Ministers—and the Secretary of State only this morning—have encouraged will be justified only if the coal-burn contract provides for the continuation of the Bilston/Monktonhall complex and the Longannet complex? That must surely be the irreducible minimum requirement for deep-mine coal in Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** If Labour councillors are responsible for the growth of opencast mining in Scotland I am glad that they recognise the valuable contribution that it can make. If coal is to have a substantial future in Scotland it must be competitive, and opencast mining helps towards that end.

I too want deep mines to have a long and secure future. But that depends on improving their output and productivity and achieving a competitiveness that enables coal to be marketed successfully.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Would the Government have allowed the SSEB to put thousands of jobs at power stations and pits in Scotland at risk and to threaten the future of a vital sector of the Scottish economy if a directly elected Scottish Parliament with the authority to speak for the people of Scotland had existed?

**Mr. Lang:** What worries me is that such a Parliament might have taken up the suggestion of the Scottish Nationalist party, which was that Torness, one of the most important generating stations in Scotland, should be sold to an English company, with the result that Scottish industry might have had to buy back from England electricity generated in Scotland.

**Mr. Jack:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the privatisation of electricity gives the Scottish electricity industry a real commercial opportunity to export power to England and Wales? Does he further agree that it gives Scottish industry more control over its own affairs, instead of control being exercised from London?

**Mr. Lang:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It reverses the decentralisation which nationalisation always creates. In the 1940s, when Scottish electricity enterprises were nationalised, a whole raft of decision-making was removed from Scotland to the south. We are reversing that process to help regenerate enterprise in Scotland.

## Dementia

13. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek further medical advice on the nature and course of dementia, particularly in relation to Alzheimer's disease.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** No, but my right hon. and learned Friend keeps in touch with a wide range of medical opinion. We give financial assistance to Alzheimer's Scotland and Scottish Action on Dementia, which provide help and support for people with dementia. We are also supporting the establishment of the dementia studies development centre at Stirling university and are funding research into care in the community of the elderly with dementia.

**Mr. McAvoy:** Does the hon. Gentleman share the view expressed in, or feel any sense of shame at, the statement made by the Minister of State that Alzheimer's disease is of a fluctuating nature? What consideration has the Minister given to the view of Dr. Robert Hill, consultant neurologist at Edinburgh western general hospital, that Alzheimer's disease is progressive and that remission does not occur? In view of the fluctuating nature of medical opinion on this matter, the whole issue should be re-examined. It is a shame and a disgrace that the Government are forcing the tragic people who suffer from these conditions to pay the poll tax.

**Mr. Forsyth:** The hon. Gentleman will see, if he looks at what my hon. Friend said, that his account is wrong. The hon. Gentleman talks about shame and the need for sympathy for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. I suggest that he contacts his friends in the Labour party in councils such as Stirling who are refusing, out of spite and to make a political point, to provide a collection service for the community charge. If Labour Members are concerned to provide help for the handicapped and others in meeting their obligations to pay the community charge, they should show that concern by arranging for collections, as they have done in the past in respect of rates.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** I deplore the cheap political points that the Under-Secretary made. Is he aware that for thousands of people who discover that their spouse, husband or wife, is suffering from Alzheimer's disease or senile dementia, that is a terrible discovery and that they have to live with it? The Government should not inflict the full force of the poll tax—of £200, £300 or more—on these disabled people. The Government should, even at this eleventh hour, recant and ensure that they do not have to pay the poll tax.

**Mr. Forsyth:** As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, people on low incomes will benefit from rebates. We are indeed showing concern for people suffering from Alzheimer's and other disabling conditions. We are increasing the benefits payable to the disabled by no less than 90 per cent. or £7·3 billion. That is in stark contrast to what Labour Members did when they were in Government.

**Mr. Galbraith:** The Government's behaviour in this matter is disgraceful and callous. We are talking about a very disadvantaged group of the population. The Government continue to hide behind medical advice. I put it to them that their medical advice in this matter is wrong and should be reconsidered—*[Interruption.]* I have had some experience of this. The Minister of State talked about Alzheimer's disease being a disease of gradual onset and progressive decline. Patients suffering from this condition are no different from others suffering from dementia. The advice that the Government have on this is wrong and should be reconsidered. In other words, the Government should get a second opinion.

**Mr. Forsyth:** In all of that the hon. Gentleman did not ask me a question—*[Interruption.]* The Government's advice has come from the Chief Medical Officer and others and it has been carefully considered. I note that the hon. Gentleman did not offer to ask Labour-controlled councils to help the disabled with a house-to-house collection in respect of the community charge. I also note that when his party was in power it had no proposals to exempt from the payment of rates people suffering from Alzheimer's and other disabling conditions. I also note that as part of their policy review, Opposition Members plan to force people who suffer from Alzheimer's and other conditions to pay towards local government by assessing the capital value of their houses.

**Mr. Holt:** My hon. Friend will know that I first raised the subject of Alzheimer's disease on an Adjournment debate five years ago. Since then there has been greater public awareness of the disease, and that is manifestly clear from my hon. Friend's reply outlining the research that is taking place. Nonetheless, does my hon. Friend concede that those who are responsible for caring for those with that debilitating disease do not receive sufficient consideration? Will he at least give thought to the idea that the Government should give more consideration to the carers, who are bound in honour and love to people with whom they have lived for many years, and who suffer from Alzheimer's disease?

**Mr. Forsyth:** My hon. Friend is asking me to stray outside my sphere of responsibility. However, I am very much aware of his concern for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. If he heard my answer to the original question, he will be aware of the considerable support that we have given to organisations such as Scottish Action on Dementia and Alzheimer's Scotland which are providing help and support to the families who have to cope with that difficult and debilitating disease.

## Constitution

14. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last made a speech outlining the Government's position on the constitutional status of Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I last commented on constitutional matters in a speech to Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale Conservative Association on Friday 10 February.

**Mr. Salmond:** Will the Secretary of State elaborate on his speech at Melrose and explain why he argued that whereas independence was a matter for the Scottish people to decide, devolution was a matter for the United Kingdom and for Parliament? What is his reaction to the point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in last month's *Radical Scotland* that

"To all intents and purposes, Scotland is an occupied country in which the ruling power depends for its support on a power base which is outside the country."

**Mr. Rifkind:** If the hon. Gentleman's Budget proposals, which we were told about last Friday, are anything to go by, that seems to be the view of the SNP. When we heard about the hon. Gentleman's Budget proposals, my officials contacted the headquarters of the SNP, but were told that nothing was known about them. When we examined the details, we discovered that according to the hon. Gentleman, the defence expenditure of an independent Scotland would represent about 5 per cent. of current United Kingdom expenditure to defend some 35 per cent. of the land mass of the United Kingdom. Therefore, it seems that the Scottish Nationalist party either would want to leave an independent Scotland defenceless, or would wish to depend upon the English Government to defend Scotland after independence. What price independence then?

**Mr. Galloway:** Is it not a breathtaking effrontery for the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) to ask the Government such a question when the SNP is conspiring with the Government to paralyse any possibility of constitutional progress in Scotland? Is it not the case that the Government and the Scottish Nationalist party are two sides of the same coin and that Scottish constitutional progress is caught between the hammer of Thatcher unionism and the anvil of SNP sectarianism?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first invite to join the SNP.

## "Working for Patients"

15. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in response to the National Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients".

**Mr. Forsyth:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of positive responses to the White Paper "Working for Patients". We will shortly be publishing six working papers setting out in detail how the White Paper proposals are to be implemented in Scotland.

**Mr. Bennett:** Does my hon. Friend share my surprise that a White Paper which will give patients more choice and a faster service should be opposed by Opposition Members? Does he agree that their only vision for the future of the Health Service is a Health Service run by COHSE and NUPE for the benefit of COHSE and NUPE?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I agree with my hon. Friend, but he is not being entirely fair to Opposition Members. I note that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has offered to abandon his political convictions and to favour the idea of the Falkirk district infirmary becoming a self-governing hospital if proposals for its closure were ever implemented. As neither the health board nor the Government have any such proposals, it is an interesting response to our White Paper.

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** Does the Minister appreciate that at the time when I considered the proposals from the consultants I was unaware of another option—closure, as the Minister himself says, over his dead body? If that option is still available, we will take it.

**Mr. Forsyth:** Even if the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to defend the interests of his local hospital in Falkirk, we certainly are, which is why we have invested so heavily in it with new maternity and geriatric facilities. I am not sure that my dead body in exchange for the hospital would be a good deal for his constituents.

**Dr. Godman:** Is it not the case that many general practitioners are deeply concerned about the inadequacies of the White Paper? Is it not the case that many general practitioners fear a diminution in the quality of the

treatment given to patients if these proposals are implemented? Does the Minister agree that, where Scotland is concerned, the authors of the White Paper know little or nothing about medical practice in general and nothing at all about general practice in particular?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I think I can follow that question.

The only general practitioners who will be concerned will be those who listen to the misrepresentation coming from the Opposition Benches. There is no question of patient care being anything other than enhanced as a result of these proposals; and it is particularly perverse to argue that giving general practitioners more responsibility and an opportunity to control their own affairs as practising family doctors will be to the disbenefit of patients. It is true that particular aspects of the delivery of primary health care services in Scotland need to be considered, and we are currently discussing with doctors' representatives how we can implement our proposals in Scotland in the most satisfactory way. I am delighted to say that we are having a very responsible and positive response from the medical profession.

## Constitutional Convention

16. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to accept the invitation to attend the Scottish constitutional convention.

**Mr. Rifkind:** No, Sir.

**Mr. McKelvey:** Does the Secretary of State not realise that he is doing a grave disservice to the ordinary people of Scotland? Is he aware that they are crying out for democracy and that the only relief that they can get from the social injustice thrust upon them by Thatcherism is by some kind of directly elected assembly, even if it has only limited powers? Does he not recognise that the poor and the elderly who suffer from social injustices need a voice at the convention to argue for such a directly elected assembly?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The individual citizen in Scotland has exactly the same democratic rights as individuals elsewhere in the United Kingdom. All live in a democratic society.

**Dr. Reid:** Can the Secretary of State tell us any other issue on which in the past 10 years he has done such a complete and utter U-turn as on the question of the Scottish assembly? Is it not the simple and sad fact that he has abandoned his principles for his promotion prospects? Does the Secretary of State really believe that the people of Scotland have so readily abandoned their principles, or been bought and sold for Treasury gold? If he does, why does he not put their principles to the test by having a referendum on devolution as soon as possible?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My views remain exactly as I have explained. Any system of devolution for one part of the United Kingdom that does not apply elsewhere is likely to weaken rather than strengthen the union in which the Labour party also believes.

**Mr. Harris:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that some of us on the Government Benches think that perhaps he ought to go to such a conference, if only to remind the Labour party of the total opposition of its leader to the whole concept of devolution when it was last on the agenda, and also to stress that if, by chance, a devolved assembly were set up, many of us on the Government Benches would want to see drastic changes in the composition of the House so as to reduce the current gross over-representation on a numerical basis of Scotland at Westminster?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is certainly the case that the leader of the Conservative party pays more attention to the subject of devolution when she is in Scotland than does the leader of the Opposition when he is there.

**Mr. Wallace:** The Secretary of State has said yet again that he thinks that devolution in any one part of the United Kingdom without devolution all round would weaken our unity. Is that a definitive statement of policy on behalf of the Government with particular reference to the future government of Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Rifkind:** In terms of Scotland, England and Wales, Scotland continues to benefit from the existing structure of government. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Northern Ireland example is sui generis and that it would be unwise for anyone on either side of the argument to draw conclusions from that. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that during the period of the Stormont Government there was a substantial reduction in the number of Irish Members in the House of Commons and that the United Kingdom Cabinet did not contain a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

**Mr. McAllion:** I would not go so far as to say that the Secretary of State for Scotland will be sorely missed when the convention first meets at the end of the month. If he did turn up at least he could explain to the convention why he has introduced the poll tax in Scotland to make local councillors more accountable to Scottish voters while he plans to do nothing whatever to make Scottish Ministers in any way accountable to Scottish voters.

**Mr. Rifkind:** If I turned up at the proposed convention I would have no difficulty about finding a seat because it appears that very few people will be there. This is a spurious attempt to try to generate interest in a subject when such interest has not otherwise been forthcoming. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the constitutional convention was invented by an organisation that produced a document with a blatantly nationalist tone. If he and his hon. Friends are as unionist as they claim to be they should have nothing to do with it.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I shall take points of order after the statement.

## Remand System (Privatisation)

3.31 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about private sector involvement in the remand system.

In my statement to the House on 30 March last year, I announced that, among other measures which were in hand to deal with prison overcrowding, I intended to make a further study of the possibility of involving the private sector more closely in operating the remand system. To this end, I published last July the Green Paper "Private sector involvement in the remand system". I appointed the management consultants Deloitte, Haskins and Sells to study the practical implications of the options set out in the Green Paper, namely, that contracts might be placed with the private sector for the provision and operation of new remand centres, and for the escorting of prisoners to and from court and their custody at court.

The consultants' report is today being made public, and copies have been placed in the Library. The study was carried out with the help of criminal justice system experts with a wide range of experience of police, prison and courts matters. The consultants advise that, on certain assumptions and subject to further examination of certain issues, private sector involvement would be feasible both for remand centres and for escorting and court duties. They make recommendations on practical procedures and safeguards to ensure that, in any part of the system that was contracted out, prisoners' rights and public safety are properly protected. They also tackle the important question of accountability.

Many of the comments received on the Green Paper concern the issue of principle. It would be wrong for the Government to abdicate their responsibility for the proper treatment of prisoners. It would be wrong for coercive powers to be exercised by those over whom there was no proper control and for whom nobody was adequately accountable. I would not want to proceed unless I was satisfied that a suitable framework of safeguards, controls and accountability could be created. The studies that have been carried out show how such a framework might be devised, and, if this can be borne out in practice, I do not believe that these issues should stand in the way of attaining the practical benefits that private sector involvement may bring.

Some critics have overlooked one point of principle, which is that prisoners should be accommodated in decent conditions which respect their dignity as well as ensuring the protection of the public. If the private sector can contribute to achieving this, that must be to the good.

Having weighed the discussion so far, I propose to move forward on both the escorting and remand centre options, in different ways. Even among those respondents to the Green Paper who had reservations about private sector involvement in the operation of remand centres, many saw the potential advantages of a change in the escorting and court custody arrangements. There is a good prospect that the private sector could provide a better service than at present and at lower cost. The extent of private sector involvement remains to be settled, but I am clear that the existing complex and overlapping escort systems of the police and prison services must be rationalised. The arguments for relieving the police and prison services of the escorting task, so that they can concentrate on their real jobs, are compelling.

Further detailed study will now be undertaken to determine the precise composition of the contract areas; there will be detailed consultation with interested parties about exactly how their requirements should be specified and paid for: the consequences for police and prison service staffing and finance will also need to be considered. We shall need also to be satisfied before a final decision that there is adequate provision for the selection, training and discipline of staff, and for their answerability to the courts.

On the possible private operation of remand centres, there are also positive indications. These indications will now need to be tested in further detailed investigation of potential contractors and their costings before we finally decide whether to propose that we go ahead with the establishment of privately operated remand centres. No potential contractor should enter this field believing it will be an easy option. Standards would be high and would be rigorously enforced. I want to ensure that potential contractors fully understand this and are capable of providng a cost-effective service in these conditions.

My accountability for the treatment of prisoners and the safety of the public would need to be maintained. To achieve this, I would propose that, in line with the consultants' recommendations, each contract would be subject to permanent on-site monitoring by a Government official appointed by me. This official would also have under his direct control the exercise of disciplinary sanctions over prisoners and the hearing of complaints. I also agree with the view that most of the respondents to the Green Paper expressed that contracted-out remand centres and escorting services should have boards of visitors and be subject to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons. Subject to the results of these further investigations, I would intend, when the parliamentary programme allows, to bring legislation forward to provide a legal framework which would be needed to enable contracting-out to go ahead.

The introduction of the private sector into the management of the prison system in the way I have outlined would certainly represent a bold departure from previous thinking and practice. It offers the prospect of a new kind of partnership between the public and private sectors in this important, though often sadly neglected, aspect of our national life. We should not be scornful of new ideas which, if successful, will make an important contribution to the Government's programme of providing decent conditions for all prisoners at a reasonable cost.

**Mr. Roy Hattersley** (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Neither in his statement today, nor in the Green Paper which preceded it, has the Home Secretary even attempted a rational justification of the decision which he has just announced. Even the survey by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, on which he relied so heavily, examined only the practicality, and not the propriety, the desirability or the advantages of privatising the remand system. That company was handed an item of dogma and was asked to decide whether the Government could get away with it. Its conclusion, which appears on page 49, is that the difficulties of privatising the remand service should not be underestimated.

The Home Secretary has made no attempt to explain how or by what figure his proposal would reduce the number of prisoners held on remand—a major element in the crisis of prison overcrowding. That is because his proposal will have no effect on the figure. Last year 10,235 prisoners were held on remand compared with 5,795 in the first full year of Conservative Government. Why does not the Home Secretary implement real measures which would reduce that intolerable total—the encouragement of magistrates to award bail more consistently and the insistence that prisoners held in custody all over England should have their trials completed in 110 days?

Is the Home Secretary aware that there is something deeply unpleasant about the false piety of his promise that the Government will not

"abdicate their responsibility for the proper treatment of prisoners"?

Will he confirm that Deloitte's report—which in many particulars is of a quite different tone from that in which the Home Secretary has spoken today—proposes that standards in private prisons should be enforced "progressively" through

"escalating warnings, financial penalties and ultimate contract terminations"?

What will happen to prisoners in inadequate circumstances while all that protracted legal wrangling is going on? They will certainly not have the instant redress which prison visitors and Her Majesty's inspectors can provide under the present system but which will be denied when commercial prison managements argue about contractual obligations.

Will the Home Secretary understand that there are many people, not just on the Opposition Benches, who regard it as wrong in principle that holding a man or woman in prison should be an activity from which profit is made under any circumstances?

On the subject of escort duties, the Home Secretary has told us that there is general agreement about the need for change. Again, as is often his practice, he was less than frank. The general agreement about the need for change is not a general agreement that the change should come in the form of privatisation. Why, if the change is necessary, does he consider only one option?

What the Home Secretary has announced today is as objectionable as it is absurd. It clearly has two intentions. The first is to create the illusion of activity—the Home Secretary's increasing preoccupation. The second is demonstrated by the tentative, apologetic and intellectually inadequate nature of his statement. This announcement is intended to prove that he is prepared to swallow any item of Conservative ideology no matter how distasteful. What he has announced today will damage the prison service and his reputation in equal measure.

**Mr. Hurd:** The right hon. Gentleman's facts are out of date. The remand population fell by 550 last year. He knows perfectly well of the measures that we are taking through the imposition of time limits, imposed for the first time in England and Wales by the Government, through the creation of bail hostels and through bail information schemes, precisely with that aim. I visited the Greater Manchester probation service yesterday and was much impressed by everything that it is doing in that area.

The contracts would specify standards which would be higher than many of those which are in effect at the moment in local and remand prisons. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we are working steadily, and now with some success, to reduce overcrowding and to bring proper sanitation into the conditions in which remand prisoners are held. The question before us is whether, in addition to doing that in the public sector, we should use the skills of the private sector more widely than we do at present.

There would be no abdication of responsibility in that. The decision to remand in custody would remain with the courts, and I would continue, through the system of the monitor suggested by the consultants, to be accountable to Parliament for the security and well-being of prisoners. The Home Secretary would exercise that accountability through the contract, through the effective monitoring and inspection arrangements. The contracting-out of services does not diminish in this or other areas the contracting authority's responsibility for the quality of service provided; it is simply using a different method to deliver the service.

The right hon. Gentleman is right. My approach to this is cautious. But it is not right to close our minds to new ideas or to new ways of achieving what every sensible hon. Member wants, which is to achieve a higher standard, particularly for those who are held in our prisons before trial or sentence.

**Mr. John Wheeler** (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his announcement will receive a very warm welcome from a great many people, not least the majority of the members of the Home Affairs Committee, which, in a report in 1987, made this very recommendation? The Home Affairs Committee made that recommendation because there were two major things that it wished to see achieved. First, what is proposed will advance the humanitarian care of prisoners by providing a contrasting management style and improved conditions for remand prisoners. Secondly, it will help to bring buildings and other resources into use to deal with the overcrowding of remand prisoners, about which the whole House and many members of the public are concerned.

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend is perfectly right: the report of the Home Affairs Committee had a powerful influence. Anybody who reads the consultants' report will see that this is not a cost-cutting exercise but an exercise in the use of resources to provide a better service. The private sector believes that is could provide decent conditions for about the same amount per prisoner per day—£31—as the current poor conditions in many overcrowded remand centres and local prisons cost.

As for escort and court duties, the private sector says that it could provide a substantially cheaper service that is just as good, if not better. It is worth remembering that at present 1,000 policemen and 800 to 900 prison officers are involved in escort duties every day. That is a commitment which does not require a tithe of the wide range of prison and police skills in which these men are fully trained.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary no longer accept the principle —which, in a speech that he made on 18 July 1987, he appeared to accept—that the coercive powers of the state that are necessary to enforce the deprivation of liberty of the subject should remain the direct responsibility of the state? Why has he backed down from that principle, in the face, no doubt, of Prime Ministerial pressure?

Secondly, is not the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Deloitte report, in seeking to examine the only conceivable justification for what he has proposed—the

*[Mr. Robert Maclennan]*

cost-effectiveness of the private sector—brings in a not proven verdict and makes it clear that, with regard to reform possibilities, further studies comparing the public sector with the private sector need to be made before a decision can be arrived at? Does he not agree that, even on the basis of cost-benefit criteria, this report does not support the action that he intends to take?

Finally, does not the Home Secretary recognise that the Deloitte report draws attention to, and gives a grave warning about, the management difficulties of operating at the interface between the private sector and the public sector when the private sector breaks down?

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman is quite right in saying that the report suggests that research and negotiation are necessary. That is exactly what I have announced today. The report also makes it clear that it should be possible to find ways of preserving accountability, the responsibility of the courts and the responsibility of the Home Secretary, while, in order to provide better conditions, making use of the skills of the private sector. Both points are made clearly in the report, from which my statement flows logically.

**Mr. Ian Gow** (Eastbourne): Will not the British people view with incredulity the hostility of the Labour party to proposals that will release many of the 1,000 policemen who, each day, are engaged on escort duties? My right hon. Friend's proposals will mean that some of those policemen can carry out their real function—protecting the innocent from the guilty.

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree with my hon. Friend. One thing on which I thought the Labour party and I agreed was the urgent need to improve conditions in our prisons, particularly the conditions of those held on remand. This is one way, beginning with two or three remand centres, of doing that. Are we to exclude that possibility for dogmatic reasons?

**Mr. James Lamond** (Oldham, Central and Royton): Does the Secretary of State realise that in abdicating his responsibilities and admitting that he and his Ministers are incapable of organising even proper remand centres he is not helping the many thousands of men and women who are held on remand? One such person is my constituent, Abdul Rehman, who is in Preston prison and has been on remand since 29 January 1988—13 months. His trial will not take place until April at the earliest. What will the Home Secretary do about such cases? My constituent's business and family life have been ruined while he is still an innocent man.

**Mr. Hurd:** It is right to say that some people are held on remand for too long. However, that is not under my control.

**Mr. Hattersley:** It is.

**Mr. Hurd:** Of course it is not. I do not decide when cases come to trial. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) knows better than that. The right hon. Gentleman also knows that the House introduced the concept of time limits for bringing people to trial. That was taken in a modified way from a system in Scotland. He also knows about the new steps we have been taking on bail hostels and bail information schemes to reduce the number of people held on remand. He will have been glad to hear the figures I announced a few moments ago, which show that there has been a reduction in the past year.

**Mr. Jeremy Hanley** (Richmond and Barnes): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) mentioned the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells report. Would it not have been better if they had not been so selective in their quotations but had continued reading from the report? It says:

"We do not underestimate the work that would be involved in realising the proposed approach."

It went on to say:

"We believe, however"——

**Hon. Members:** Reading.

**Mr. Speaker:** Paraphrase, please.

**Mr. Hanley:** It went on to say that it believes that the outline suggested is realistic and practical. Therefore, Deloitte, Haskins and Sells thinks that my right hon. Friend's approach is practical and realistic.

I welcome the report. I was a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and I ask my right hon. Friend to take urgent steps, having introduced an experiment, to ensure that the detention of immigration suspects and women's prisons form the next step in the progress being made.

**Mr. Hurd:** The immigrants who need to be detained are already held under arrangements where we contract out to the private sector. The case is not an exact parallel, but there is a precedent about which I have not heard complaints from Opposition Members. I agree with my hon. Friend, and I hope that hon. Members who are interested in the matter will look carefully at the report, which does not go overboard. It points out the difficulties and, having examined them, suggests ways in which they can be solved. It is on that basis that we now propose to set in hand the further work I announced in my statement.

**Mr. John Evans** (St. Helens, North): Will the staff employed in the privatised sector of the prison service be free to join the Prison Officers Association? Will the POA have negotiating rights on their behalf?

**Mr. Hurd:** That will be a matter for the contractors.

**Mr. Tim Smith** (Beaconsfield): Is not the key issue one of accountability? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if tough and tight contracts are drawn up with private contractors which give incentives for good performance and penalties for poor performance, there is no reason why accountability should be not only maintained but strengthened?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is right. It would be on the basis of a contract. In addition to the contract and its enforceability, there will be the three provisions outlined in the report and which I mentioned in my statement. There will be the monitor, who will be an official directly responsible to me. He will be handling questions about, for example, discipline and prisoners' complaints. There will also be the inspectorate—we have seen the effectiveness of Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons, particularly in the last year or so—and there will be the board of visitors, as there is for a normal prison.

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones** (Ynys Môn): The Home Secretary's announcement does not address the real issues facing people in north Wales, in particular. I refer to the policy decision on setting up a remand centre in such rural areas. I am sure that the Home Secretary is aware that the remand centre at Risley is almost 60 miles from the courts in my constituency. I do not see how the Home Secretary's announcement will help towards the provision of a remand centre in north Wales. It matters not whether the transport structure is public or private. Public and private transport can equally be stuck in traffic jams. Will the Home Secretary address the real issue of the provision of decent accommodation for prisoners in north Wales?

**Mr. Hurd:** I am familiar with the hon. Gentleman's point about north Wales. I should not like to give him a commitment that, if Parliament agrees, one of the new centres might be in north Wales, but the general answer to his question must be yes. Of course we are pressing ahead, first, to reduce the size of the remand population and, secondly, to improve conditions in which prisoners are held. In both respects we are making some progress, but the question is whether, in addition to those two things, we should experiment with and try to bring in some private sector skills to help with those tasks. [HON. MEMBERS: "What skills?"] People who automatically say no to that are being careless of the need to improve conditions in remand centres.

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): My right hon. Friend's announcement is most welcome. Does he agree that what is objectionable and absurd is not what he said but what the Opposition have said? To anyone who has investigated the problems in our prisons, as the Home Affairs Select Committee did, it is quite clear that there is an urgent problem in improving conditions, particularly for remand prisoners. My right hon. Friend's statement is not about profit or political dogma but about improving conditions for prisoners on remand.

**Mr. Hurd:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. These exchanges show that, on this occasion, dogma lives on the Opposition Benches. We are not proposing to privatise existing remand prisons. We are not proposing to alter in any way the arrangements for convicted prisoners. We are simply saying that it is worth seeing whether, alongside the improvements we are seeking within the scope of the prison service, the private sector can help. It is dogmatic to rule out that aspect.

**Ms. Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Is the Home Secretary aware that his Department's last experiment in private prisoner farming was the prison ships run by Securicor on which unfortunate Tamil refugees were held? With reference to his remark about skills in the private sector, is he aware that the training given to the Securicor guards who were holding people in the most difficult and delicate circumstances was derisory and lasted for only a few days? What steps will he take to ensure that, in their search for profit, private sector companies running remand centres will not skimp training, as Securicor did in regard to the prison ships and the Tamil refugees?

**Mr. Hurd:** With her experience, the hon. Lady will know that the arrangements at Harmondsworth, for example, were run pretty well. They are reviewed from time to time. In the time that I have been at the Dispatch Box, I have not heard great outcries from the Opposition about the way in which that arrangement works. *[Interruption.]* Of course there are complaints abut particular cases, but I am talking about the general system. I have not heard complaints about that. The hon. Lady is quite right. As I said in my statement, the selection of staff and their training are crucial in the management of remand centres. Both aspects clearly will have to be covered by the contract.

**Mr. Richard Alexander** (Newark): Surely there is nothing inherently unreasonable in what my right hon. Friend proposes. If there is a perceived public need, must it always be met in the public sector? Surely the criterion should be whether it can be done more efficiently and effectively. All the party political dogma is coming from the Opposition.

**Mr. Hurd:** That is so. The longer the exchanges go on, the clearer that becomes. The Government and the House, because this matter will require legislation, will need to be clear about the lines of accountability and clear that they can call the Home Secretary to account if something goes wrong in a remand centre under private management, as they can now. However, the consultants' report shows ways in which that need can be met, and if the Government and Parliament are satisfied that that can be done, there is everything to be said for seeing whether we can improve the present prospects by the proposals in the report.

**Mr. Norman Buchan** (Paisley, South): Is not the Secretary of State aware that we are all in favour of improvements? He has failed to make out the case for improvements in this instance. Will he take on board the fact that there is already sufficient anxiety about the operations of private security forces? It is particularly repugnant that a system involving forced incarceration and, in some cases, violence, should be in private hands and privately controlled when the state should be dealing with the matter. Will he give us an assurance that he will not attempt to persuade the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider the same proposal? If he does, the people of Scotland will bitterly oppose it.

**Mr. Hurd:** I am not answering for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The hon. Gentleman says that all Opposition Members are in favour of improving conditions. The Labour party has consistently opposed and sniped at the present building programme, which is the best immediate way of improving conditions. I have found that a remarkable and rather disgraceful paradox.

The Labour party is opposing, as a matter of principle and without considering the practicalities, this proposed experiment to see whether we can use the private sector more effectively. I am driven to the conclusion that the Labour party's enthusiasm for improving the standards in our prisons is a matter of words only.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** I must have regard for the subsequent business, which is a debate on Wales. There is considerable demand to take part in it. I shall allow questions to continue for 15 minutes and then we must move on.

**Sir Peter Hordern** (Horsham): Although I can see that escort duties could be performed more cheaply and perhaps with great advantage by the private sector from

*[Sir Peter Hordern]*

the new remand centres, can my right hon. Friend explain how the custodial responsibilities could be carried out more cheaply by these methods, as any company offering such services must do so with the expectation of profit, and bearing in mind that responsibilities for custody must remain the same as under present arrangements?

**Mr. Hurd:** The responsibilities will remain the same and the contract will ensure that. The advantage that a private contractor might have over the present system is that he would not start with the existing range of agreements and practices, which we are reforming and changing through the Fresh Start reform. Anyone who examines the system carefully knows that such agreements and practices exist and make it more difficult to raise standards. In the area to which my hon. Friend referred—managing remand centres—there are not likely to be cost savings, but the private contractors might be able to deliver a higher standard of service, without overcrowding and with proper sanitation, for example, more effectively and at a comparable cost to the present cost of holding people under prison conditions which are much inferior.

**Mr. Dave Nellist** (Coventry, South-East): Why has not the Home Secretary mentioned that private sector tenders for two remand centres—Everthorpe near Hull and Cookham Wood near Rochester—have already been received by his Department? In the case of Everthorpe, planning permission has not only been sought, but granted; it was sought five months ago, in October. Who are the contractors for those private prisons? Why have the Prison Officers Association and the Civil and Public Services Association not been told of the plans? Why does the Home Secretary talk about proposals when behind our backs, for five months, he has been discussing with contractors to get these private sector remand prisons built?

**Mr. Hurd:** As the consultants have made clear, there have been discussions, but far more detailed discussions will be needed, as recommended in the report, before any decision can be taken. The new framework, if we propose it to Parliament, will require parliamentary approval. There is no question of decisions having been taken.

**Mr. Kenneth Hind** (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the public will view this measure as giving magistrates the maximum opportunity to protect the public from people who should be locked away and not be granted bail——

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman, not I, takes responsibility for what he says.

**Mr. Hind:** Does my right hon. Friend consider that the new remand centres should be built in the centre of our cities, close to our courts, so that relatives and those who represent people in courts will suffer the minimum inconvenience and the costs of transportation will be lower?

**Mr. Hurd:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That point has been raised with me many times over the past few years. It is valid and needs to be taken into account.

**Mr. Peter L. Pike** (Burnley): Does the Home Secretary recognise that his announcement this afternoon is an admission of the Government's failure to deal with the real problems facing remand centres, with people there who should not be there living in appalling conditions? Does he accept that many people will view the prospect of Butlins and Securicor bringing together their comparative skills to provide the service as a half-baked idea which should be dropped? He should concentrate on coming forward with a positive solution to the real problems of remand centres.

**Mr. Hurd:** I do not regard this proposal as a substitute for what we are already doing, which I have sketched twice already this afternoon. The figures suggest that that is beginning to have some effect. Eventually, the question for the House is whether, in addition to the new resources we are putting into bail hostels, tightening time limits, the bail information scheme and the prison building programme, which is opposed by the Labour party, we should conduct experiments. I believe that we should.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that existing prisons are largely expensive colleges of crime? Should not the Opposition recognise that the new remand centres will offer the opportunity for higher standards which are more likely to lead to self-discipline? Will my right hon. Friend also encourage more families to foster juveniles, whom local authorities, lamentably, have failed to keep out of trouble?

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree with the first point. The object of the exercise is to see how we can achieve higher standards.

**Mr. Tony Worthington** (Clydebank and Milngavie): All hon. Members would agree that the present standards for remand prisoners are appalling. If the Secretary of State is going to set high standards for the private remand centres, it would be untenable, legally and morally for those standards to be higher than the standards in the remand centres run by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will, therefore, have to improve the standards in existing remand centres in order to be able to enforce the conditions in the private remand centres. But if the standards in state remand centres can be improved, why do we need to change?

**Mr. Hurd:** The Opposition cannot have it both ways. They cannot say that the proposition is wicked because standards will be too low as profiteers make profits and that it is wicked because the standards will be too high, which is what the hon. Gentleman has just suggested.

If we go ahead with this scheme, the contract will ensure higher standards in the two or three new remand centres than exist in some, but not all, prison service remand centres. We must work all the time, as we are doing, to improve the standards in prison service remand prisons.

**Mr. Richard Holt** (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend take it from me that his reputation will be enhanced by what he has said today if for no other reason than that to some extent he has put his own career on the line by having this experiment? If it is successful—as I expect—he will be given the plaudits due to him, but if it fails Opposition Members will have been proved right. Their indignation should wait until they see how it turns out.

**Mr. Hurd:** We are doing many new things and we start them cautiously with experiments. I make no apology for

that because new thinking and cautious experiments are what are required in the criminal justice system. This suggestion fits neatly and logically into that pattern.

**Mr. Gerry Steinberg** (City of Durham): The Secretary of State must be aware that security firms are now two a penny throughout the country and that they recruit their employees from people on the dole and pay them extremely low wages. Is he telling the House that those security firms are to take over from the Prison Officers Association, which is the representative of a skilled profession? Why does not the Secretary of State take some positive action by introducing legislation to reduce the time spent on remand, as has happened in Scotland, and invest in some bail hostels run by professionals?

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman should know that I am doing both those things.

**Mr. David Ashby** (Leicestershire, North-West): *rose——*

**Mr. Speaker:** Was the hon. Member present for the statement?

**Mr. Ashby:** No, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** In that case, I shall have to call the hon. Gentleman on another occasion.

**Mr. John Battle** (Leeds, West): Will the Home Secretary explain what contribution his contracting-out statement will make to alleviating overcrowding in Armley in Leeds, which his Department concedes is the most overcrowded prison in Britain? What will his statement do to address the current crisis of young unconvicted prisoners being held there on remand when they should not be, which has resulted in five young people committing suicide already and numerous attempts? Would it not be better for his Department to fund bail provisions such as bail hostels and bail support schemes—schemes that have been put to his Department by the probation service? Would they not be a better means of tackling the crisis in our prisons?

**Mr. Hurd:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am concerned about the position at Armley. He may also know that I have asked the deputy director general of the prison service to make a special report to me because of the suicides that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I am sure that he is right to take those tragedies seriously. I have now received that report and am studying it. I shall make known our conclusions very soon.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose——*

**Mr. Speaker:** I call Mr. Skinner—briefly please.

**Mr. Skinner:** I am always brief. Does the Home Secretary realise that he cuts a sorry figure in trying to impress the House with this sleazy operation, which is more about him grubbing around for votes among his Cabinet colleagues, satisfying the Prime Minister and lining the pockets of the people who represent the Tory party and of those who pay into its funds? Who will get the contract for Father Ryan? Will it be Trusthouse Forte, Avis rental cars or even the Guardian Angels?

**Mr. Hurd:** That was a bit laboured. For his light weekend reading I shall send the hon. Gentleman the Green Paper, the consultants' report and the Select Committee report. Perhaps he will then reach a different conclusion.

**Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse** (Pontefract and Castleford): The Home Secretary has conceded that what he describes as the "proper" conditions in prisons are his responsibility and that of the Government. That being so, why have the conditions in Armley prison, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) referred, deteriorated so badly over the past 10 years? Bearing that in mind, will the Home Secretary explain a little further what he means by the "special expertise" which he feels will solve the problem?

**Mr. Hurd:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, there has been a substantial increase in the prison population over the years. However, in the past year not only has the remand population fallen slightly; the prison population has been held fairly steady. But I am not making too much of that because it might change again in the wrong way. If the hon. Gentleman studies the current figures, he will see that there has been some relief from the overcrowding pressure from which we have suffered.

The staff at Armley have done an amazing job in extremely difficult circumstances. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) said that the people there should not be in prison, but it is, of course, the courts that decide whether bail should be granted in certain cases, not me. We are trying to make it possible for the courts to find alternatives to remand in custody in more and more cases. That is extremely important. However, that effort, which clearly needs to be continued and intensified, does not absolve us from looking at any new ideas and new people who may come forward.

As I said in my statement, the proposals will be tested and further work will be done, so the hon. Gentleman should not say that there is no contribution, no help, and no new ideas that can be brought to bear.

**Mr. Bob McTaggart** (Glasgow, Central): If the Secretary of State is really concerned about the conditions of prisoners, and especially of remand prisoners, should he not address himself to the fact that many people are held on remand without any limit on time and that the majority of them end up receiving non-custodial sentences? If we attacked that question more seriously, that would do a great deal to alleviate some of our problems. Will the Secretary of State inform the House where the skills of the private sector were obtained and learned? Presumably it must have been in Scotland.

**Mr. Hurd:** I shall try to deal with both the hon. Gentleman's points. First in effect, he complained about the working of the Bail Act 1976. I am anxious that the Act should work properly and that the number of cases in which people are refused bail and then either acquitted or not given custodial sentences should be kept to the minimum. However, that is a matter for the courts. Our job is to provide as convincing alternatives to remand in custody as we can, and the hon. Gentleman knows that that is what we are doing.

Secondly, we know that there are skills involved in escort duties because they have already been tested, and there are certainly skills involved in the design and

*[Mr. Hurd]*

construction of prisons. In the light of the consultants' report, I do not see any grounds for denying that there could be skills in the management of remand centres also.

**Mr. Hattersley:** Does not the Home Secretary realise that the weakness of his argument was demonstrated by his denial about the figures for men and women held in prison on remand—figures that were given to me by his Department just over two hours ago? Despite the small reduction of which he was so proud, the fact is that the remand population is now twice what it was when the right hon. Gentleman's Government came to office. If he is really concerned about that, why does he not implement the 110-day rule instead of talking about it?

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman again to answer the question: what are the special skills that private contractors have for running remand prisons, other than the willingness to make profits out of human misery?

**Mr. Hurd:** "Let us test and see" is the message of the consultants' report and it is entirely reasonable. The right hon. Gentleman has taken a dogmatic approach and is denying the possibilities of the proposal in the face of evidence from the Select Committee report and in the face of what has been said as a result of the consultants' work. "Let us test and see", is the summary of my announcement today.

On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, in answer to an earlier question I conceded that there has been a massive increase in the remand population—as there has been in the prison population as a whole over the past 10 years. What I am saying and what evidently surprised the right hon. Gentleman is that during the past calendar year there has been a sizeable fall in that population. That might be temporary, so I do not want to overrate the argument. However, that fall may show that some of the efforts that have been made to contain and reduce the remand population are working. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act for the first time gave me powers to impose time limits. The right hon. Gentleman knows that I am doing that—*[Interruption.]* If he does not, he is ignorant. He knows that I am extending the arrangements steadily across the country and that before he is much older time limits will apply throughout England and Wales. That is progress, which was not attempted—or attempted successfully—by Labour Home Secretaries.

### NEW MEMBER

*The following Member made the Affirmation required by law:*

Kim Scott Howells Esq., for Pontypridd.

## Points of Order

4.21 pm

**Mr. Dick Douglas** (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On occasion I have been on the receiving end of colourful verbal strictures from your good self. No one wants to incur your displeasure, Mr. Speaker, but could you nevertheless take time to examine the method and approach that you seem to be adopting in relation to the calling of Opposition and Government Members in Scottish Question Time?

As I understand the proceedings of the House, Question Time is an occasion for hon. Members to put the Executive—that is, the Government—under pressure. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the supporters of the Government whom you choose to call do not do that. Today a Conservative Member was called who had put down no question whatever for Scottish Question Time. When he had put his supplementary he departed the House—only to return again, such was his interest. He thus prevented many Opposition Members from putting genuine questions, of interest to their constituents, to the Government and putting pressure on the present particularly objectionable Secretary of State for Scotland and his cohort.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's reply to the question asked by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) may have misled the House somewhat. The Minister said that the question of metered water rates was for the discretion of the regional councils, yet he has——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman will have to take that up with the Minister rather than with me. It is not a matter for me, and I have no idea whether what the hon. Gentleman has said is right or wrong. What is the point of order?

**Mr. Bruce:** The related point of order is that the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside was called twice, while some Opposition Members were not called once. When the Government are bringing in English Members to ask questions, it seems unreasonable that their Scottish Members should be called twice, keeping Opposition Members from being called at all.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett** (Pembroke) *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Will it be helpful?

**Mr. Bennett:** I hope so.

**Mr. Speaker:** I hope so, too.

**Mr. Bennett:** Further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), Mr. Speaker. You will recall that in questions to the English Department of Health on 13 December the Opposition Front Bench consisted of the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook). There were three Scottish Labour Members questioning the English Health Department.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Helpful, but I think that it would be a good idea if I dealt with this.

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton) *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am on my feet; allow me to deal with this.

I do not think that I need repeat to the House that we are a United Kingdom Parliament. I weigh the rights of majorities in the House very carefully, but the rights of minorities must also be taken into account. Today 35 Scottish Members were called, and 11 Members representing English constituencies. Four of those had questions on the Order Paper, and one of the questions was about forestry, a matter that concerns the entire United Kingdom and is answered for by a Scottish Minister. It is a very difficult balance, but I do my best to be utterly fair.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter of serious concern. Today's edition of *The Guardian* contains a statement that the European Commission is prepared to bulldoze this country into accepting a gross lorry weight of 44 tonnes. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, the then Secretary of State for Transport making a solemn statement that the current maximum of 38 tonnes would be retained.

Have you, Mr. Speaker, received any notification of a statement from the Secretary of State for Transport to make it clear that the Government will resist any imposition of a new limit by the Common Market? Although the Government have removed the right to a veto on transport matters, they should be here to prevent the arrival of more juggernauts on our already overcrowded roads as a result of the arbitrary fiat of the Common Market.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have received no such notification, but let me tell the hon. Gentleman and the whole House that we in this United Kingdom Parliament feel that no one should bulldoze us.

**Mr. Thomas McAvoy** (Glasgow, Rutherglen): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to delay the House unnecessarily, but you may recall that this afternoon the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said in reply to a question that I had asked with reference to the Minister of State's use of the word "fluctuation" in relation to Alzheimer's disease that what I had said was wrong and untrue——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is taking time out of the Welsh debate. I cannot be responsible for what is said by the Minister at the Dispatch Box, or any other hon. Member. This is not a point of order for me.

**Mr. McFall:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was present for the entire hour of Scottish Question Time and stood up in vain on six questions, while watching hon. Members with no constituency interests in Scotland being called and departing the Chamber. I had put my name down for the ballot and had been drawn seventh. I subsequently discovered that my question had been transferred to the Department of Education and Science.

That question concerned a burning issue in Scotland —the possible closure of the Glasgow veterinary school —and it should have been debated in the Chamber today. If that is not of real concern to the people of Scotland, what is? What advice can you give me, Mr. Speaker, so that—as one of my hon. Friends said earlier—the people of Scotland can genuinely question the Executive on such issues?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I do not know about the transfer of the question, and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was not called. Perhaps I may quote to him and the House the wise words of the Leader of the Opposition when I was chosen to be Speaker for the second time. He said that, sadly, in this place no Member can expect to be called on the day that he wants, at the time that he wants and on the subject that he wants.

**Mr. Harry Ewing** (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall put my point of order in my best Welsh accent. I know that you are not responsible for what Ministers say at the Dispatch Box, but today I believe that the Secretary of State for Scotland inadvertently misled the House. I questioned the right hon. and learned Gentleman about Shell's proposal to construct a pipeline between Grangemouth and England to pipe ethylene. In his reply the Secretary of State said he understood that there was a pipeline already between Grangemouth and England. But there is no such pipeline. Shell's proposal is a new approach and the Secretary of State inadvertently—I do not believe for one minute that the right hon. and learned Gentleman intended it; no lawyer ever does anything that he is not sure of—misled the House. I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State is present to carry that message back to his boss; and I shall look for a letter tomorrow.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sure that what the hon. Gentleman has said will have been heard.

## BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 17 MARCH

*Members successful in the ballot were:*

Miss Joan Lestor.
Mr. Ian McCartney.
Mr. Henry McLeish.

## BILL PRESENTED

PROTECTION OF RESIDENTS IN RETIREMENT HOMES

Mr. Nigel Griffiths, supported by Mr. Harry Ewing, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Norman Hogg, Mr. Alistair Darling and Mr. Harry Barnes, presented a Bill to establish the rights of residents who have purchased a retirement home in a complex run by a management agency to appoint the management agency and agent of their choice, to appoint the accountants and auditors of their choice, to have presented audited accounts for any charges levied on them, to restrict the increase in management charges; and to require developers and management agencies to give full details in all advertisements and promotional literature of all charges: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 April and to be printed. [Bill 89.]

# Scotland

4.31 pm

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Scottish Assembly and Executive and for their functions and powers; and to make consequential provision.

Ten years ago today the people of Scotland voted by a majority of 77,000 to establish a directly elected national assembly for their country. Scotland was, of course, cheated of that assembly by procedural manoeuvring in this place. A cleverly constructed wrecking amendment, allied to the intriguing of Westminster party politicians, was sufficient at that time to ensure the repeal of the Scotland Act 1978 and with it the defeat of the Labour Government who had steered the Scotland Bill on to the statute book.

In the long years since then, Scotland has had extremely good cause to regret that missed opportunity, which briefly opened up in that referendum a decade ago. Clearly, being realistic, my ten-minute Bill will be of symbolic significance only. It cannot and will not put right the many wrongs that have been done to my country by Conservative Governments since 1979, but that is so only because my Bill will never make it on to the statute book.

When Scottish home rule is finally enacted, as enacted it will be, and when, at last, an elected national assembly convenes in Edinburgh, there is no doubt that the prospects for social justice and for economic recovery in Scotland will be transformed for the better. Those who put their faith in the present system of governing Scotland are either blind to its deeply undemocratic nature or not entitled to call themselves democrats.

Scottish Office Ministers, and the army of civil servants behind them, are accountable only upwards, to those above them in the Westminster system, and never downwards, through Scottish Members of Parliament, to the only true source of democratic government in Scotland, the Scottish people themselves.

The particularly Scottish elements in the current machinery of government—the Scottish Grand Committee, the Scottish Standing Committee and the Scottish Select Committee—are either dissolved, patronised or packed with non-Scottish representatives. Those Committees are never allowed to carry out their intended function of scrutinising the Executive and placing a democratic check on the legislative or Executive excesses on behalf of the Scottish people. Those Committees, and with them the ballot box in Scotland, are rendered impotent by a flawed system of parliamentary government which places overwhelming and unaccountable Executive power in the hands of an unrepresentative, albeit an elected, minority.

That flawed system of governing Scotland can no longer be tolerated. In the words of the recently published "Claim of right for Scotland"

"Either we advance to an Assembly or we retreat to the point at which Scottish institutions are an empty shell."

The purpose of the Bill is to serve notice that Scotland intends no retreat, but is determined to advance to the assembly for which its people have repeatedly voted. The advantages of an elected assembly for Scotland are many. Through it, for example, the Scottish people would directly control their own unique system of education. No assembly that was accountable to the people of Scotland would ever countenance the scale of university cuts seen in Scotland or the introduction of student loans into Scotland. No assembly based upon genuine democratic consent would consider for a moment the closure of established and successful dental and veterinary schools. No assembly, which relied for its legitimacy on the Scottish people, would promote opting out or subject seven-year-old school children to the trauma of national testing. Yet all of those developments are taking place in Scotland today only because those who control Scottish education are unaccountable to the Scottish people for what they do.

An assembly would likewise transform the prospects for tackling Scotland's endemic housing crisis. The answers to the plight of the homeless, to the despair caused by dampness and condensation, to the problems of overcrowding and the problems of growing rent arrears and indebtness are already known to those who are daily involved with Scottish housing. They understand the need for a programme of public investment in the housing infrastructure. They recognise the importance of subsidising owner-occupation and public renting in a fair and equal manner. They appreciate that choice and diversity in housing must be available to everyone by right, not just to those who happen to be able to afford it. But they do not have the ear of Scottish government, because government in Scotland is not Scottish. If the resources to solve those problems are ever to be released it will be only through an elected Scottish assembly.

It is also important to consider local government in Scotland, which is distinct from local government elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It has its own unique structure, its own unique system of finance and its own separate traditions of public service. All of those are now put at risk by a centralising and authoritarian Government determined to impose uniform controls that will ensure that Westminster runs every corner of the country, imposing a sameness that stems from submission to central Government.

Worst of all, there is the poll tax—unwanted, unloved and despised by eight out of 10 Scots—imposed on Scotland in circumstances so undemocratic as to call into serious question the claim of this House to any kind of democratic legitimacy. A Scottish assembly elected by the Scottish people would, as a matter of priority, abolish the poll tax and restore the independence of Scottish local government. For me that in itself makes the case for a Scottish assembly unanswerable.

Tonight there are to be Tory celebrations in London and Edinburgh to mark the 10th anniversary of the defeat of the Scotland Act 1978 and to plan for the defeat of any future Scotland Acts. We are told that the Tories will be celebrating 1979 as a turning point in Conservative party fortunes, although, God knows, Scottish Tories have had little enough to celebrate about in the past 10 years—there is little enough about United Kingdom politics of the past 10 years for any of us to celebrate. Local democracy has been all but strangled. Trade union rights have been smashed. The right to dissent and to freedom of speech have been and are being seriously curtailed. A secret and all-powerful state grows more obsessively secret and ever more authoritarian behind a parliamentary facade, which no longer relates to the people and which is now distantly remote from any democratic reality.

In those circumstances an elected Scottish assembly would present the most important democratic breakthrough in post-war British politics. To borrow a phrase from the Scottish poet, Hugh McDiarmid, it would be:

"A flash of sun in a country all prison grey."

The days of Scotland waiting for others to make up their minds about Scottish government are over. At the end of this month the Scottish constitutional convention will hold its first historic meeting in Edinburgh. That convention will bring forward proposals for an assembly which will unite behind it an unprecedented level of majority popular support in Scotland. Other hon. Members may question the level of democratic support behind this ten-minute Bill, but no hon. Member will be able to question the level of democratic support for a Scotland Bill that will come from the work of the Scottish constitutional convention.

There is and there will be an absolute democratic imperative on the House to recognise the will of the Scottish people. If that imperative is ignored and if this House again sells the pass on the Scottish question, it can no longer claim any democratic legitimacy in Scotland and it will deserve to be opposed by democrats not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John McAllion, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. George Galloway, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr. Thomas Graham, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. Harry Ewing, Mr. John McFall and Mr. Martin O'Neill.

SCOTLAND

Mr. John McAllion accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Scottish Assembly and Executive and for their functions and powers; and to make consequential provision: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 17 March and to be printed. [Bill 90.]

**Mr. Dennis Canavan** (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible to record that not a single Back-Bench Tory Member was present during that important debate on Scotland's constitutional future?

**Mr. Speaker:** That has just been recorded.

## Welsh Affairs

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** In view of the large number of right hon. and hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies who wish to take part in this important debate, I propose to use my power to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock. If, due to the restraint of those hon. Members called before 7 o'clock, that proves to be unnecessary, I shall ask the then occupant of the Chair to be flexible.

4.40 pm

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker):** Since we last debated this subject a year ago we have, unfortunately, lost two of our parliamentary colleagues, Brynmor John and Sir Raymond Gower. I am sure that it is right to begin by saying that hon. Members on both sides of the House are united in their sadness at that loss. The two hon. Members had many qualities and characteristics in common. Both served their constituents exceedingly well and were dedicated to the prosperity and future of Wales. Both had a great spirit of public service and qualities of compassion and kindness which all hon. Members admired. We regret their passing.

I should also like to congratulate our new colleague, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), who has just taken his place in the House. Like him, I arrived at the House after a by-election. I must confess to relief that since then I have had to fight only general elections, not by-elections. For the period that the hon. Gentleman is a Member of the House, I wish him well and the fulfilment of his ambitions in parliamentary life.

During the past year, there have been many events which will affect the future of the Principality. A range of new schemes and enterprises have been set up, all of which will have a considerable impact on the future of Wales. During the past year, the valleys initiative has been launched and the enterprise initiative was launched by the Department of Trade and Industry. Major proposals have been made for housing, to which I shall refer later. The Welsh language development board has been launched and a White Paper on health has been published. Bills on the privatisation of water and electricity have begun their passage through the House. All those developments will have a considerable impact on Wales, and I shall have something to say about each of them.

I realise that the Opposition cannot say that the programme for the valleys is splendid. Understandably, they have to say that if it looks good, it is merely good publicity and public relations but not good in a monetary sense. I perfectly understand that reaction as I spent some years as a member of a shadow Cabinet in opposition to two Labour Governments. I do not think that my record would show me to have been full of praise for anything that those Governments did.

This week, one of the Welsh newspapers commented on a report sent in by the Welsh district councils. I have just read the report on the valleys programme, which they had also sent to me. I had replied to them and was surprised by the headlines in the newspaper. I thought that the report was constructive. It analysed what was taking place,

*[Mr. Peter Walker]*

devoted several pages of approval to the details of many of the proposals and ended with six major policy priorities, with virtually all of which I agreed.

A great deal is currently being done to overcome the considerable problems—in particular, the decline of the coal and steel industries—that the valleys have suffered and in some respects are still suffering. I think that everyone, irrespective of political views, will rejoice at the recent considerable new inward investment into the valleys. There has been one investment—often a large one—every two weeks, and many more are being negotiated. That will substantially increase the diversity of industry and commerce in the valleys.

I am sure that everyone is also delighted that Welsh Development Agency factory lettings have been at record levels. In the nine months from 1 April last year to 1 January this year, there were no fewer than two new factory lettings per week. Unemployment in the valleys, although still far too high, has fallen during the past three years by nearly 40 per cent. During the seven months since the launch of the valleys initiative, the fall in unemployment in the valleys has been even faster than the record falls in Wales as a whole.

**Mrs. Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): In the past month, unemployment has risen in the Cynon valley, which still has the highest male unemployment rate in Wales. The valleys initiative has not done much to help towns in my constituency such as Mountain Ash, Penrhiwceiber, Aberdare and others which have been devastated by job losses in the coal industry.

**Mr. Walker:** As the hon. Lady will know, it was the chief executive of her local authority who prepared the report from the district councils in which he listed many factors in the valleys initiative of which he thoroughly approves. As the hon. Lady also knows, unemployment in her constituency peaked in 1986 and is now much lower, although a great deal still needs to be done there. In a recent parliamentary answer I listed all the initiatives taking place in her valley, where there is enormous public expenditure. If she would like to table a similar question on the likely benefits for her valley of the valleys initiative, I shall be only too pleased to answer it. Greater programmes than ever before for work such as derelict land clearance and factory building are now being undertaken.

Under the valleys initiative, the new small loan scheme and the valleys enterprise scheme now operate. Those schemes apply only to the valleys, and already several dozen valley businesses have taken advantage of them. I hope that many others will benefit from them in the future.

One of the most exciting elements is the new enterprise initiative launched by the DTI, under which firms can apply for substantial Government grants so that they can call in consultants to advise them on a range of important issues. No fewer than 360 projects have been undertaken for valley firms in the first few months of this initiative.

Another initiative of considerable importance, not just for the valleys but for the whole of Wales which I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome—and when it is built and completed, support—is the centre for quality, enterprise and design at Treforest. Building is now starting and I hope that the first occupants will arrive at the end of August. This institution will be unique to the United Kingdom, and I am glad that it will be in the valleys. Its object will be to have a major impact on improving design quality so that Wales and the valleys retain their reputation in that respect.

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): We await the outcome of the valleys initiative to see whether it will create new jobs and provide new money. If it does, everyone will welcome it. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept, however, that there are old industrial areas outside the valleys—old slate quarry areas, for example—which face problems similar to those of the valley communities? What initiatives does he plan to help those areas?

**Mr. Walker:** I intend to deal with other parts of Wales later in my speech. I am dealing now with the major new initiatives that we have launched, but I agree that such areas face a range of problems, that some have higher unemployment than the valleys and that action is needed.

The hon. Gentleman says that he awaits the outcome of the initiative and will judge it on the details, and I am happy for him to do that. In the first six months of the initiative, there has been a great deal of new money and, compared with the promises and predictions that I made, there has been more activity on derelict land clearance and factory building and letting, and more money is going in. I intend to deal later with today's announcement by the Welsh Development Agency of the new factory building programme for 1989-90, which is larger than last year's.

The figures for regional aid in the valleys are remarkable. Grants made since the initiative, to the middle of January, have covered projects involving 7,500 new jobs and private investment of about £180 million. The WDA's record advanced factory building programme is well under way. In the current financial year, it involves investment in 450,000 sq ft of new advanced factories. In addition, more than 300,000 sq ft of bespoke factory building has been completed, and more projects are in hand. Total WDA investment in factory building in 1988-89 will be more than £20 million in 1988-89 and about £66 million over the three years of the programme, which is £5 million more than my original forecast. Work is also in hand on more than 130 small local authority factory units, with Welsh Office urban programme assistance.

**Mr. Keith Raffan** (Delyn): As my right hon. Friend knows, there is considerable disappointment in my constituency at the Government's decision not to extend the Delyn enterprise zone. Will he give an assurance today that the focus of WDA factory provision in north Wales will shift from south-east Clwyd to north-east and coastal Clwyd? At present there is an imbalance favouring Alyn and Deeside and Wrexham Maelor which we want redressed throughout north Wales.

**Mr. Walker:** My hon. Friend will be pleased to see the programme announced by the WDA today. I know how long and enthusiastically he has propounded the need for more factories. Today's announcement of the WDA factory building programme for 1989-90 includes plans for three new factories in the Delyn area, which I know will be welcomed by my hon. Friend and his constituents.

A great deal is happening in training in the valleys, where more than 20,000 people are expected to benefit from the Training Agency programmes in this financial year. Other major investments are taking place, too. It is

now estimated that £56 million will be invested in the garden festival at Ebbw Vale. I hope that all local authorities, not just that of Ebbw Vale, will support the project, which will benefit the whole of Wales. In all the programmes of the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales tourist board and others, we must ensure that we take full advantage of this enormous capital investment.

**Mr. Ray Powell** (Ogmore): Returning to the point about the Training Agency and future developments in training, I must point out that that has nothing to do with the valleys initiative, which is designed to reduce unemployment. Since the transition in Ogmore from enterprise to training we have lost about 500 jobs in an organisation of which I am chairman, known as CATO —community activities and training in Ogmore. When and how will those jobs be replaced?

**Mr. Walker:** I have discussed this with the hon. Gentleman. A decision was announced long before the event that the large sums being spent on training should be spent on schemes in which real training was provided to give the trainees future careers. The community schemes were of great service at a particular time, but it was then important to move over to training in greater skills with proper training facilities.

In the valleys initiative I pledged that £1 million per week would be spent on training in the valleys for the next three years. I intend that to happen, and that the money be spent on training of a quality that will use the skills, talents and abilities of the people of the valleys, because that is the best way of developing industry.

This week I met the key people involved in the training organisation. We have invited a group of people to serve on the advisory training board, some of whom have still to say whether they will do so. The board will consist of people of high quality. The previous chairman of the Training Commission, Sir Mel Rosser, has agreed to continue, and I am glad to say that George Wright of the Transport and General Workers Union has agreed to serve on the board. He was on the previous commission and has considerable knowledge of the training needs of the areas. I intend regularly to meet those responsible for training to ensure that that £1 million per week is well spent on improving the quality of training.

During this period there has also been remarkable progress in the clearance of derelict land in the valleys. Record levels of expenditure have been deployed. In 1988-89, expenditure is expected to be £14 million, compared with the original forecast in the valleys initiative of £12·5 million. Schemes involving the clearance of about 400 acres will be completed in 1988-89, and a further £40 million will be spent over the next two years. In all, 2,800 acres are expected to be cleared during the life of the valleys programme, an increase of 300 acres on my original forecast of eight months ago.

The urban programme package for 1989-90 includes allocations totalling £18 million of projects to benefit the valleys; that is a 19 per cent. increase over the record level of allocations this year and about 67 per cent. over the year preceding the launch of the valleys enterprise. The Welsh Office has also announced that it will make available additional funding of £5·5 million for 10 more valley health projects, which are proceeding. The forecast 25 per cent. increase in the number of houses benefiting from enveloping and block repair schemes is taking place; about 2,000 houses will be treated under the programme in 1988-89.

I could continue with more details. I challenge anyone to find anywhere in the United Kingdom with a population of 700,000 in which there is so much activity on such a scale and enjoying such considerable success.

The enterprise initiative launched by the DTI was important. Wales has a remarkable record during its first few months of that initiative. When I took on my responsibilities at the Welsh Office I discovered that, when major DTI schemes were launched to provide grants and facilities for industry, far from receiving more than its appropriate share, Wales virtually always got less. We endeavoured to communicate with Welsh commerce and industry—with considerable success—and the Opposition will be delighted to hear that in the first few months of the enterprise initiative, applications and grants provided under the scheme in Wales have been 60 per cent. higher than the DTI had predicted. Indeed, applications are better in Wales than in any other region of the United Kingdom, which reflects the vitality in what is happening there.

During the course of the year I announced the setting up of the Welsh Language Board and received criticisms from both sides about it. The English-speaking parts of Wales said that it was monstrous to set up a board whose members were all enthusiastic Welsh speakers. They thought there should have been a balance between English and Welsh speakers. I decided to set up that board because I wanted on it people who were enthusiastic about the Welsh language. They have started their work and made various suggestions to us. They will be making many more suggestions in the coming period. Partly on their advice and partly as a result of the examination that we conducted, I have today announced a record £4·6 million of grants for the Welsh language, a 40 per cent. increase over this year.

This large increase demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to the language and our determination to build on the enthusiasm and good will that already exists to secure its future. Welsh language education will receive £2·7 million, £2 million of which will be allocated to local education authorities, the Welsh Joint Education Committee and other educational bodies, including colleges. More than £700,000 is being given to support the Welsh language educational development committee to meet the cost of curriculum-led developments proposed by the committee.

I also hope that during the year there will be additional proposals which, if approved, can be supported from the £300,000 that I have yet to allocate. In addition to the £4·6 million, I have also made available £160,000 in 1989-90 for educational support grants to be given to support Welsh in the curriculum, and I hope significantly to increase that support in the future.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett** (Pembroke): With regard to Welsh in the school curriculum, may I ask my right hon. Friend to bear in mind the fact that, although we in Pembrokeshire support encouragement being given to the Welsh language and culture, there is the traditional culture of Pembrokeshire which for nearly 1,000 years has been based on English? Will he also bear in mind the representations which are being made to him by the

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governing bodies of schools in south and mid-Pembrokeshire? They feel that rather than be obliged to have Welsh as a compulsory part of the curriculum, which will alienate the large number of English speakers, its inclusion in the curriculum should be voluntary.

**Mr. Walker:** I hope that, in all of what can be described as the predominantly English parts of Wales, considerable enthusiasm will be shown by education authorities to ensure that the teaching of Welsh is available. In terms of Wales as a whole, that represents a positive approach. I do not believe that there is any need for the English-speaking parts of Wales to show any fear or hostility towards the idea of more children of English-speaking families learning the Welsh language. The measures that we are pursuing in this sphere will prove to be important.

I note that the Welsh Language Board has been offered more than £250,000 to undertake the tasks that I have set it. That is the amount of money that it suggested that it would need in the coming year for the tasks that it will be taking on. In that area too, therefore, considerable progress is being made.

I wish to consider next the provisions that have been made and the legislation that has been passed in relation to housing. As yet, neither local authorities nor the people of Wales have recognised the radical change that is taking place and the way in which it can lead to considerably greater resources going towards improving the housing stock in Wales. The new housing improvement grants which will come into force in 1990 will be of particular benefit to Welsh householders and will enable us to target resources to those in greatest need.

For the first time, there will be a mandatory grant to enable dwellings to meet a new and more objective fitness standard. Discretionary assistance will be available to improve properties beyond that to a new target standard. Our test of resources will ensure that those in the greatest need receive the highest level of assistance, and for the first time grants of up to 100 per cent. of the cost of the works will be available. For example, a pensioner couple with an income of £90 per week will receive 100 per cent. assistance by way of grant. A married man with two children and earnings of £6,000 will also receive 100 per cent. improvement grant.

Considering the position and nature of the housing stock in Wales, the nature of the people of pension age and the fact that there has been a massive programme of housing improvement in Wales—in the last 10 years it was far greater than anything that had previously taken place—this new mechanism, by which throughout the United Kingdom a great deal of the money will go to those on lower incomes with the worst housing, will result in a considerable transformation of the scene in Wales. I hope that local authorities and others concerned will examine carefully how to take full advantage of the scheme when it is introduced in 1990.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** The Cynon valley has the highest percentage of unfit housing in Wales, and more than half the privately owned houses are unfit for human habitation. will the right hon. Gentleman estimate how long it will take the Cynon valley to put right its unfit housing under the programme that he has been describing?

**Mr. Walker:** I cannot think of any part of the United Kingdom that will benefit more from this scheme than the Cynon valley, because, as the hon. Lady says, there are many people on low incomes and a large number of old houses. Never, under any Government of any complexion, has there been a mandatory right to 100 per cent. grant for people in that position. I hope that the hon. Lady's local authority will examine in detail exactly how it can take advantage of the scheme. The speed with which advantage is taken of the scheme is important in terms of planning, because Wales has experience of poor workmanship in house improvements. As the scheme will not come in until 1990, that is a good period for local authorities to examine, survey and decide how to meet the mandatory requirement on them to deal with the problem. For areas such as that represented by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), this will be an important and radical measure.

I come now to some controversial areas in terms of party politics. Before the White Paper on health is implemented, there will be plenty of time for dialogue and suggestions. I hope that we shall debate the White Paper in the Welsh Grand Committee, when I shall be interested to hear the views of hon. Members. As one of the small number of Cabinet Ministers who were originally involved in the drafting of that White Paper, I give a categorical assurance that there has never been any motivation that it should be a means of privatising the National Health Service. I believe that it is absolutely vital to keep the NHS and to manage it well.

I hope that, when people examine the White Paper—as I had to examine it in terms of drafting—they will bear in mind the importance of deciding what levels of quality to set for the management of the NHS. Irrespective of the complexion of the Government in power, that is a very real problem. By considering the quality of management, the manner of its recruitment, the amount that it is paid and the diverse nature of the skills required, we wish to improve the quality of delivery, whatever total Government expenditure is put into the NHS.

I am eager and willing to look at ways to achieve that improvement. For example, would there be advantage in having more managerial power at hospital level rather than at district authority level? If that were to be done, it would have to be on the basis that management had all the obligations to carry out all the services that were needed in the locality served by that hospital. Not only would there have to be a management structure by which that would continue to be done, but we would have to monitor the situation to ensure that it was being done after the change had taken place.

There are many issues in the White Paper, some controversial and others not, but they are all important, considering the considerable resources that are being spent on health. In what I might call the Welsh passage in the White Paper, we can see that in Wales perhaps more than in most parts of the United Kingdom there is considerable scope for improving the services to see that the lifestyle of the people, the prevention of illness and health care is improved. We are examining proposals on those matters and I hope that they will come forward in the coming year.

**Mr. Ted Rowlands** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Welsh Office does not appear to have produced working papers on the Welsh section of the White Paper. Will the

right hon. Gentleman say more, for example, about the so-called treatment centres? I cannot discover any information to flesh out what is said about those centres.

**Mr. Walker:** On most issues we shall be issuing papers similar to those for England, and of course those principles will apply. I think that they are to go out this week. Thereafter, we shall issue papers on specific Welsh proposals. There will be plenty of time for discussion and I am anxious to hear the views of hon. Members in all parts of the House.

I recognise the party political differences on water and electricity privatisation. When those proposals have been implemented and are fully in operation they will have to be examined by the people of Wales. Prior to vesting date, many issues will arise about the form of privatisation, the way in which the shares are placed and the use of land holdings. I am happy for those two proposals to be examined on their merits when they are in operation.

I should like to say a few words about the general economy of Wales and deal with some regional matters. In regard to north Wales, I have asked my hon. Friend the Minister of State to examine the implications of the completion of the A55. He will be meeting local authorities and will welcome the views of Members of Parliament representing north Wales and other areas. Currently, the movement of inward investment in north Wales is very encouraging. A whole range of potential planning applications are under consideration. Obviously, I cannot comment on them, because any appeals will come to me.

There is no doubt that there is enormous interest in development along the A55 and enormous potential for tourism. We have to examine carefully ways to attract to mid-Wales, west Wales and north Wales businesses and interests in which the geographical location is no longer of any great importance. Due to the nature of telecommunications and monocommunications for a whole range of service industries there is no disadvantage in being in a place that is not on the main routes but is very attractive. I want to persuade local authorities along the A55 to take a postive approach to planning and not merely react to applications that are put in. They have to make clear which areas they would like to see developed and the type of development that they would prefer.

I understand the fear that development will damage Welsh language and culture, but nothing has been more damaging to the language than the lack of economic development, which has led Welsh-speaking people to move away. If economic development means firms and managers coming from outside, one has to examine the education system and ensure that the Welsh language is preserved, but one also has to consider the enormous advantage of active economic development. In the coming months, therefore—before the summer recess, I hope—the potential of the A55 to north Wales will be examined.

The letting of factory units in mid-Wales during the past 12 months has been quite staggering, and way beyond what was predicted. For that reason, we have given the go-ahead to further investment programmes. Some further units are under construction and some are to be built in the coming year. If we consider the scale of population concerned there are considerable advantages in making such efforts.

In regard to south Wales, in the long-term communications are terribly important. The completion of the second Severn bridge is also of considerable importance. I am delighted that the firms to which the tender documents are being sent were announced yesterday. We have given them a very short time in which to put in their tenders and I hope that shortly afterwards we shall be able to make decisions and proceed quickly with the building of the new bridge. Likewise, an improvement of the railway services is extremely important to south Wales and will take place on a considerable scale.

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): What discussion has the Secretary of State had with British Rail and other interests in the railway sector? Has he considered a direct rail link through the Channel tunnel to European capitals for passengers and freight? It is totally unacceptable for such a link to go through London, as it would cause complete chaos.

**Mr. Walker:** I have had talks with the chairman of British Rail and with the chairman of the Channel tunnel company about that. British Rail has a statutory requirement to produce a basic plan for building an infrastructure fitting into the Channel tunnel during this calendar year and it is working on that. I have relayed to British Rail the importance of good freight and passenger services.

In regard to freight, the important thing is not necessarily the direct line to the Channel tunnel, but where, how and how speedily the carriages are assembled and how quickly they go through the Channel tunnel. In various parts of Wales, we have to create very good modern freight terminals in which carriages can be assembled and made ready to move as whole trains or to link up with other trains to go through the Channel tunnel. We are considering those issues in great detail with a view to creating an extremely good service.

We should remember, however, that 82 per cent. of all freight traffic to Europe will go by means other than the Channel tunnel. Everyone is becoming obsessed with the Channel tunnel, which will convey a very important 18 per cent. of the freight, instead of concentrating on improving communications for the other 82 per cent. of freight from the United Kingdom to Europe. There is considerable potential for south Wales in a possible link with Portugal and Spain through Milford Haven docks. Although the docks have been built, road improvements would be needed. There is considerable potential for getting a considerable amount of United Kingdom freight to Spain, Portugal and Ireland by that route.

**Mr. Roy Hughes** (Newport, East): Before the Secretary of State leaves the subject of railway links, will he confirm that British Rail has been considering the possibility of reopening the Severn tunnel junction which was closed —in my view, ill advisedly—only two years ago? Will he also say something about railway halts in Gwent? There is certainly a clamour for one in Magor, which is developing fast. Can the Secretary of State give any assistance to Gwent county council as it seems that British Rail is asking for an exorbitant amount of money to provide that halt?

**Mr. Walker:** I have not discussed either of those matters with British Rail. I have heard nothing from British Rail about those issues, but I shall look into them.

We must consider a number of issues concerning south Wales. Newport and Cardiff enjoy a great deal of inward investment, including the big Ford investment. I believe

*[Mr. Walker]*

that the area surrounding Swansea also has considerable potential. The WDA factory programme announced today suggests a specific programme, and a number of local authorities around Swansea bay have formed a consortium, including a number of places currently confronted with considerable difficulties, such as Llanelli. I hope that there can be a range of promotional activities and factory building which would greatly benefit areas further west along the M4 motorway.

In regard to the economy, the WDA factory building programme announced today is on a considerable scale. I shall not bore the House with the details other than to say that they are a considerable increase on anything that has taken place before. However, I shall say a few words about an important issue to Wales—the future of inward investment. Recently, the Select Committee examined inward investment and made a range of proposals. There is no doubt that inward investment into Wales in recent years has been on a considerable scale and has proved a great success.

In the past year, inward investment has broken all records in terms of forward investment. Even excluding Ford, it breaks all records for inward investment. We are enjoying a big proportion of the inward investment in the United Kingdom. We have an attractive package of measures, thanks to the selective assistance and the Welsh Development Authority. The most important and attractive ingredient is the fact that we have gained a good reputation in labour relations and productivity.

I believe, however, that our drive for inward investment must be even more professional in the immediate future than in the past. We have had colossal benefit from both investment and jobs, each of which has risen year by year on a considerable scale.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** Does the Secretary of State agree that the quality of the inward investment is important, that a number of the jobs that have been created in Wales recently are low paid and part time, that current average male earnings in Wales are the lowest of any region in Britain, and that the position of women is even worse? Is there not a possibility that people are exchanging poverty-line benefits for poverty-line wages?

**Mr. Walker:** That is a very bad remark to make about the quality of inward investment. It creates the impression both at home and abroad that the only thing coming to us is low quality investment. Does the hon. Lady think that the Ford investment is low quality or that some of the investment in the chemical and electronic industries is of low quality? As for average male full-time earnings, in two of the Glamorgan county council areas they are higher than in the west and east midlands at present. The image that the hon. Lady constantly wishes to depict of low earnings and unskilled people is just not true. I ask her to go down the list of inward investments over the past two years. How can she suggest that they are of lousy quality? They are very high-quality investments, bringing a new range of activities and considerable skills to the Welsh economy. I warmly welcome them and hope that they will continue to be of such high quality.

One of the important new injections into the Welsh economy in investment is financial services. These are going on now on a considerable scale. In the recent past, the Trustee Savings bank has brought 2,000 jobs to Newport. There has also been investment by the National Provident institution, a major French bank, Rothschild's, and the expansion of Lloyd's bank in Swansea. We also have a whole range of small firms expanding their staff and their activities. Over the past eight years, 20,000 additional jobs have been created in financial services in Wales. Nobody would have predicted that rise such a short time ago. I am glad that it is accelerating, and I am glad that the Cardiff bay development will add to it. It is something that will benefit the whole of Wales.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** It is interesting to hear the Secretary of State refer to 20,000 extra jobs in financial services in the past eight years. He must realise that in the past 10 years we have seen a reduction of 153,000 full-time jobs in Wales. When does he expect us to get back to the levels of employment that existed when Labour was in power?

**Mr. Walker:** I suggest that if the hon. Gentleman waits for the forthcoming figures he will be pleasantly surprised. He may, when he sees them, say that this is due to the very small sample that was taken, and that may well be true, but all I can say is that in Wales we have the remarkable fact that since its peak in May 1986 unemployment has dropped by 62,000 despite the fact that in that period we lost 10,000 more jobs in coal and steel. Financial services are a very important part of the economy.

The Select Committee said that it did not like the title of WINvest, and that it should be replaced or altered. I accept that recommendation, as I do not think that it is a good name.

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): How about "Walkervest"?

**Mr. Walker:** That might be much better. If it comes about, I shall cite the hon. Gentleman as the proposer.

We see, therefore, that Wales is experiencing a substantial fall in unemployment, has an enormous flow of inward investment and has the biggest factory building programme for its size anywhere in the United Kingdom and perhaps anywhere in Europe. The diversity and number of new jobs is increasing and new training is being carried out on a considerable scale. The combination of all these factors is transforming the Welsh economy. I believe that the people of Wales recognise that this transformation is taking place and that it is very much to the benefit of future generations in Wales.

5.24 pm

**Mr. Barry Jones** (Alyn and Deeside): It was interesting to hear the Secretary of State refer to inward investment and to a record building programme. Some of us on the Opposition Benches thought that the really big record was his output of press releases during the past year: they have rained down on Wales thick and fast.

I had hoped to hear in the right hon. Gentleman's assessment of the economy how he saw the impact upon small and medium-sized businesses in Wales of a possible further rise in interest rates. As regards inward investment, I had hoped to hear some sort of statement on the Toyota project. But he did not mention them. I would use the word "sanguine" to describe his speech, even "over-sanguine", and as a corrective I will offer a reference to the report by the Low Pay Unit in today's *Western Mail*, which says that:

"the divide between Wales and the south-east of England is now greater than it was a year ago."

According to the *Western Mail*,

"The report argues that the situation has worsened since the loss of relatively well-paid, male-dominated jobs in the Welsh coal and steel industries in the early 1980s. Low pay is also common in rural Wales."

It makes the serious statement:

"Average earnings for men are lower in Wales than in any other region of Britain".

More facts as an antidote to an over-sanguine speech. In Clwyd male unemployment is 12·8 per cent., in Dyfed 14·8 per cent., in Gwent 14·2 per cent., in Gwynedd 17·1 per cent., in Mid-Glamorgan as high as 17·3 per cent.; South Glamorgan has 12,459 unemployed men and some 4,200 unemployed women, and West Glamorgan has 14·5 per cent. male unemployed. These are very serious figures. The right hon. Gentleman's approach today took no account of the very large-scale unemployment that still exists throughout Wales today. One of the disadvantages that he labours under is that his Prime Minister, early in the 1980s at a Conservative conference in Swansea, actually said that the unemployed of Wales should travel to England to find work.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to two late colleagues of ours. Sir Raymond Gower was regarded by all of us as a very personable man and a very gentlemanly person—a very nice man. Nobody would deny that he was a House of Commons man. None of us ever heard from those Benches any harsh or personal statements that were offensive. In the Tea Room he was a pleasure to talk to. He had a great deal of humour; he used to understate matters. In the Welsh Grand Committee, Raymond Gower was always very loyal to his Ministers, and he displayed a great deal of insight into the politics of Wales. I rather think that, over the years and behind the scenes, he gave Ministers a lot of good advice. Nobody can take from him his superb constituency work. He was probably one of the finest ever constituency Members. Nobody could say that Raymond Gower had other than tremendous personal and loyal support from Lady Gower. Our proceedings will be the poorer for his death.

In passing, I draw attention to the pressure in modern politics throughout Wales. I remember Mike Roberts, Alec Jones, Brynmor John and Euan Evans. We can all draw some conclusions from the passing of these colleagues.

Having spoken about late colleagues, I should now like to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) who had an exceptionally warm welcome today. He fought a fine campaign and is no stranger to us. He is a considerable broadcaster and his by-election victory is a watershed in this Parliament. I enjoyed listening to all his speeches in the campaign, and I especially like his identification with and loyalty to his own industry of mining. I was impressed by his love of the Welsh landscape and know that he will do his best in the House to guard it. He spoke up strongly for the under-privileged in his constituency—those on low wages and people who are badly housed. When my hon. Friend speaks in the House, some of these issues may come forward.

I was disappointed in the Secretary of State's response to the loss of jobs in the steel industry. In Trostre, Velindre, Brynawel, Ebbw Vale and Shotton, there have been heavy job reductions, over 1,000. Those were hi-tech, full-time, first-rate male jobs in manufacturing, and the economy cannot afford such job losses. I emphasise our great regret at the lack of consultation. It seems that, once the steel industry was privatised, the board was able to act at will. I do not think that the Secretary of State lifted a finger to help. I regret that, because we have lost some of the best jobs in Wales.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will say something about the tinplate industry in Wales as we go towards 1992. Our steel workers who suffered job losses are getting a poor repayment for first-class productivity. They generated profits but have suffered a reduction in manning because there have been many redundancies over the years. The Secretary of State should take into account the strength of the industry. I do not want that strength to be dissipated now that the industry is privatised. I warn the Secretary of State that many steel workers in Wales fear that their jobs will go to contractors. I am informed by trusted and experienced trade union leaders that there is always a decline in the status of jobs provided by contractors. That decline is in health and safety, pensions, wages, holidays and other conditions that were hard won and jealously guarded over many years.

I should now like to turn to the south Wales coalfield. There is now a revue of the Cynheidre and Marine collieries in which about 1,500 jobs are being looked at and about 500 jobs are under review elsewhere in the coalfield. The loss of 2,000 colliery jobs would be serious because coal and steel jobs are important. I have a hot question for the Secretary of State. Why is the Carway Fawr mine at a halt after the investment of £35 million? The miners believe that production has been halted so that when people are taken on again they will be non-NUM members.

We think that the supposedly moderate face of British Coal in south Wales is a blind. The south Wales NUM is noted for its good day-to-day industrial relations. We have every reason to believe that British Coal is acting provocatively and, arguably, wanting disputes. I should like the Minister to refute that. He should meet the chairman of British Coal and the area director for south Wales and raise these matters because they are of great importance to the coalfield.

I spoke about great pressure on miners. They are somewhat bitter because it seems that the productivity goalposts are being moved. They are also worried about the import of anthracite from China and there is apprehension about the effect on the south Wales coalfield of electricity privatisation. Because of the importation of anthracite our production centres are being closed. The Minister should intervene, not step aside and ignore the worries in the coal industry.

When we consider the potential loss of 2,000 coal jobs and 1,000 steel jobs, we see that even if the Toyota project were to come to Wales, the jobs that it would provide would be negatived. We could put it another way and say that, to replace the steel jobs soon to be lost in Wales, we would need several more of the magnificent Ford Bridgend investment projects. That shows that the matter is serious.

Interest rate levels have prompted warnings from the business community in Wales. A recent survey by Cardiff chamber of commerce showed that high interest rates are an increasing headache for businesses in south Wales. We have had a warning from the director of the CBI in Wales, Mr. Ian Kelsall, that sustained high interest rates will lead to a decline in investment. I was disappointed that the Minister did not address himself to the problem of high interest rates in relation to industry in Wales. He did not

*[Mr. Barry Jones]*

address himself to the continuing impact of the balance of payments crisis or to the effect on businesses of likely increases in the cost of water, electricity and gas. He did not speak about inflation, which may well hit 8 per cent. before long.

The Secretary of State and I both know that the Budget surplus is estimated at about £10 billion. Will he use the authority and influence of his Department to ensure that the Severn bridge tolls are not increased? We should like to hear about the date on which it is intended to start the second crossing. We are worried by recent statements by the Minister for Public Transport, because it seems from reading reports of what he has said that he is not prepared in any way to say that the second crossing is a certainty. We expect the Secretary of State and his Ministers to fight hard for the earliest possible starting date. Given the size of the Budget surplus, there is no reason why the Department of Transport should not seriously consider electrifying the Crewe-Holyhead railway line.

We should have a guarantee of major increases in funds to tackle the housing crisis. The Secretary of State forgot to tell us that more than 4,500 people are homeless in the Principality, according to a recent answer to a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman). We should like the Minister to press for an increase in child benefit and for more funds for the National Health Service, with the aim of mounting a meaningful attack on waiting lists and financing a genuine programme of preventive medicine in Wales.

The right hon. Gentleman should devise schemes to assist exporting industries in Wales. Something should be done about bringing in lower interest rates. On these Benches we say no to a free market; we know, and the right hon. Gentleman knows, that Wales needs public investment, intervention and more and more funds.

While I and my right hon. and hon. Friends have criticised various legislative proposals that have come before the House in recent months, we need legislation which the Government have not brought forward. There was no mention in the Queen's Speech of a measure to make an attack on environmental pollution. Yet in Wales last year the infamous poison ship, the Karin B, wanted to dock at Neath. In my constituency poisoned soil has been dumped near houses, having been brought to Mostyn dock from Rotterdam. The Dutch did not want it; we in Wales had to receive it.

In the borough of Torfaen, Rechem has an infamous smoke stack. Its outpourings frighten the local population. My hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) is fighting hard for a public inquiry. We should have a public inquiry too about continuing pollution of the river Dee, from which water is extracted for domestic use. There have been far too many pollution incidents on the river. The right hon. Gentleman surely saw the *Daily Post* this week where it is reported that the North West water authority still intends to dump raw sewage in Liverpool bay. Much of that deposit ends up in the north Wales area to the detriment of our beaches and our tourist industry. Public opinion demands ministerial intervention in the near future.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of pollution, will he please not forget probably the worst industrial polluter left in Britain, the phurnacite plant in Abercwmboi in my constituency? Does he agree that if that plant were in the south-east of England it would have been shut long ago?

**Mr. Jones:** I agree with my hon. Friend. It would be instructive if the right hon. Gentleman, in the course of his many visits to Wales, were to go with my hon. Friend to see for himself what it is like.

More Welsh people should be involved in decisions affecting the environment. Above all, we want an adequate inspectorate. We have only one inspector responsible for poisons for all of Wales, yet the importation of foreign poisonous waste is a burgeoning industry. There has been a 13 per cent. increase in carbon monoxide from cars in the past 10 years. Expenditure on research into the environment has been cut by 17 per cent., yet there has been a tenfold increase in the importation of hazardous waste since the Government came to office. We want legislation, and we want the right hon. Gentleman to speak up for us on this matter.

Much of what the right hon. Gentleman said today related to the valleys initiative. We have a mandate to make our views known. The initiative has a noble aim if it is properly funded, strategic and not tactical, long term rather than short term, and if it is free of any taint of a confidence trick or of the technique of the sting. The right hon. Gentleman made an error last week. Two days before the Pontypridd by-election, he could not resist the temptation to meet some of his cronies and make a speech to them, instead of making a statement to the House on the Monday. I am sure that his civil servants advised him against doing that.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** May I say that there was no protest by civil servants? The speech was agreed and announced in September 1988 before there was any knowledge that there was to be a by-election.

**Mr. Jones:** So it was just a coincidence that the right hon. Gentleman went to meet his cronies two days before the Pontypridd by-election. His civil servants did not protest. They advised him not to do what he did.

**Mr. Walker:** I had no advice from any civil servant on that. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that civil servants gave me advice which they did not. I hope that he will withdraw that.

**Mr. Jones:** The right hon. Gentleman is stung. He is embarrassed. He knows that he made a monumental error of judgment. By his demeanour during his intervention, all of us on these Benches know that he has virtually made an apology. I respond to the right hon. Gentleman in the same spirit as he made his intervention.

My advice to the right hon. Gentleman is that he should not play around with the initiative for short-term gain. The councils in the valleys are good councils. They are well informed and responsible. Their reaction to the initiative has been reasoned. That is important for the whole programme. I want to give the right hon. Gentleman some advice. The areas outside the valleys are getting nervous. He has to do something about them. Yesterday in the *Western Mail* we had the headline:

"Urban aid package share out is attacked".

The article said:

"Dyfed County Council yesterday bitterly attacked its share of Wales's £20,600,000 urban aid package. The county's

share, of only £48,000, was described by civic chiefs as bitterly disappointing, with West Wales being sacrificed at the altar of the Valleys Initiative."

The right hon. Gentleman has work to do; he must tell areas outside the valleys that he is not robbing Peter to pay Paul, as it were.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** The hon. Gentleman has quoted from yesterday's *Western Mail*. Has he seen today's issue with the headline:

"Investment in rural industries 'booming'"?

Underneath it says:

"West Wales is now witnessing a major rural investment boom."

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman should tell that to Dyfed county council.

**Mr. Allan Rogers** (Rhondda): The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) has quoted the *Western Mail* as a definitive newspaper. During the recent by-election it was grotesque that the *Western Mail* and the *South Wales Echo* were taken over by the Welsh Office. At one stage we wondered whether the cost of their publication would be included in the Conservative candidate's election expenses.

**Mr. Jones:** It is "Walkervest" and "Walker Mail". That is in keeping with that newspaper over generations.

The £8 million for housing envelope schemes is welcome, but that amount could be used entirely by but one local authority in the valley areas.

Valley councils fear a stop-go policy on derelict land clearance schemes. A consistently high provision of cash is necessary, not just in one or two years. What specific extra funds will be given to deal with the awesome problems posed by our aging population in the years ahead? If the right hon. Gentleman has not thought about that, he had better start doing so in the context of the initiative.

Will the Secretary of State meet the valley communities to hear their response? Will he take the time to hear their views? Will he meet the local authorities with his junior Ministers, not just once but several times in the years ahead? The three-year programme is welcome, but if the initiative is to get off the ground it must run for at least eight years because continuity is all important.

Surely the urban programme funding should be increased significantly. The valley councils clearly believe that the initiative can prosper only as a rolling programme. The Secretary of State instances 25,000 to 30,000 jobs in three years. What private enterprises will put their money into the valleys and who will pay for the infrastructure to facilitate such an advance?

Regional development grants are out, but the Secretary of State has included them in his package, having the cheek to talk of a massive increase in applications. The massive increase was because regional development grant was to be phased out within three months. That is typical of the right hon. Gentleman. Local authorities do not think that regional selective assistance will be sufficient to fill the gap that will be created by the loss of regional development grants.

In a document published by the valley councils, they say:

"It was surely deceptive to draw attention to a 'massive increase in applications', when the main reason for such an increase was the three months period given for firms to apply for RDG before it was removed. Obviously this ultimatum generated applications from firms who wished to protect their position, thereby beating the deadline".

The councils use the word "deceptive", and it is that sort of approach that I want to warn the Secretary of State against. The initiative must work. The programme must be carried forward.

The valley councils fear that their economic efforts will be secondary to those on the coastal plain. The Secretary of State must give some assurances on that. The Government's financial cuts have left valley road maintenance in a scandalous state. They say that the fabric of their roads may disintegrate entirely. Will the right hon. Gentleman make cash available to avoid that? Where are the proposals to upgrade the present antiquated three-lane sections of the heads of the valleys road? Surely upgrading that road is of fundamental importance to a strategy for the region. That is of prime importance, but the right hon. Gentleman did not refer to it.

The figures that the Secretary of State has given for housing are not enough. The total repair bill for the valleys is in excess of £300 million. The employment and financial status of many home owners is disturbing. That is the only word to use. A rolling programme for housing is necessary.

Let me remind the Secretary of State that the poll tax would be a devastating blow to his own initiative. How can his initiative revitalise the valleys when the burden of the poll tax will fall disproportionately on the valleys? The right hon. Gentleman's support of the poll tax undermines the very programme that he has been extolling to the House. Again, that is typical of the right hon. Gentleman. We want some answers from him on that issue. If he does not make money available over and above the normal provision, his initiative will fail.

It is daft for the right hon. Gentleman to include the improvement of hotels and pubs. Many brewery refurbishments were completed before the valleys initiative was announced. That has caused some hilarity in the valleys at the right hon. Gentleman's expense.

I have read the impressive response of the Committee of Welsh District Councils to the valleys initiative. I know that the Secretary of State has read it and I hope that he will meet members of that committee.

I support the idea of the valleys initiative. Much needs to be done to create jobs, to provide good housing, better health and better education and to improve the quality of the environment in the valleys. But the Secretary of State is an expert at gift wrapping. The paper is nice and shiny. The bow is beautifully tied. But when the right hon. Gentleman's parcels are unwrapped there is not much in them. We shall have to look carefully at his statements and examine them in detail.

The Secretary of State is willing to take the credit for the valleys initiative—he went to Merthyr to get it—but, he must share responsibility for the Government's policies and their impact on the valleys. The Opposition know that the Government's economic policy is at odds with the aim of the valleys initiative. Until the right hon. Gentleman can work that out we have a serious problem.

The Electricity Bill guarantees electricity for our Welsh people, but at a much higher price. It will have a serious impact upon the south Wales coalfield. It will encourage a flood of cheap imported coal and there is no guarantee in the Bill of security of supply in the mid-1990s. It is defective legislation.

The Local Government and Housing Bill continues Her Majesty's Government's attack upon local government in Wales. It guarantees large increases in council house rents.

*[Mr. Jones]*

Those rent increases that the Government will force upon council house tenants are likely in turn to force tenants to buy their homes. In case the Secretary of State has not read it, I can tell him that his name is on it.

The Secretary of State's name also appears on the Education Reform Bill which has since been enacted. That Act goes overboard on testing. It puts a great deal of pressure on the primary school pupil and it ignores the current demoralisation of the teaching force and the need for money for staff in order to meet the demands that the right hon. Gentleman and the Secretary of State for Education and Science are making through the curriculum. Worse, it is potentially divisive.

Worse—if it can be worse—is the Water Bill. If ever there was one, here is an unwanted, friendless Bill. Its name could be "the great Welsh land sale". When last were some 85,000 acres of beautiful Welsh landscape put under the hammer? The Bill there virtually guarantees that the ownership of our own Welsh water authority will slide into the hands—the profit-hungry hands—of City institutions. That is to be the fate of the Welsh water authority. In respect of this Bill, the Secretary of State has been as weak as water. His name is on it.

Why has no Welsh national rivers authority been mooted? My right hon. and hon. Friends and I say to the Secretary of State that he should have had Wales exempted from this Bill. Without a doubt, it is a stain on his reputation. The Secretary of State for the Environment —the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley)—bested the Secretary of State for Wales in Cabinet. The Secretary of State for the Environment has overturned the right hon. Gentleman's own water reorganisation of 1973. If ever there was a departmental humiliation, this measure is it. However much the right hon. Gentleman may squirm, he knows that the Bill is a major defeat for him and his Department, yet he had the recklessness to put his name to it. It guarantees high costs, but does not declare a war on pollution or guarantee quality water, yet the right hon. Gentleman failed to have Wales exempted from it.

Then there is the Local Government Finance Act 1988. I have to tell the right hon. Gentleman that the poll tax goes against the Welsh people's instinct for fair play. As if he did not know it, the poll tax will bear heavily on the larger, poorer families of Wales. Women, too, will lose out. When the full impact of the legislation is measured, it will be seen that our valleys curse the poll tax and curse the right hon. Gentleman who failed to have Wales exempted from it.

We have also the White Paper on the National Health Service reforms. Does not the right hon. Gentleman know that these reforms are unwanted by patients, by nurses, by doctors and by ancillaries? Does he not realise that the White Paper is a lost opportunity? It contains no substantial proposals about how to provide quality care for the elderly—just a proposal for private health insurance and private beds. How can the average pensioner afford private health insurance? The Prime Minister should explain, because, despite the Secretary of State's disclaimer today, and despite his soft words and his honeyed phrases, there remains in Wales the suspicion that the Health Service is to be prepared for privatisation. I remind the Secretary of State that Mr. Aneurin Bevan, the architect of the Health Service, drew his spirit from the people of Wales—and the pervading spirit was social justice. This White Paper goes in the opposite direction. It is another instance of an error of political judgment on the part of the right hon. Gentleman.

I understand that my own county health authority—Clwyd—condemned the overhaul of the National Health Service. It said that the health authorities that provide regional services—Merseyside, for example, offers cancer services to North Wales—have their costs reimbursed through extra Government funding, but that under the new arrangements they would charge for those patients they treat. Dr. David Jones, the general manager, said that between £5 million and £10 million would be needed. As recently as yesterday, the health authority voted, by nine votes to one, with one abstention, to reject the right hon. Gentleman's own White Paper. This measure is not needed by the people of Wales, and when the general election comes, and when there are further parliamentary by-elections, the right hon. Gentleman's party will be called severely to account. That I predict.

These measures—all of them—will be the means by which the right hon. Gentleman's party loses many, many votes in Wales, and, symbolically, I throw the book at him. He will deserve the criticism that he will get throughout the length and breadth of Wales for putting his name to measures that Wales does not want and does not deserve. He should know that he is putting very heavy burdens upon the backs of his hon. Friends who will present themselves to the Welsh people for re-election.

I firmly believe that the Prime Minister appointed the right hon. Gentleman as our Secretary of State by error. Perhaps she thought that his constituency—Worcester—was in Wales. These legislative measures will quicken the electoral decline of the Conservatives in Wales. The Education Reform Act, the Local Government and Housing Bill, the Electricity Bill, the proposed changes in the National Health Service, the poll tax and the privatisation of our water industry are against the grain of our nation's history, and I know that they will be rejected by the electorate. The Secretary of State for Wales, who so carelessly—indeed, cheefully—endorses them, will in the long run be found waiting by the Welsh people.

For all his skills of presentation, the right hon. Gentleman cannot hide the fact that he is politically the Prime Minister's messenger-boy. The most experienced member of the British Cabinet, and arguably the most able, is the Prime Minister's apologist for unjust, unwanted legislation in Wales. I remind him that at Prestatyn last year he was rash enough to say that he would make the political map of Wales blue. Well, he has got the blues now. Pontypridd gave him the answer. Hon. Members on this side reject the free market approach. We shall redouble our efforts, because we believe that the Conservatives are in decline. We look forward to the hustings, when our programme will point to victory and to social justice.

6.9 pm

**Sir Anthony Meyer** (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) reminds me of nothing so much as a small boy sitting on the edge of a canal bank, fishing aimlessly through the long afternoon with a bent pin, and coming up with nothing more than a few rusted tin cans.

I am very conscious that this slot in our debates was almost invariably filled by my good and close friend, and the friend, I believe, of every Welsh Member, Sir Raymond Gower. On a later occasion it will be my privilege to pay a fuller tribute to him, but at this point I must say that he had one quality in particular that I think we should all do well to emulate: he invariably gave his political opponents credit for sincerity and for good intentions. I will try, at any rate in this speech, to live up to his high standards in that respect.

After the Pontypridd by-election, which was caused by the untimely death of another much-loved and much-admired Welsh colleague, Brynmor John, and which has brought into this House a very distinguished new Member, whom we all eagerly look forward to hearing, if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, the Labour party, very understandably, is feeling rather pleased with itself. It can hardly be blamed for licking its lips over the prospects in Vale of Glamorgan, where the act of Raymond Gower will be a hard one to follow.

There were two fundamental reasons for the Pontypridd result. There is the natural disenchantment that comes after any Government have been in power for some time. The only surprise is that it took so long in coming. What is of more specific interest is to assess how far the mid-term unpopularity has been mitigated and aggravated by the Government's policies, particularly those affecting Wales. I intend to deal mainly with those policies but, before that, I must face another relevant issue.

During the by-election campaign the Labour party concentrated on attacking the value of the valleys initiative of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside did the same today. There was a lot of talk about hype from one Opposition Member and much derision over the paucity of visible results from the initiative. Fair play; that is all part of the rough and tumble of politics and I am sure that my right hon. Friend would be the last to complain. He knows the value of a sharp jab in the solar plexus. In trumpeting so loudly the scope and huge aims of his valleys initiative he was laying himself open to just such a jab, especially with a by-election coming when it did. No doubt there will be other such blows in Vale of Glamorgan.

However gleefully the Labour party exploits the contrast between my right hon. Friend's policies and the achievements shown to date, it knows two things well. First, the valleys initiative represents a major effort by one Minister, in a Government who are excessively addicted to market forces, to intervene purposively in the economy and to use the power of the state to unleash large-scale private investment. Secondly, it shows something else which offers an even sharper comment on its by-election tactics. My right hon. Friend, in this matter as in everything else that he has undertaken in his long and immensely distinguished public career, has always been conscious of the need for boosting morale. He knows that if he can create the impression that the valleys are about to enjoy a rebirth of activity, private investors, scenting a boom, will want to get in on the act. That, in its turn, will touch off other investors until the process of growth becomes self-stimulating.

I apologise for a brief attack of total recall, but I can remember the mood of dismay with which those of us in the British forces in this country in 1943 contemplated the prospect of making an opposed landing on the heavily fortified coast of northern France. I remember how, within a few weeks of his appointment as commander-in-chief, General Montgomery, speaking directly to all the troops under his command, had convinced us that the landing was not merely possible but something to look forward to with relish and cheerfulness. My right hon. Friend is perhaps too young to have come under Monty's spell, but he has some of his qualities—at any rate the electorate of Wales seems to think so.

A truly startling poll conducted by the *Western Mail* just before the by-election—if Opposition Members wish to dispute the validity of the poll, may I say that it predicted the result of the by-election with uncanny accuracy—showed that no less than 93 per cent. of Conservative voters who expressed an opinion said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was doing the best job among Welsh party leaders. That is perhaps not surprising. It showed that 73 per cent. of Liberals thought the same, and the cruellest blow of all for the Labour party was that half as many again of Labour voters approved of my right hon. Friend as approved of the Member for Alyn and Deeside. Almost every Welsh Member is prepared to admit in private that the Secretary of State is the best thing that has happened to Wales in many a long year, and his speech today was good evidence of that.

I come to the more controversial matter—the impact of the Government's policies on Wales. Without the substantial economic progress that has occurred under this Government, there would not have been the recovery from the painful process of industrial reconversion that was forced on Wales by the previous over-reliance on the older, heavier industries. There is no doubt that the Welsh economy is infinitely better placed to withstand any future blast than it was even 10 years ago. I am aware that there is plenty of room for discussion as to whether the social price of the conversion has been higher than it need have been or whether the fruits of the new-found prosperity have been shared out with tolerable fairness. However, the prosperity is indisputable, and I see unmistakable evidence of it throughout my constituency, most notably in Rhyl.

However, some of the Government's policies have exceptionally, and sometimes needlessly, damaged Welsh susceptibilities. There is the exclusive reliance on interest rates as a means of combating inflation, which is causing hardship and resentment among farmers and home buyers. There is the sheer lunacy of the poll tax, which will turn out to be at a higher level than we have been led to expect and will be far more expensive for local authorities to collect than the Government have allowed for. I withdraw none of the criticisms I have repeatedly directed at that daft idea. However, it is now the law and must be obeyed.

There is the privatisation of water, which is at present dragging its serpent path through Committee and making few friends on the way. I still find it as intensely and deservedly unpopular in Wales as it has ever been, and the news that the Government plan to spend £100 million telling us how splendid it is is hardly calculated to endear it to us any more.

There is the privatisation of electricity, which does not arouse the same hostility but which does not send the blood coursing through Welsh veins.

There is also the fundamental reform of the National Health Service, which is certainly necessary and well intentioned. However, it will be hard to make it acceptable unless the Government are seen, at the same time, to be making a massive additional injection of public funds into

*[Sir Anthony Meyer]*

the Health Service. That should be done in much the same way as they could more easily have secured acceptance for the changes in the social security system if they had not tried to combine those changes with limiting the growth in expenditure at the same time.

Of course, there have been the confrontations with the doctors, nurses, social workers, farmers, house buyers and, in their time, the teachers, miners, postal workers, civil servants, the BBC, all our EEC partners and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand—and now, as if that was not enough, the serried ranks of the lawyers. That is far from being an exhaustive catalogue. It is all seen by many people in Wales as part of the syndrome, once described by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), of the Prime Minister being unable to see a British institution without wanting to hit it with her handbag.

It is not as if there was any great love in Wales—any more than anywhere else in the United Kingdom—for those institutions. However, there is a growing feeling that enough is enough and that privatisation is in danger of becoming an obsession of the sort more usually associated with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and Mr. Enoch Powell. It is more urgent to improve public services than to pull them up by the roots.

More and more people in my constituency, including many of my Conservative supporters, wish that the Government would stop and let us catch our breath instead of turning everything upside down for the sake of it. Also, they are not as convinced as they might be of the overwhelming merits of the reforms to date. They have been told time and again that the Department of the Environment has sorted out local government. However, they find that, despite all the talk about curbing local council extravagance, Clwyd county council is making a gigantic increase this year in its rate precept while, at the same time, failing to carry out its full responsibilities in education or social services. They ask how that can be when Clwyd had a generous rate support grant settlement and the new machinery is supposed to be in place to stop such extravagance. However, the intolerably large increases go on just the same. What will Ministers do about it? What can they do about it?

The people have been told, rightly, how much the Government have done for the police, where their record is miles better than that of their predecessors. But they read also that the north Wales police have asked for 30 extra posts and have been allotted six, and at the same time they read of more and more loutish riots in hitherto peaceful villages.

Although we have the best Home Secretary that I can recall, the Government are not seen to be winning the battle against crime or disorder. It would be dishonest to pretend that a large increase in police resources would turn the tide. However, the impression which is now widely prevalent in north Wales, that the Government are refusing the increase in manpower for which the police are asking—an increase which is needed if they are to cope with imported hooliganism in seaside resorts and the home-grown variety in the villages without totally depriving the countryside of any cover—reinforces the growing sense of unease that the Government are getting some of their priorities wrong. I ask the Secretary of State to convey to the Home Secretary the deep disquiet that is felt throughout north Wales on this matter.

It is not just in the matter of law and order that there is growing concern about the Government's priorities. There certainly was a need to diminish the power of the state, to give the individual more room to breathe and to assert himself over mighty corporations. The new freedom has brought results that benefit the whole community, but there are things that can be better done by collective action. I refer to public order, the protection of the environment, education, and health. People seem to sense that fact more vividly in Wales than in other parts of the United Kingdom. That feeling will have to grow and deepen before it constitutes any real threat to the Government at the next election—although, no doubt, it will fuel many a by-election humiliation. As long as divisions in the centre and on the Left persist—and they will persist—there can be no effective challenge to Conservative supremacy. We Conservatives will continue to govern this country for a long time.

I do not know whether the ambitious projects that my right hon. Friend has launched, not just for the valleys but throughout Wales, will have shown enough results to enable our party substantially to increase its representation in the next Parliament. It certainly deserves to. What I do know is that a Conservative Government who rely for their power and authority solely on English seats are not the kind of Government whom I want in my country. I should find it hard to support policies that seem designed to produce such a result, and I have profound comfort in knowing that neither would my right hon. Friend or any of my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench.

6.22 pm

**Dr. Kim Howells** (Pontypridd): I echo the tributes that have already been paid to my distinguished predecessor, the late Brynmor John. As Under-Secretary of State for Defence, Minister of State in the Home Office, chief Opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland, defence, social security and agriculture, and simply as a decent human being, Brynmor John gained the respect and admiration of all whom came into contact with him. As a member of Labour's shadow Cabinet, he maintained a special interest in defence, community relations and Welsh affairs. He listed his chief interests as music and watching rugby.

During my by-election, his and my favourite club, Pontypridd, fought a hard and uncompromising duel with Llanelli. As I sat and watched the huge, force-fed Llanelli forwards manhandling our smaller, spirited Pontypridd pack, I thought of Brynmor and wondered what he would have made of such a spectacle. Would he, like me, have been reminded of the similarity between Llanelli's tactics and those of the majority of the Cabinet when they rudely trounced the former right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, beginning a train of events that resulted in a by-election in that constituency being held on the same day as that in Pontypridd? Would he, like me, have been struck by the similarities in the one-eyed press coverage given to both bloodbaths, with Pontypridd and the former right hon. and learned Member for Richmond portrayed as the guilty parties, leaving Llanelli to pour its players into the present Welsh national side and the Prime Minister to retain her grip on the national economy?

Given the less than distinguished record of the current Welsh rugby team and the Government's performance in controlling inflation and their balance of payments deficit, Brynmor John would have smiled and whispered something about how it is better to lose a short battle but win the war. If ever the Welsh rugby establishment or the Prime Minister care to venture into the Pontypridd constituency, there will be a special welcome there. It may take some getting used to, but it may also help them on their way to wherever they plan to retire. The Pontypridd constituency is modern Wales in microcosm. I am far from certain that the Welsh rugby establishment or the Prime Minister has any notion of what that means.

Oh, they have their methods for gauging the mood of the Welsh nation. The rugby bosses seem to favour the sacrifice of a goat at midnight so that they can judge the composition of the national squad from reading the carcase's entrails. The Prime Minister employs as her own diviner in Wales the right hon. Gentleman from the English marches who continues to chant, "Initiative, initiative," as though he believes that, at a stroke, the very word will eradicate all the economic and social problems that his Government claimed to have cleared up five years ago.

My constituents bear little malice towards those who, because of accident of birth, walk in ignorance of the true nature of modern Wales. They have almost certainly forgiven the candidate for the Social and Liberal Democrats, for example, who, in the recent by-election, referred to Pontypridd as a black hole. They did not forgive him quickly enough to prevent him from losing his deposit, but never mind. Pontypridd's intrinsic sense of fair play ensured that the SDP candidate lost his deposit as well.

As I said, the constituency is modern Wales in microcosm. Its northern extremities embrace the old heart of Wales's coal industry. In the south, it is fringed by the M4 corridor of newer, lighter industries, and to the east and west by constituencies which, like Pontypridd, have experienced considerable changes of character since the second world war. Evidence of those changes is spread evenly across the Pontypridd constituency. There has been around its southern communities a welcome expansion of new industries.

At the northern and eastern ends of the constituency the evidence of change is less encouraging. For example, the Tonyrefail community was proud of its colliery—Coedely—until it was closed under the auspices of the Conservative Government. Similarly, if we travel south and east, we find the community of Beddau, where the Cwm colliery was located. That colliery employed 1,000 men until it was closed under the auspices of the Conservative Government. Travel south and east and we find the community of Nantgarw, which lost its colliery at the same time as Beddau lost the Cwm colliery.

There is no let-up to such closures. Just an hour ago I heard directly from British Coal that it has lodged the strongest possible public complaint at news of the Central Electrical Generating Board's decision to import, via Newport docks, a test cargo of 30,000 tonnes of American coal for its Aberthaw B power station. British Coal is particularly upset at the news, because, as the Secretary of State knows only too well, it has invested heavily in the collieries which supply Aberthaw. British Coal has made it clear that that investment has resulted in an unprecedented increase in efficiency and productivity, and a perfectly adequate supply of low-cost fuel from its pits to Aberthaw.

I fail to see the sense in allowing the CEGB, which is about to be hocked off to private enterprise, to destroy the good work of this investment just for the sake of making a fast buck on the international coal market. I deplore the prospect of my constituency's electricity supply depending for its fuel on sources beyond the boundaries of Wales. Although we in Pontypridd may have reservations about the price that we pay for our electricity, and even greater reservations about the lack of anti-pollution technology installed in power stations, we are glad that our electricity is generated from low-sulphur Welsh coal at the Aberthaw power station.

We are far from glad to note the Government's enthusiasm not merely for imported coal but for the construction of a nuclear pressurised water reactor at Hinkley Point, just 20 miles from the southern edge of my constituency. Although, no doubt, some of my constituents may enjoy the remarkable spectacle of the Secretary of State for Energy attempting to emulate Tony Curtis in that great old film "Trapeze" by performing the political equivalent of a triple somersault as he justifies the need to ring-fence the nuclear industry at the same time as he throws the rest of the power industry into the open market, many more of my constituents will be hoping and praying that the Secretary of State for Energy will find no equivalent of Burt Lancaster to catch him as he hurtles towards the temporary safety net of the Back Benches,, taking his poor nuclear policy with him.

The people of Pontypridd do not intend that their elected representative should remain silent on such issues, and nor shall I, as long as I manage to attract the attention of your fair and most reasonable eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

6.30 pm

**Mr. Gwilym Jones** (Cardiff, North): It is rare to have the privilege of following a maiden speech, especially in mid-term, as a result of a by-election. It is traditionai that maiden speeches are listened to without interruption and greeted with approval. I have no wish to depart from that tradition, although I do not do so merely out of tradition. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) is already a known face from his appearances on television. I was most interested to see in a recent television appearance that he has such diverse interests as jazz music and our own exciting proposals for redevelopment in south Cardiff. He now has the opportunity to be a known voice —or an even more known voice—as he has taken his place on the Opposition Benches.

I unhesitatingly offer the widest welcome to the hon. Gentleman personally because, whatever political differences any of us may have with each other, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is as sincere in representing his constituents as I and every other hon. Member try to be. Whatever our differences, we must try to remember that we are human beings as well as hon. Members and we must try to work together. The hon. Gentleman will know as well as any of us what a hard act he has in following the late Brynmor John. He was a loved and respected Member of Parliament. He was loved and respected in the House and as a neighbour, in that my constituency abuts the Pontypridd constituency. I know that Brynmor John was

*[Mr. Gwilym Jones]*

loved and respected in south Wales as well. I wish the hon. Member for Pontypridd well in his membership of the House, and I am sure that in our continuing debates we shall hear much more from him.

Another hard act to follow was the late Sir Raymond Gower. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) spoke admirably in his tribute to my late hon. Friend. He said that Sir Raymond Gower was arguably the finest constituency Member of Parliament for Wales that we have seen. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside never spoke truer words. I can subscribe to those words because for much of my life in south Wales I lived in the late Sir Raymond Gower's constituency. My first involvement in politics was in 1964, when I canvassed the area in which I lived on behalf of the then Conservative candidate, Sir Raymond Gower. Most recently, when I had the privilege to enter the House, Lisvane, where I live in south Wales, was in Raymond's constituency.

There has always been intense media coverage about what will happen after the loss of Sir Raymond Gower. It struck me that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made a most appropriate comment on Monday in delivering some form of rebuff to his counterpart, the leader of the Social and Liberal Democrats, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). He suggested that there was no great haste to be discussing the Vale of Glamorgan as the late Member for the Vale of Glamorgan was not even buried at that point. There have been unseemly moves in that direction, and I am afraid that the speculation about who may replace my hon. Friend continues.

Only last night the editorial in the *South Wales Echo* said that whoever was to be the new Conservative Member for Vale of Glamorgan had to be an outstanding Member of Parliament. Yet we do not know who will be the next Conservative candidate for the Vale of Glamorgan and we do not know when the by-election will be held. As the right hon. Member for Devonport said, there is plenty of time to speculate about that. When we have a new hon. Friend to join us on the Conservative Benches—if that is to be the outcome—I sincerely hope that, whatever qualities he has, we shall be able to say that he is another Sir Raymond Gower, who is truly fit to represent the Vale of Glamorgan which Raymond represented so well and for so long.

I do not want to fight the Pontypridd by-election again. I will admit to the hon. Member for Pontypridd that I went up there myself. At the end of Thursday night, when I was still going round the doors of Hawthorn in the cold rain, it went through my mind how marginal a constituency we were fighting there. But we can learn from Pontypridd. I refer again to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who called the result in Pontypridd a watershed. I find it interesting that he should describe it as a watershed because, as far as I can calculate, it was Labour's second worst result in Pontypridd at least since the end of the second world war.

I may be criticised by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who made a fascinating attack on his own Front Bench by strongly criticising the use of references to the *Western Mail*, just as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside was doing that. I suppose that I knew what he meant when I saw on the front page of last Tuesday's *Western Mail*:

"Thumbs up for PM and Walker."

The *Western Mail* was certainly not prophesying the result of the Pontypridd by-election in putting that headline on its front page, but there were some interesting points in the opinion polls to which the *Western Mail* article referred.

An issue that has been on our Welsh agenda and to which it is pertinent to refer in a Welsh day debate is the question of devolution, which most of us in Wales thought had been buried on this day 10 years ago, when the people of Wales voted overwhelmingly and convincingly for having no truck with the Labour Government's Welsh assembly. That was borne out by the opinion poll that was reported in last Tuesday's *Western Mail*. Excluding those who did not know or did not answer the question, 44 per cent. of the respondents said that they did not want devolution. Out of the supporters of the party that espouses devolution—the Welsh National party—a majority wanted devolution, but a not insignificant number of those who said that they were going to vote for the Welsh nationalists—23 per cent.—said that they were opposed to devolution.

**Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): To get the record straight, my party does not espouse devolution. Clearly the hon. Gentleman has not been reading the *Western Mail*.

**Mr. Jones:** I am somewhat surprised by that correction. The respondents to the *Western Mail* opinion poll would have felt that Plaid Cymru was espousing a form of devolution—the ultimate form of devolution. My understanding of the hon. Gentleman's policy is that he wants to see an independent Wales within the Common Market. To me, that is a form of devolution. I point out to the hon. Gentleman that, besides the 23 per cent. of his own supporters who say that they do not support devolution, a further 20 per cent. say that they do not know—and that is a total of 43 per cent. of those who claimed to support Plaid Cymru in the Pontypridd by-election.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) has already referred to another result from the opinion poll—the substantial approval rating for our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. He had a far higher approval rating than the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside or the leader of the Welsh nationalists, the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). I know that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy will join me in noting that that was a far far higher approval rating than that for the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), the leader of the Democrats in Wales.

**Mr. Allan Rogers:** When it comes to approval ratings and opinion polls, does the hon. Gentleman accept that the best opinion poll was the by-election result in Pontypridd because we attempted to make that election a referendum on the policies of the Secretary of State and the electors of Pontypridd gave them a firm thumbs down?

**Mr. Jones:** I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's contention is right——

**Mr. Rogers:** Count the votes.

**Mr. Jones:** Yes, I do count the votes, but I contend that my party did no worse in the Pontypridd by-election than the Labour party, because the Labour party regarded that

seat as its own but it got its second lowest ever result in a Pontypridd election since 1945. It was even worse than its 1987 result and was worsted only in the 1983 election.

When the approval ratings were broken down by the political allegiances of those questioned, 19 per cent. of Labour supporters preferred my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales while a mere 13 per cent. approved the actions of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who is my right hon. Friend's counterpart on the Opposition Front Bench.

Those questions and approval ratings were not confined to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to his opposite number because my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's approval rating was tested among the Pontypridd electors. She scored 34 per cent., which was significantly more than the leader of the Labour party. Indeed, out of those who said that they would vote Labour —we know that there were substantial numbers on Thursday—one in four preferred my right hon. Friend to the leader of the Labour party.

From all that I deduce—this is most relevant to our consideration of Welsh affairs—that there is still a form of traditional support for the Labour party in the valleys in Wales. However, that support is grudging and owes most to tradition. When the electors of the valleys of south Wales are asked specific questions about policies and the people who implement them, there is a far higher approval rating for my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales and for their Conservative policies than for the Opposition. On that evidence the by-election result is not a watershed. It is the death knell, or rather yet another death knell, for the Labour party in Wales and underlines the aim of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to turn the map of Wales blue.

What else can we learn from that result, and what else has happened in this past year? I have learnt that we have a new spokesman on the Labour Front Bench and that he displays a more positive approach than his predecessor. Indeed, he referred positively to the valleys initiative this afternoon. I wonder how much the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside regretted comments in the press this week that, under the leadership of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who unfortunately is temporarily not in her place, a study has been set up, comprising Labour party researchers, which is determined to prove that the valleys initiative is a sham, a hype and not worth proceeding with. How typical that reaction was of a destructive attack from Labour and how much it must be regretted. How much more refreshing it would be if a Labour Member representing the valleys had said that he or she was setting up a study group to try to show how the valleys initiative could be improved and how one could build on the excellent work done by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

However, when such conversions happen, they are something of death-bed conversions. Again in the *Western Mail* this week I noted that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside outlined his policy for housing and his commitment to the right-to-buy for council house tenants. I wonder how that commitment has come about. Is it because it is now an elephant on the doorstep and cannot be ignored because nearly 60,000 tenants of council houses and flats in Wales have now exercised their right to buy? In view of its poor result in the Pontypridd by-election, the Labour party clearly cannot continue to attack council house tenants who have exercised their right to buy. There is still a strong and continuing stream of applications from tenants who want to exercise that right to buy. Therefore, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's conversion, which is probably a good, if a late and dated, example of his pragmatism.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside will now welcome the new Housing Act. Rented accommodation has usually been a smaller proportion of the housing stock in Wales than in the United Kingdom and instead home ownership has traditionally been higher. Since 1979 the proportion of those who own their own homes in Wales has increased from 59 per cent. to 68 per cent. I very much welcome the Housing Act and hope that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside will soon do so. It provides tenants in Wales with more choice and better services.

I am glad about the establishment of Housing for Wales, which takes over the responsibilities of the Housing Corporation. I believe that it will operate those responsibilities better. Mr. Allan from Cardiff is to be the new chairman and I particularly welcome one of my constituents, Mr. Adam Peat, who is to be the chief executive. I am glad that the financial resources for Housing in Wales for 1989-90 will be 19 per cent. greater than for the previous organisation.

More emphasis in Wales is now rightly being put on housing associations as being the providers of socially necessary housing. Since 1979 housing associations in Wales have either built or renovated 15,000 additional homes. They are providing necessary additions to the council housing stock and the stock of the private rented sector. As not everyone wants to be a council tenant, the greater emphasis on housing associations is especially welcome.

Local councils appear to be frightened of some of the provisions of the new Housing Act. They appear to be especially frightened of the freedom for tenants to change their landlord. Why should councils in Wales be frightened of that new freedom? If they are good landlords who look after their tenants, there should be little for them to be frightened about—if "frightened" is the right word—because tenants would not want to change from them. If we consider the theory of that new freedom, we should ask why local councils are frightened of tenants having that opportunity which merely represents a freedom that the tenant can exercise, if he so chooses, after a ballot.

I am glad to note that two tenant groups in Cardiff are already actively considering the opportunity to change themselves into housing associations. Their estates would be owned by housing associations which they could feel were their housing associations. They would be able to feel that they could more closely control the places in which they live. I cannot predict the outcome. The tenants may ultimately resolve to remain with Cardiff city council and not to form themselves into housing associations. However, it is good that those two groups are giving this issue their fullest consideration and I hope that all tenant groups in Cardiff and elsewhere will also do so. If there are any minor shortfalls on the part of housing authorities such as Cardiff city council, this exercise will at least encourage them to be better landlords and more responsive to the proper needs of their tenants.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales also referred to the new Local Government and Housing Bill. I welcome especially the new grants regime. It will overcome the frustrations that many people in my constituency and elsewhere have felt at being eliminated

*[Mr. Jones]*

from assistance when making necessary repairs to their homes simply because their homes were not built before 1919. I welcome the fact that the greatest help will go to those in the greatest need and that 100 per cent. mandatory grants will be available to those who most need them. I have many examples in the Tongwynlais, Gabalfa and Heath areas of my constituency where there is 1920s housing which is just as much in need of that help as pre-1919 housing. The people who live in those houses also need those 100 per cent. mandatory grants.

In many ways, that matter is a less well publicised aspect of the work of the Welsh Office. Inevitably our press is filled with the controversy surrounding new housing developments. The latest planning application to change yet another green field makes significant headlines, but the important progress made in improving Wales's existing housing stock and the further progress that will be possible when the Bill becomes an Act have certainly not been promoted.

I confess that I have had enough cause to quarrel with the Welsh Office. I was particularly upset to learn recently that the North Penwyn development in my constituency now seems certain to go ahead. What can be laid directly at the door of the Welsh Office is the allowing of an appeal by the Land Authority for Wales enabling it to develop parts of my constituency when the local council had overwhelmingly turned down the application. I still feel that that is entirely against the authority's remit, which should be to facilitate land and housing development where that is a commonly desired objective, not to act in the same way as a speculative developer and flout the wishes of local residents and councils.

I tend to prefer the strong policy operated by the Vale of Glamorgan borough council, which has largely tended to say that the vale is full and that there is no more room for speculative housing development there. That council is not only working in an excellent way to conserve the Vale of Glamorgan, but redirecting finances towards projects that need them—for instance, the redevelopment of older housing stock that could be brought up to a superior standard if only the money were spent. There is an opportunity for 5,000 new homes to be built in the south Cardiff redevelopment, but instead the green fields in my constituency are being destroyed. I suggest to my right hon. and hon. Friends that more promotion of the excellent work being done to improve existing housing stock could result in preserving those green fields.

Let me finally deal with the subject of health, and in particular transplants—especially kidney transplants. This is a cause that I still hold dear. Wales has led the way in improving kidney dialysis treatment, to the benefit of many patients. Pioneering work has led to the establishment of subsidiary renal units. In the last Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) promoted a ten-minute Bill, arguing that if only the English Department of Health were to emulate Wales there would be a tremendous improvement in kidney treatment there. I especially welcome the recent letting of two new contracts for a further two new subsidiary renal units, including one in my constituency, at the University hospital of Wales.

I congratulate the Under-Secretary, with his responsibilities for health, on agreeing to walk in Cardiff's St. David's day "Walk for Life" on Sunday, and I also pay tribute to the lord mayor, who has done so much to promote it. I urge my hon. Friend, when he is walking on Sunday in a most excellent cause—and, I hope, raising a good deal of money—to reinforce his determination that Wales should maintain its leading role in kidney treatment. I need only remind him of those disturbing newspaper reports about the deplorable sale of organs, involving foreign patients and transplants taking place in this country.

There is a continuing demand for kidney treatment, and a potential for the number of transplants to be increased through the adoption of the concept of "required request". If only the right questions were asked at the right time I am sure that many more transplant operations could be carried out, and that opportunity should be taken. I urge my hon. Friend on his walk to meditate on the possibility of maintaining the spirit of the lead and taking the matter up with the Department of Health in England. What could be better for Wales's leading record in improving kidney treatment than for us to hear in the Queen's Speech this autumn that a transplant notification Bill will be introduced, making the necessary progress here—as it has been made in so many parts of Wales?

6.53 pm

**Mr. Denzil Davies** (Llanelli): First, I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on his excellent speech. We all knew him, to our advantage, when he was a distinguished research officer for the south Wales branch of the National Union of Mineworkers and many of us relied on his expertise when problems arose—as they still do—involving the coal industry. I shall not follow what my hon. Friend said, especially his remarks about that famous match in which Llanelli once again beat Pontypridd, save to say that if he comes to Llanelli we shall give him and his team a traditionally warm west Wales welcome.

The Secretary of State spoke very briefly about water privatisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) rightly said how ridiculous the measure was. In all our debates, both in Committee and on the Floor of the House, I have been unable to hear or read any cogent argument or sensible justification for abolishing the Welsh water authority and replacing it with a company quoted on the London stock market. If past experience of the privatisation of public utilities such as gas and telecommunications is any guide, the service to the consumer will certainly not improve and will probably deteriorate. Prices will rise steeply and Welsh industry—which already has to pay far more for its water in many respects than many other parts of the United Kingdom—will suffer and find itself at a competitive disadvantage.

The privatisation plans cannot be justified on any of the grounds on which the Government have sought to justify privatisation in the past. It certainly cannot be justified on competition grounds. I concede that, when the Government privatise what used to be known as the trading part of the public sector, such as steel, it can be argued that competition will result. The steel industry has to compete with other steel companies, with imports on the home market and with other countries on the export market. Steel also competes with other products such as aluminium and plastic.

The case for privatisating public utilities, however, is much weaker, although I suppose that it is possible to argue that even in the case of gas there is competition in that there are other energy sources. There is no competition whatever for Welsh water, and there will be no competition for the new water company, because there is no substitute for water. The privatised water industry, as has been said, will be a total monopoly. In their ideological madness and Ayatollah-like fundamentalism, the Government are trying to graft on to a total monopoly principles and structures which can be applied only to a free competitive market. Because there will be no free market in water, the result will be a terrible botch-up, to the detriment of consumers.

The second justification for past privatisation has presumably been money. The Government have made a lot of money out of it. Now, however, they have a massive surplus on their public sector accounts—a surplus that has come about not through shrewd economic management but through the temporary benefit of North sea oil, through other privatisation measures, through the sale of council houses and through running the economy at levels far above its productive potential. The Chancellor now has so much surplus money that he dare not do anything with it. He is in the extraordinary position of being frightened to touch the money. All that he can think of is the futile exercise of repaying the national debt.

The third justification was that privatisation would establish what the Prime Minister describes as "popular capitalism" in Britain—a share-owning democracy. The privatisation of the Welsh water authority will do little for that. The Secretary of State waxes lyrical about his proposal to ensure that 15 per cent. of shareholders in the new quoted public company will be individuals. That may well happen—I do not know—but I can say for sure that the other 85 per cent. will be held by City institutions.

The accountability, albeit imperfect, which currently exists through the House and the Welsh Office will be removed and economic power will be transferred to a kind of corporate conspiracy between the managers of the new publicly quoted company on the one hand and the managers of City institutions such as pension funds and insurance companies on the other—the actuaries, the investment managers and what the Chancellor describes as the "teenage scribblers" of the City of London. We shall have corporate capitalism, as opposed to the popular capitalism that we thought the Prime Minister favoured.

The Government have no moral right to sell off the assets without returning the money that they receive to the local authorities and the ratepayers who have paid for and created those assets. There may be legal challenges in the courts, as there were with the Trustee Savings bank, and perhaps the Government will beat them off, but there is no moral right on the part of the Treasury or the new company—unless there is a restriction on the dividend—to expect that money to go back to the coffers of central Government. If the Government had any moral sense they would return the money to the local authorities.

It has been estimated that the Government's plans will probably mean that the price of water to Welsh consumers will increase by about 50 per cent. In the past few years the price of water in Wales has gone up by about 10 per cent. over and above the retail prices index. Under the new arrangements—we have not seen them in detail—apparently the new stock exchange company will be allowed to increase prices first by the RPI and then by something called the K factor.

The K factor is a figure made up of a number of complicated ingredients and indexes. One element in the K factor will be the cost of investment. If the new stock exchange company wants to invest, presumably it will have to borrow money. We all know about the level of the pound today. As things are going, it will cost upwards of 20 per cent. to borrow from the money markets. The cost of that borrowing can only be met by the Welsh consumer through price increases—it cannot be borne anywhere else.

In the competitive market place situation in which the Government believe when companies invest they often, though not always, recoup the cost of that investment not just from existing consumers but, they hope, from increased turnover and sales, an expanded market and by beating their competitors. Such companies therefore spread the cost of the investment. The new Welsh water company, however, cannot increase its sales. Everyone wants purer water, better sewers and less polluted beaches, but such improvements will not increase the sales of water or produce new customers, so there will be no chance to recoup the cost of the investment by spreading the cost —the existing customers will have to pay the lot.

It gets worse, however, because the K factor will include another figure which we should perhaps call "Special K" for the dividends that will have to be paid by the quoted company as a kind of Danegeld to its owners—the insurance companies and the pension funds. Those owners will want to be told about the dividend before the sale takes place or they will not buy the shares. As a general principle, the dividends of companies—on the stock market or otherwise—are usually paid out of profits. Profits may also result from lower costs, and there may be some scope in the Welsh water authority for reducing costs, although I doubt it because everyone knows that it is a capital intensive operation, so there is little chance of substantial cost reductions.

There is not much hope of paying for the dividends out of sales increases. As I have already said, one cannot sell any more water than at present, however much purer the water, better the infrastructure or cleaner the beaches. On top of the initial basic costs of water and the investment costs, those extra dividends—12 per cent., 15 per cent. or whatever the City demands—will have to met from the price paid by the consumer. Welsh water consumers will want to pay for better services, albeit grudgingly in some cases, but they will also have to pay for the transfer of funds from them to the new owners of the company, 85 per cent. of which will be owned by City of London institutions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside has said, a sensible Government would use some of their huge surplus funds to improve our water infrastructure and to make our water and our beaches cleaner rather than to pay off the national debt. Such expenditure would be non-inflationary, unlike the Government's proposals and despite what the Chancellor says about inflation being a terrible thing. Improving services would not have an inflationary effect on prices. If the Government were concerned about efficiency they could set up an independent body to monitor the use of their money in the new companies. A sensible Government would do that and there would be no problem.

*[Mr. Denzil Davies]*

A responsible Secretary of State—I am sure that in private the right hon. Gentleman believes this—would go to the mullah at No. 10 and tell her that the whole thing is nonsense, that the Welsh people do not want privatisation because it will not help our services and it will do no good. If the right hon. Gentleman did that, he would serve the Welsh people well, but it would probably be his last service to the Welsh people.

7.7 pm

**Mr. Keith Raffan** (Delyn): I join my colleagues in congratulating the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on his victory after what we all know was a hard-fought campaign and on diving in so quickly and delivering an eloquent and witty maiden speech. I look forward to hearing him again in the Chamber, as we all do, as well as in the smaller more initimate atmosphere of the Welsh Grand Committee—which meets shortly and to which we all look forward with such enthusiasm—and, who knows, perhaps even in the Select Committee on Welsh affairs.

This debate is the principal Welsh parliamentary event of the year. As has already been said, today's proceedings are tinged with sadness because of the recent loss of two of our senior Members, Brynmor John and Sir Raymond Gower. Both were good, decent and kindly men who were well respected on both sides of the House. Sir Raymond, with his 38 years of service as a Member of Parliament, narrowly missed being Father of the House, but in a real sense he was the father of Welsh Members. The *Financial Times* said of him:

"His interest was his constituents and he was assiduous in their welfare".

Those words could equally apply to Brynmor John. Both raised politics from what Alan Watkins of *The Observer* calls "a rough old trade" to something closer to a noble calling.

Last December, towards the end of his speech in the Welsh Grand Committee, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that he was

"anxious that we take full advantage of what the A55 can do for north Wales."

He was keen to examine closely the immense opportunities arising from the £500 million investment spent on dualling that road. He drew a parallel with the enormous impact on economic development in south Wales of the opening of the M4 corridor. My right hon. Friend then announced that he was asking my hon. Friend the Minister of State to confer with local authorities and agencies in north Wales "to achieve a much more co-ordinated concept. That will attract economic activity, inward investment and develop existing business."—[*Welsh Grand Committee*, 7 December 1988, c. 9-10.]

I hope that that "much more co-ordinated concept" will develop into—I dare not use the word initiative—a full-blown programme for north Wales. Some may ask why that is necessary and why the Government have to intervene in view of the fact that much economic progress seems to be taking place naturally.

In my own constituency, unemployment has dropped by 48 per cent. in the last two years. That is the fastest falling unemployment rate of any Welsh constituency during that period. In close second and third places are Alyn and Deeside and Wrexham Maelor. Much has been achieved but more still remains to be done.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the fact that unemployment has fallen faster in several of the valleys than in north Wales. There are currently more people out of work in Clwyd, North-West and Ynys Môn than in the Rhondda, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Cynon Valley, Islwyn and Pontypridd. A more co-ordinated and positive approach is needed to ensure that the prosperity that is beginning to be seen in north Wales is pushed along the A55 corridor into coastal Clwyd without by-passing any area on the way.

I want to make two important points which must be faced if we are to realise the full value of the A55 improvements. The first concerns roads—I have made it before and I shall make it again and again until the necessary action is taken by the Welsh Office. We need adequate access link roads to and from the A55. I am, of course, aware of the division of responsibility for roads between the Welsh Office and the county councils. But that is not a sufficient response.

Clwyd has no coherent road strategy. That is not just my view or that of Delyn borough council, but that of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). I informed the hon. Gentleman that I was going to say this today and he totally endorsed my view. It was also the view of the previous Secretary of State. Clwyd county council, having dragged its feet for a long time, finally commissioned an A55/A548 road link from consulting engineers Frank Graham and Partners. They concluded what we all knew —that the road network in the area of Flint and Holywell is unsatisfactory in terms of safety, environment and travel conditions. Yet, the county council deferred indefinitely any further study until the Flint by-pass, the third Dee crossing and Northop by-pass has been completed. It said that those roads would relieve congestion on the current link between Northop and Flint—the A5119.

Delyn borough council takes a diametrically opposed point of view. It believes that a new road link between the A55 and the A548 is of vital importance and should be completed before the Flint by-pass is completed and before the third Dee crossing is even started.

The borough council commissioned a study of strategic road issues affecting Delyn, including an A55/A548 link, from Messrs. Colin Buchanan and Partners. The report is due in three or four weeks' time. I understand that, with those prestigious engineers carrying out the report, it is already striking dread into the hearts of the county surveyors department at Clwyd.

It is astonishing that the transport section of the Clwyd first structural plan alteration contains no mention of the benefits that the A55 will bring to Clwyd. Delyn's view is in sharp contrast. The council is particularly anxious to exploit the opportunities offered by the A55. We urgently need Welsh Office intervention to ensure the development of a coherent road strategy for Clwyd and the whole of north Wales so that the vast investment of taxpayers' money in the A55 is worth while. That strategy requires adequate access link roads.

I turn now to my second point on industrial development. I welcome the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State today of three further WDA factories in Delyn. I do not want to sound like a broken record but he knows that there is too great an imbalance with the concentration of Welsh Development Agency factory space in the south-east of Clwyd, in Alyn and Deeside and Wrexham Maelor.

In the ten years since 1978 the total industrial floor space has increased in Alyn and Deeside by 72 per cent. in Wrexham Maelor by 46 per cent., while it has increased in Delyn by only 23 per cent. Admittedly, in Rhuddlan it has risen by 67 per cent. but that was from a very low base. I might add because it emphasises my point, that the situation becomes more worrying further along the north Wales coast. In Glyndwr industrial floor space is up by 25·9 per cent., in Colwyn it is down by 2·1 per cent., in Aberconwy it is down by 3·6 per cent., in Arfon it is up by 9·6 per cent., in Dwyfor it is down by a massive 50·2 per cent., in Meirionydd it is up by 9·6 per cent., and in Ynys Môn it is up by 2·5 per cent.

This clearly shows the need to shift the focus of the WDA property efforts in north Wales away from the present heavy emphasis on factory provision immediately adjacent to the English border, further west along the A55, following, in effect, the improvements in the road. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the positive move that he has made in regard to north Wales. I believe that we are now poised to take full advantage of the dualling of the A55.

As usual, all the fresh ideas are coming from the Conservative party. We initiate and the Opposition react. We set the agenda and the pace and they set up a policy review committee to try to keep up. We look to the future and they look to the past. We come up with new, fresh ideas and they rehash old, stale ones——

**Dr. Thomas:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Raffan:** Of course I shall not give way: I have only 10 minutes.

We come up with fresh ideas and the Opposition rehash old ones. To see that we need look no further than early-day motion No. 69 in the name of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), entitled "Welsh Parliament".

Today is a famous anniversary—I do not know whether the Leader of the House or those involved knew it when they organised today's business. It is the tenth anniversary of the day when the Opposition parties suffered a monumental defeat in the referendum on a Welsh assembly, by 80 per cent. to 20 per cent.

I am a kind and considerate chap, so I tabled an amendment to the early-day motion gently to remind Opposition parties of that event so that they would not humiliate themselves again, but to no avail. They seem to have forgotten 1 March, 1979. However, there is of course one Opposition Member who should not have forgotten that date. He led the "Labour says No" campaign so ably that he brought down his own Government. I refer, of course, to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who is always so much more effective when opposing his own party than when opposing ours.

Let us look at the right hon. Gentleman's record. He was for devolution in 1974; against it in 1979; for it again in 1989. He has done a triple backward somersault as spectacular as any that Greg Louganis has ever performed but without any water to break his fall.

If we go back 10 years we find an unbelievable treasury of quotes on devolution from the right hon. Gentleman. Here is a sampler:

"The irony of devolution is that it will smash beyond healing the unity of Britain".

He also said:

"A new slab of Government in the form of an Assembly would turn into yet another costly millstone around the necks of the people of Wales",

and:

"In practice it"—

an Assembly—

"would simply mean a divisive and destructive scramble over limited resources with no gain in money or democracy to the people of Wales",

and:

"For the price of an Assembly we could have a new hospital or six miles of motorway or 10 comprehensive schools every year".

He had the nerve, the gall or—that wonderful Hebrew word—the chutzpah, to say a couple of weeks ago:

"I've always supported devolution—a devolution that is right for Wales".

"Something old; nothing new"—that is the Labour party refrain. As Neil Ascherson, the *Observer* columnist, put it:

"Devolution is a withered word".

The phrase "something old, something new" applies equally to the speech of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)—*[Interruption.]* I am being asked to wind up just as I was coming to my best bit, but never mind, I shall use my speech again like the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. He made a speech which has again shown him to be the original "Green". All he does is recycle his old speeches; we had another old one today. He forgets, as his colleagues forget, that Pontypridd, where Labour had a reduced share of the vote and where its majority was almost halved, will not win Labour the 98 seats it needs to achieve victory at the next election.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** Order. It was remiss of me not to do so before, but I take the opportunity to remind the House that Mr. Speaker has placed a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

7.19 pm

**Mr. Geraint Howells** (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Braint ac anrhydedd yw caelsiarad am Gymru a'r Ddydd Gwyl Dewi. To some of us St. David's day is very important but perhaps it is not so to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), who does not understand the aspirations of the Welsh people and the nation. Turning the clock back a few years to St. David's day 1974, four of us in the House today will never forget that day as it was early in the morning of that day that we were elected for the first time—the hon. Members for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), and myself. Whatever views people may hold about us, we are still here and we hope to remain for a long time. When we entered the House a week after St. David's day we were fortunate to be met by the two hon. Members who have already been mentioned—Sir Raymond Gower and Brynmor John—who advised us in a nice way on how we should proceed in the House, and thank God that we had the pleasure to meet them and to know and work with them.

Today we have listened to the new hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). It is an historic occasion for him—I can recollect no other Welshman making his maiden speech on St. David's day. That is a wonderful achievement. The hon. Gentleman's delivery was excellent. He made a humorous speech and I predict that in a few years he will be one of the greatest orators in the House.

*[Mr. Geraint Howells]*

He has an excellent baritone voice and I wish him well. He is also a staunch devolutionist. Better still, he is one of the Howells clan—a rare commodity in Wales today.

Turning to the Secretary of State for Wales while I am in a complimentary mood, I congratulate him on the way in which he has looked after the interests of the Welsh language. As a Welshman and Welsh speaker, I congratulate him on his great endeavours and concerted efforts to save the language before it is too late. I am only sorry that other Conservative Members do not share his will to support Wales, its language and its culture.

On the 10th anniversay of the referendum on devolution, it is appropriate to look back over the intervening years to see what has happened in Wales under this most centralist of Governments, after the rejection of the measures on offer at that time. I am not afraid to talk about devolution, I am willing to argue with the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) whenever he wants to discuss the aspirations of Welsh people and the devolution of power to them, which he does not understand.

Although the Secretary of State claims great advances in manufacturing output, well above the United Kingdom average, he fails to point out how much ground there was to make up after the dismantling of the traditional industries during the lifetime of this Government. Wales, more than anywhere else, has suffered from the concentration of power and resources in the south-east of England, and continues to do so. The Welsh Office may paint a fine picture of factories, valley initiatives and inward investment, but that is more a tribute to its public relations efforts than a reflection of the true state of the nation.

We still have a crumbling infrastructure in Wales. Where are the plans to build the north-south road link? We still have the worst housing stock in the United Kingdom. Unemployment in some areas is disgracefully high. For example, despite the Government's massaging of the figures, it is still very high in my constituency. Standards of education in many parts of Wales are far lower than they should be. School buildings are in poor repair; parents and pupils have to run bazaars and jumble sales to provide the funds for fairly basic requirements in the schools. Our university colleges are struggling for survival in an unfriendly and philistine environment. Agriculture in Wales, which has not yet been mentioned, has suffered some of the worst years in living memory but the Government have steadfastly refused to provide any special help for the worst afflicted areas. After 10 years of Tory rule, Wales has gained little and lost a great deal.

I am sure that if a Welsh Parliament had been established in 1979 we should not now be facing the iniquitous poll tax, which will hit people in Wales who are at the lower end of the income scale. We should not now face the cost of water privatisation or fear the privatisation of British Rail, which could cut our rail services to the bare minimum. We would give short shrift to the Government's latest proposals for the so-called reform of the National Health Service, because the people of Wales know that those proposals will bring little benefit to the sick and the elderly. We would protect our institutes of higher education and defend our research institutions. By now, a north-south road would have been part of the plans for an improved road and rail network, and plans for improved housing would be well advanced. Education would be given far higher priority, and local government would be streamlined to respond to the needs of the community.

The truth is that Wales has already comprehensively rejected Thatcherism, as shown by the falling number of Tory seats and the evidence in recent polls of a growing desire for a Parliament for Wales. There is something profoundly undemocratic about the way in which we are governed by the bureaucracy of a Welsh Office and ruled from London by various quangos full of Tory appointees. The Welsh people are waking up to the fact that if they are to have what they want—what is good for Wales and her people—government must be brought closer to the people through a fairly elected Welsh Parliament which can deal directly with the problems and aspirations of our country.

I said in 1979 that a Tory Government with centralist ideas would delay the establishment of a Welsh Parliament for at least 10 years. I now feel that there is a real awakening of enthusiasm for the principles of devolution, not just among politicians but in the population at large. It is time to reopen the debate in the context of the present economic, social and cultural state of Wales—we should not wait for another 10 years. Most hon. Members representing Welsh seats are now in favour of devolving power to the people of Wales. One thing is certain—whichever party now in opposition takes over from the Conservative Government, all are pledged to support a Welsh Parliament. We look forward to that day, and I hope that it will come soon.

You said, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we could speak for 10 minutes. You may not be aware that I was to have spoken fourth today but I made way for the hon. Member for Pontypridd to make his maiden speech, so I wonder whether you can give me any extra time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Once the Standing Order has been applied, it is not in my authority to give any extra time.

**Mr. Howells:** I accept your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker—perhaps things will be better in a Welsh Parliament.

7.29 pm

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett** (Pembroke): The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, north (Mr. Howells) seems to think that a panacea for the problems of Wales is a Welsh Parliament. It is clear from proposals that have been put forward in the past for a Welsh Parliament that, far from being a panacea, it would be a recipe for disunity and argument between the Westminster Parliament and an assembly in Cardiff. The Westminster Parliament would have to decide how much taxes could be raised for spending in Wales. In any event, we could not have the break-up of the United Kingdom that the hon. Gentleman wishes to see.

I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate, as I did last year, on some constituency matters, but I wish at the outset to pay tribute, as hon. Members in all parts of the House have done, to the late Sir Raymond Gower. I was able to pay tribute to Brynmor John in the debate on 1 February on the Pontypridd by-election. I remember Sir Raymond sitting a few feet from me, chuckling with delight as the debate progressed. That was typical of the man.

Those of us who, as new Members, got to know him well in the Tea Room in recent years became aware of his friendly, avuncular personality and the way in which he would give warm advice, would teach us some of the ways of the House and would tell us how to perform our work as constituency Members. I greatly regret his passing. I am sure that whoever follows him as the Member for Vale of Glamorgan will have a difficult role to play in emulating the hard work that Sir Raymond did over 38 years.

My route to my constituency takes me down the M4 through south Wales to the far corner of west Wales. Driving down that motorway, I see the remarkable transformation that has taken place in the Principality in the last few years. It is incredible to see the new housing and factories going up and to witness the prosperity that has come to Wales under this Government.

That has been seen in the figures for unemployment across Wales. My constituency has the highest single unemployment rate in Wales. Whereas in 1987 we had 7,381 people out of work, that had fallen last year to 6,232 and at January this year the figure was 4,899. It is still far too high, but it is a fall in two years of 33·6 per cent. I welcome the improvement in the economic circumstances of my constituency. Initiatives have been put forward in recent months for Tenby, Pembroke, Narberth and, above all, for Milford Haven. But there are still worrying signs in my constituency.

The reply I received to a written question on Monday of this week showed that imports through Milford Haven and Pembroke Dock had fallen to 7,151 tonnes in 1987. I am glad to note that the figures for Fishguard show an improvement, but there are still problems in my part of the world, caused partly by the geography of being so far from the major centres of population and markets.

However, on the good side there are wonderful signs of revival. In Pembroke Dock there are clear signs that it is becoming a boom town, and I pay especial tribute to Govan Davies, one of our leading entrepreneurs in that town. He has raised nearly £7 million, mainly through private means, towards funding his deep-water dock facilities which are being constructed in the town. When completed, that will provide 500 jobs. It will also provide, on the warehouse site, 300,000 sq ft of new warehouse accommodation. He was the subject of an article in the February edition of *Management Today*, which said:

"Moreover, Pembroke Dock has certain undeniable advantages over many other ports. It has no lock gates which open only when the tide is high, as at Bristol, for example. Davies' docks will be accessible, except to big Panamax vessels, at all states of the tide. They will work seven days a week, round the clock . . . It should thus be possible to turn round shipping, which earns money by being at sea and only incurs costs when in harbour, as quickly as anywhere in Britain. Milford Haven Port Authority charges are among the lowest in Europe. Davies also suggests that shipowners should be able to negotiate cheaper insurance rates by avoiding the English Channel."

There are also clear signs that, with the revival of the B and I ferry service to Ireland from Pembroke Dock and with the growth of the Ledwoods company and the Jenkins and Davies company in the town, the manufacturing base of Pembroke Dock is on the up.

But in the 10 minutes available to me I wish to concentrate on the local economy and the future of Milford Haven. There, unemployment is still running at 24 per cent., far higher than the Welsh average. In discussions about the future of the royal naval armaments depot in Milford Haven, the Secretary of State promised to contact the chairman of the Welsh development agency to see whether action could be taken on Milford Haven. I was delighted that, as a result of the pressure which I, local trade unions and local residents put on the Secretary of State, he announced at the end of last year the establishment of the Milford Haven business initiative by the WDA. I look forward to seeing the report which the chairman has promised will be with us shortly.

In my speech last year I referred to the subjects of small business units, the improvement of the infrastructure, the improvement in inward investment and the need for Government offices and agencies to be brought to west Wales. Today I shall refer to only two of those, the first being the infrastructure.

We must ensure that the A477 and A40 are brought up to dual carriageway standard throughout their total length, for that is the way to ensure that the goods and services that we need in west Wales and the goods and services that we can provide—the imports and exports—can go swiftly to the large markets and centres of population.

But we must also push British Rail into improving its services to west Wales. Hon. Members who use BR will be aware that it takes only two and a half hours to get to Swansea by InterCity 125. But it takes nearly another two hours to get from Swansea to Haverfordwest, which is only another 60 miles away. We do it in dirty, two-car diesel multiple units which are hot in summer and cool in winter. One cannot see out of the windows for the dirt and, because there are only two cars, inevitably large numbers of passengers must stand. My constituents in west Wales are entitled to a decent railway service, and that would be the way to attract more passengers and customers.

Those who took part in the Welsh Affairs Select Committee visit to the far east last year were impressed with the determination of companies, especially in Japan, to invest in Wales. They saw Wales as a country of growth and potential with good labour relations and a good tax regime. I want to see my right hon. Friend encouraging those Japanese and other companies to expand westwards into the west and mid-Wales. It is all very well having a great deal of new investment around Cardiff, Newport and Wrexham, but those of us in west Wales—I see the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) nodding in assent—want those companies to be brought to our areas.

The green field site of the former Esso refinery would make a superb opportunity for use by Nissan, Mitsubishi or one of the other companies which is expressing interest in Wales. By providing valuable work to the local economy, it would have the effect, through the multiplier, of increasing the amount of cash in the shops and thus helping to build up the local economy.

I welcome the Secretary of State's comments about increasing trade with Spain and Portugal. It is vital that we make a headlong rush towards increasing trade with those countries because that is an under-developed market where there should be ample opportunities to export our goods.

I have time to refer to only one other matter, and that must be the farming community in my constituency. They are concerned about the review which is now taking place of the Potato Marketing Board. I have told my constituents that I want to see the outcome of the review before reaching a conclusion. The Government must have

*[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]*

extremely strong arguments before I shall be convinced that we should get rid of the Potato Marketing Board. It has been a good stabiliser for the local farming economy.

I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate, and I welcome the fact that the economy of Wales is improving greatly.

7.39 pm

**Mr. Donald Coleman** (Neath): You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have served longer in this House than anyone else, and during those years we have heard tributes paid to colleagues who have served here and passed on. Today, hon. Members in all parts of the House have paid tribute to Brynmor John and Raymond Gower. Each tribute has been fulsome and has emphasised the warmth, dedication and commitment of those men. I join my colleagues in those tributes and I believe that we should be failing in our duty if we did not mention Mrs. Ann John and Lady Gower, whose support for their husbands made it possible for our former colleagues to give the quality of service that they did to the House and to the people whom they represented.

Today we have also witnessed the commencement of a new parliamentary career. We welcome to our assembly my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). He speaks eloquently and with ability and I am sure that his contributions will enhance our proceedings in the Mother of Parliaments.

I extend an invitation to right hon. and hon. Members to visit Neath to see the excellent development taking place there, especially the pedestrianisation of the town centre, which makes it among the best in Britain. Before the Secretary of State dashes out with a press statement claiming it as another of his great initiatives, I place it on record that the development in Neath owes nothing to the whizz kid from Worcester but is a result of the confidence of the people of Castell Nedd. The development was designed by a former borough engineer, Mr. Alan Jenkins, and authorised by the borough council in co-operation with West Glamorgan county council. When I was a youngster in my home town of Barry large numbers of day trippers used to come to the town—many of them, no doubt, from Neath. When I visited my home town recently it occurred to me that it might be very useful for some of the citizens of Barry to take a day trip to Neath and see what is being achieved under a Labour council and perhaps compare it with what is happening in Barry under a Tory council.

It has been said that life in south Wales centred around two great industries—coal and steel. That is perfectly true. Those industries did not just create employment—they moulded the character and quality of the people and their communities. From those and related industries came our religious leaders, our community leaders and our industrial leaders—leaders of the Welsh people, some of whom, such as Nye Bevan and Jim Griffiths, went on to become leaders of the British people. Today those industries have declined from their former strength, but they are still important to the communities in which they exist and to the economy of Britain. Unfortunately, the present Government, unlike many people in south Wales, do not see those industries as related to the lives of the people of south Wales but only as a means of private profit and expendable if that profit is not achieved.

Last week Blaenant colliery, which is in the Dulais valley in my constituency and the only deep mine left in west Glamorgan, was on stop and £1 million was lost, and what was it all about? It was about the pig-headedness of British Coal management at area level. Twelve months ago Blaenant faced possible closure. Now, as a result of co-operation between men and local management a new face has been opened up which will provide good quality coal for another four years. The seams are rather thin—2½ to 3 ft high—and, unfortunately, very wet, especially at times of heavy rainfall, so the men working there get soaked to the skin. In addition to the wet conditions, air passes through the pit at high velocity and makes it bitterly cold.

During the past 30 years it has been custom and practice among men working in such conditions to get on with the job, finish it and get out of the pit, which often meant working through food breaks so that the work could be completed. That flexible approach by the men and the local management has been the means of turning around the future of the pit. The pit was closed last week because an edict came down, without consultation, that the men were not to leave the pit but were to remain there until the end of the shift, in conditions which were likely to injure their health. The Secretary of State understands these things much better than any of his Tory predecessors as Secretary of State for Wales, as he was responsible for the coal mining industry when he was an Energy Minister. I ask him to intervene and to stop the nonsense which closed Blaenant last week and thus remove the men's suspicion that there are other motives behind British Coal's action.

I remind the House that Blaenant is in the news again this week because of the accident on Monday evening when two men, Calvin Jones and Clive Havard, lost their lives in the pit. The sympathy of right hon. and hon. Members goes to those so tragically bereaved by that accident, which is a reminder to everyone that mining is not like working in a shop, an office or an electronics factory—it is dirty and dangerous, and those who work in it and their community are very special. Those two men grew up together, played together, went to school together, worked together and ultimately died together.

Finally, I want to say a few words about the steel industry, in which I have to declare an interest. I notice that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are signalling to me to sit down. That is a pity because I am concerned about the tin plate industry and its effects on the steel industry in Wales. There is a fear that unless we are able to maintain steel and tin plate in south Wales, we shall lose our steel industry in Wales and perhaps the ideas of Eden and Ridley in the days of the Heath Government will come to pass.

Perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales is not happy that we are not so enthusiastic about his endeavours for Wales, but we want success in Wales. That is why we set up the Welsh Development Agency when Conservative Members voted against it. We want it to succeed because its success will mean a better life for the people of Wales.

7.48 pm

**Mr. Ted Rowlands** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Secretary of State for Wales has an avowed mission to convert the valleys to Conservatism. He is not making very much progress and we are not seeing his light at present. Equally, it is the right of the native to convert the missionary, and that is our aim and purpose. One reason why he is not making progress is that fundamentally the valley communities do not share the attitude, the approach and the values that are the driving force of specific Government policies.

I notice that an almost simplistic model of policy is now being applied to practically everything, whether it is steel, gas, coal, health or housing. It is the simplistic idea of the competition model—that if one manages to create conflict, if one manages to divide, if one manages to break things up in the name of competition and motivate people with money and incentives, everything will be infinitely better.

The valley communities do not work on that basis. The people in the valleys do not share those values or possess that kind of mentality. They believe much more in co-operation than in conflict. They believe much more in collectivist action than in highly individualistic or competitive attitudes. It does not mean that we do not want to get on, but when it comes to the community and, in particular, areas of service in the community we do not believe in this simplistic competition model being applied to every aspect of our life and our services. The Secretary of State will find, as the Government seek to apply this model to areas that touch the very heart of our services and the very nature of our community, that the reaction and the revulsion will increase.

I will illustrate the point by reference to the White Paper on health services, for it is almost archetypal of this competition model approach to what is a vital and central service in our community. I do not know whether hon. Members read the day after the White Paper came out the remarks of Dr. Hugh Saxton, a distinguished consultant and chairman of the management board of Guy's hospital. It would transform attitudes to patients, he said, referring to the White Paper:

> "We will have to look outwards for our customers instead of just watching them come through the door. Every patient becomes in some sense a private patient, a valued customer who is bringing the money for treatment with them."

I find that attitude absolutely nauseating. Are the thousands of patients who are currently passing through the doors of Guy's hospital not valid? Are they just watched through by the Dr. Hugh Saxtons and the rest of them because there is no money motivation in it? Are the concept of the Hippocratic oath and the idea of service no longer enshrined in the attitudes of consultants who run our hospital services?

It is that instinct, that mentality, which runs right through the White Paper on the Health Service to which we fundamentally object and which we reject—the idea of trying to create, in the one and only Health Service that most of our communities have, some sort of conflict, some sort of competition, when the fact is that we want to make the one Health Service that we have work much better, we want not to break it up but to build it up and improve it. We have only one district hospital and one Health Service in our community. We do not expect any others to turn up. We want to make the service better and even more responsive to the needs of the community that it is meant to serve.

I listened with some interest to the important statement of the Secretary of State about the role of the so-called self-managed hospitals and his commitment to the notion that all the services provided by them will be committed to the community in which they are built. This is not what the working papers issued by the Department of Health show. I hope that when the Minister replies he will clarify the position. One working paper makes a clear distinction. It says that these self-managed hospitals will be responsible only for what it calls "core services". It says:

> "'Other Services' are those where there may be expected to be . . . an element of competition in supply".

Let me tell the House what those services are—not the committed core services but the treatment of cataracts, hernias and hip replacements, all vital services that we expect from our own district general hospitals. According to these working papers, these services are not necessarily to be the function of one district hospital or another; they will be open to some sort of competition in supply. What a nauseating concept it is that elderly patients in my constituency, who are hobbling with terribly arthritic hips or suffering from the painful condition of hernia, will have to hunt around perhaps as much as 50 or 100 miles away from the hospital up the road from where they live, the hospital that is within walking or bussing distance. They will have to look for whoever is competing in supplying treatment for hernias or hip replacements.

In my community, because of the climate, we have a high incidence of ear, nose and throat conditions in our young people. The notion is that families have to peddle their children and hunt round to Ysbyty Gwynedd, to the West Wales hospital to get an ENT condition seen to. That is the idea written into these working papers, and we reject it utterly.

Where is this competition in supply? I have the figures for all our district hospitals and their waiting lists for treatment of conditions like hernias and cataracts and ENT conditions. At Prince Charles the waiting time is over 209 days for hernias—that is when one gets on to the waiting list. Would we look for treatment at East Glamorgan? No, it has an equally large waiting list. Perhaps we can send our people all the way up to Ysbyty Gwynedd—there is only a 65-day waiting list there. Is that the idea—that the patient hunts for a service he should be albe to expect from the hospital that the community has built and in many cases has financed and supported voluntarily?

That is one of the reasons why the Secretary of State will fail hopelessly in his mission to convert the valley communities to this narrow-minded, mean and petty attitude towards life and society and community.

As I said, the natives have a right to try to convert the missionary, and I would like to convert the Secretary of State and his Ministers into taking another approach to our Health Service. There is much common ground. I have welcomed and supported, as the Minister knows, the efforts of the hospital waiting lists initiatives that the Welsh Office has promoted. There is a necessity, as the White Paper says, although it is rather weasel-worded in this respect, to define closely the role and contracts of major consultants in all our hospitals to ensure that we get the maximum service from that formerly great profession.

We must deal with and settle once and for all the unfortunate notion that the recruitment of private patient work in our community has something to do with the lengthy waiting lists in our hospitals, thus giving rise to

*[Mr. Ted Rowlands]*

potential conflicts of interest. We could give stronger powers to patients. We should not be hidebound by earlier, old-fashioned views about how the hospital system was accountable to the community. We could look at various ideas.

I should like to borrow one idea, promoted possibly by the Secretary of State when he was in the Department of Energy. I have been rather impressed by the function and work of James McKinnon on behalf of the customers of the gas industry. Let us look at the idea of a health regulatory body which would stand up for patients and demand that hospitals delivered the services and achieved their objectives. There are whole areas where we could reach out to some common ground, but we will not reach out to common ground on the basis of the present proposals.

I am no medical expert, but I understand that if one tries to transplant an alien organ into a body it is highly likely to be rejected. There is a very high likelihood that if the Government continue to attempt to graft American-style attitudes and money-motivated methods on to the British National Health Service they will be rejected and, in the process, the Secretary of State himself will be rejected.

7.58 pm

**Mr. Chris Butler** (Warrington, South): I should like to congratulate the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) not only because, like him, I was a research officer in Wales, not only because he managed to win a by-election in Wales, which I did not, but also because over the years I have followed his progress, and he has exuded such frankness and honesty that this place will be the better for his presence.

There is a long-standing myth that the Welsh language was effectively extirpated by the Act of Union in 1536. However, 300 years later 90 per cent. of the Welsh population still spoke Welsh. The trouble is that the victims of that myth have assumed that the salvation of the Welsh language depends upon the reimposition of the official status of Welsh, perhaps through a new Welsh language Act or otherwise.

All the new bilingual forms and the rights of Welsh people to speak Welsh in court and to deal with local and central Government in Welsh have probably not created one more Welsh speaker—welcome as those developments have been. The salvation of the Welsh language lies in education. For that to make progress it must exploit the substantial reservoirs of good will that exist in the monoglot English-speaking majority. To a great extent, that opportunity is impeded by those who do wilful damage and deliberately disobey the law in a cause which they believe will advance the Welsh language. That causes damage because it enshrouds the Welsh language in negativity. To win hearts and minds, people must draw others towards them and not repel them. In 1755 the Cymmrodorion knew that when they said that their aim was to

"reveal to the world the value of this old language in such beautiful colours as it will be reckoned an honour henceforth to speak it."

That is an important message and it is one that Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin has learned. It has exuded that attractiveness. It was started in the early 1970s and it has now grown to an organisation that schools 10,000 children a year. It has 530 groups and 320 mother and child groups. Its target is to have 600 groups in the near future, each fed by a mother and child group.

That expansion has had to be fuelled by hard cash. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin is a voluntary body, proud of its independence and, to a large extent, it has raised its money through its own sweated labours in fund raising that often involves parents. The plural funding on which it depends has given it an independence and a zip that no local education authority could hope to emulate. Welsh Office funding has grown generously by about 827 per cent. since 1978, to £383,700 in 1987-88. It also receives local authority social service grants of £120,000 a year from the Welsh Office to support its field operation and headquarters. Sadly, I do not think that those LASS grants have grown in line with inflation. It also receives some funding from local authorities, although some are not as generous as Gwynedd, Clwyd and Dyfed.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin desperately needs more money to pay for desperately unfulfilled needs. It needs more development offices, the people who go around monitoring progress and pump-priming new groups. It needs a great increase in the number of group leaders, especially in the south-east and north-east of Wales. I understand that it has made a submission to the new Welsh language body asking for resources so that young mothers can be trained in pre-school education and so that they too can take on the duty of educating these young groups.

The insufficiency of group leaders can be attributed to the rapid growth of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, which has meant that it is outstripping the resources available to it. That is a signal to the Welsh Office that more resources will be needed for Welsh medium teachers. Young children have the facility to absorb language in the way that rain is absorbed. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin turns them out at the age of four and a half potentially bilingual. Because of that the organisation is engendering a demand for Welsh medium education at primary and secondary school levels.

The Government believe, or at least they say that they believe, in parental choice, in diversity to make that choice real and in higher standards. In Wales we have ready-made excellent standards in Welsh medium schools, and that fact derives from the highly motivated teaching staffs within them. We have ready-made cultural diversity and a ready-made real alternative.

The demand for Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin often comes from English-speaking monoglot parents, especially in the south-east and north-east of Wales. That should be presented as a blockbuster argument to the Welsh Office, because if we believe in parental choice we should accommodate that choice. If the believers in the Welsh language and in its future are prepared to manipulate the Government's aims to their objectives, we could achieve the jewel in the crown—the right of children in Wales to be educated through the medium of Welsh.

8.5 pm

**Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) who is a dysgwr—a Welsh learner—himself, and I am sure that his support for Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin will be noted by that movement and by the Government.

It is also a pleasure for me to welcome and congratulate my hon. Friend the new Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on his maiden speech. Those of us who have known him for many years know that he has rhetorical skills and I am sure that he will apply them in the House as he has done elsewhere for many years. He secured a good vote in the Pontypridd by-election but I can claim to speak for 25 per cent. of the Pontypridd electorate. Our candidate in that by-election, Syd Morgan, fought a positive campaign that elicited a strong response from the electorate in that valley community which no doubt resonated in other valleys.

The untimely death of Sir Raymond Gower occurred after a hard day's campaigning. I know that that was the way he would have wanted to go. That may be a cliché, but I know that Raymond would have appreciated it. It is right to put on record our appreciation of the tradition of Welsh Toryism from which he sprang and for which he was such a valuable representative for many years.

In paying tribute we also look back to the history of the last 15 years in Welsh politics as my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) has done. I have only 10 minutes and I shall spend one minute on history and the remaining time in dealing with the future. The history of events since 1979 have been recounted in the debate and by my friend Jon Dressel in the *Western Mail* this morning. We had the disappointment of the failure of the devolution referendum, but it is important to put those events behind us because Welsh politics have moved on since 1979.

In that sense, I attempted to give a short, salutary lesson to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) who tried to suggest that the party of Wales believed in devolution. I have made it clear on a number of occasions that we do not believe that the question of a devolved assembly and the relationship between Wales and this House is the most important question about the government of Wales. The most important question is about the powers to be established in an effective Welsh Government in Cardiff and the relationship that such a Government would have with the European Community.

Whether we like it or not we are living in the age of federalism. The days of a centralised nation state and of the bandying about of notions of national sovereignty, whether of the United Kingdom or of the putative sovereignty of a Welsh state, are over. We are living in an interdependent world and have to try to find what levels of government make sense for which functions. That is why we in the party of Wales have always argued that we should have an elected Welsh Government with competence over the whole of the economic and social life of the nation and the ability to relate the Welsh economy and society to the other constituent parts of western Europe. Indeed, we need look no further than the success of our sister party in Flanders, which not only has a vice-premiership in the Belgian state Government but has been able to negotiate a new federal structure for Belgium which assures, among other things, that resources are adequately distributed within the state and that the Flemish Government has direct links with other similar regions. That is the model that we take for the development of Wales.

Whether the Welsh people like it or not—clearly, some representatives do not like it—the position in the United Kingdom is changing. The people of Scotland are expressing themselves in various ways. I will not comment on the internal discussions which are going on in Scottish politics; it would not be appropriate, particularly since I have a fraternal relationship with the Scottish National party. Whatever the specific debate, the momentum in Scottish politics is towards an elected Scottish government.

The people of Wales have to decide whether they want to end up as an addendum of an English region or whether they have a level of government adequate to meet the needs of Wales for the 21st century. In a sense the debate in the Pontypridd by-election disappointed me. I lay down a marker for the Vale of Glamorgan by-election in the hope that we will get a better debate about the future government of Wales, the future planning of the Welsh economy, the way in which services can be provided and the relationship between that and the role of Wales as a small European nation and region.

I went on record a few years ago alleging that the people of Estonia, that small republic in the Soviet Union with a population of 1 million, was likely to get autonomy sooner than the people of Wales and Scotland. If the raising of a flag is a sign of autonomy, it appears that Estonia has achieved that in the last few days. So the movement towards smaller nations being the building blocks of federal structures is the norm not just in western Europe and the European Community but in central and eastern Europe.

The irony is that when these "nationalist" movements such as the popular movement in Estonia, achieve a degree of political support, it is saluted widely by people who are unionist in the House—there are unionists on both sides of the Chamber—as a sign of democracy. But when it happens in Scotland and Wales it is "separatism", in the old jargon, or, now, the "dismembering" of the United Kingdom. Apparently it is appropriate to dismember the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics but not to create democracy in the United Kingdom.

We must realise that the future belongs to the federalists—those who believe that government is not located in one place, either in this House or in any other single assembly, but organised in levels of functions. The function appropriate to a locality is one level, as is the level of the region, the level of the historic nation as a cultural community, and the level of the international community such as the European Community, with the relations between the Community and its Mediterranean partners and its partners in central and eastern Europe. That is why we do not apologise for having a vision about the future of Wales.

It is also a deeply internationalist vision. Welsh nationalism is progressive. It implies that we see our problems and opportunities in common with other nationalities and people in Europe. If we believe in our heritage of a nuclear-free Wales and of ensuring the removal of nuclear weapons from Europe, starting with unilateral action, which we still believe in, and moving on to multilateral responses, which we also believe in, that policy can be implemented through the action that small nations such as Wales can take on the European stage. That may sound far removed from some contributions to the Welsh affairs debate, but it is important that a nationalist should intervene in the discussion with an element of internationalism.

8.13 pm

**Mr. Roy Hughes** (Newport, East): Today is St. David's Day when we consider with pride and affection the fortunes of our own dear little country of Wales. It is even more special, perhaps, because we mourn the death of two colleagues whom we valued dearly, Sir Raymond Gower and Brynmor John. I endorse the generous tributes that have been paid to both of them.

It is also an occasion to say a big "croeso" to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). He made an admirable speech. During his election campaign the people of Pontypridd launched their own and the real valleys initiative. The poor Tory was left barely holding his deposit.

Our county councils are concerned about their relationship with the Welsh Office over the partnership arrangement with the EEC. That partnership, particularly relating to structural funds, should cover the preparation, financing, monitoring and assessment of operations. So far as I understand, the Welsh Office has not taken any initiative by way of informing or discussing with the county councils how the partnership might work. Apparently the relationship is better between the EEC and Scotland and other regions of England. The Commission considers that the partnership arrangement is being operated more successfully with every other member state of the Community. The lack of co-operation is difficult to understand. In his reply, will the Minister shed some light on the matter? Perhaps we may be told what steps are being taken to bring about a more balanced and harmonious partnership.

A matter which vitally concerns Newport is the proposed takeover of Plessey by GEC and Siemens of West Germany. Plessey is the major employer in Newport, with two factories in my constituency. The original one, developed in the 1970s, employs over 350 people; the second one, the former Standard Telephones factory in Corporation road, employs 170. Three years ago, in my humble way, I worked closely with Sir John Clark, chairman of Plessey, to prevent a takeover. Now there is a fresh attempt. This tends to create unease amongst the work force. It undermines morale.

There is little doubt that, if the merger goes ahead, there will be further rationalisation. That could bring about hundreds of redundancies in Newport through work being transferred elsewhere. Surely the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will take the employment aspect into consideration before coming to a conclusion. Likewise, such a vast concentration of industrial might and virtual monopoly, with foreign linkage, in an area of strategic importance is not to be desired. Lord Weinstock's initiative should be rejected. It is better to retain an element of competition. I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales will throw his weight behind the opponents of the proposal.

Generally there has been a more optimistic outlook about the Welsh economy in recent months. Of course, there are black tides as well. The closure of the Velindre steelworks, with hundreds more redundancies, is one example. We have witnessed the decimation of the Welsh coalfields, with 12,000 jobs lost since the end of the strike. The proposed closures of the Marine colliery in Ebbw Vale and Cynheidre in Llanelli are pending. Other pits are now on the hit list. New investment in Wales has a difficult task to keep up with so many redundancies and closures.

The Secretary of State keeps on telling us that unemployment is coming down, but we are entitled to ask who put it up in the first place. To use that old adage, charity begins at home, and I want to look briefly at unemployment in Newport in order to draw back the curtains a little. It has always been my belief that, with a fair crack of the whip, Newport will achieve prosperity. Situated on the eastern seaboard, it has perhaps the most favourable geographical location in Wales. It is linked by the motorway network to the south-east and the midlands. There are excellent rail facilities and modern docks. There is a fair amount of prosperity, but there is a good deal of hidden poverty as well.

From the Department of Employment's press notice of 16 February on unemployment as at 12 January, it can be gleaned that, despite all those economic advantages, male unemployment in Newport stands at 12·5 per cent. That is a pretty scandalous figure. What is more, if the 1979 method of compiling statistics is used, the figure goes up to over 16·5 per cent. In May 1979, when Labour left office, male unemployment in Newport was 7 per cent.—3,959—and the statistics then were based on people registering, whereas as now they are based on people claiming benefit. Male unemployment in Newport is nearly double the 1979 figure. That dismal situation is reflected all over Wales.

Under the Government, the blows have simply rained on Wales. Homelessness has rocketed. Houses are just not being built in the public sector. Average wages in Wales are probably the worst of any region in the country. Our National Health Service is being undermined. There has been a loss of no less than £750 million in rate support grant and £1 billion has been cut from regional aid.

Despite all those cuts and economic difficulties, the Government have the cheek and audacity to propose a doubling of tolls on the Severn bridge, which is our main access point. On St. David's day, we would all do well to remember that people have to pay to come into Wales and they have to pay to go out of Wales. That is a disgrace and an imposition. That is the situation despite all the money raised in motor taxation—close on £17 billion in the current year—less than one quarter of which is being spent on roads and maintenance. In one way or another the Government have wiped out the massive debts of other concerns in order to pursue their privatisation ventures. The original cost of the bridge has been paid for many times over. There is no bank loan involved; it is on the Consolidated Fund. The debt is purely a paper figure. It should be wiped out, as the Select Committee on Transport advocated two or three years ago.

The St. David's day message to the Government is that they have sold Wales short, and the people of Wales know it, as they showed in Pontypridd last week. They will not be conned by a publicity-mad Secretary of State. That is why they will continue to reject the Conservative party and the Government whenever the opportunity arises.

8.24 pm

**Mr. Gareth Wardell** (Gower): First, I associate myself with the comments made by hon. Members on both sides of the House in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on his excellent speech. We look forward to many more contributions of such calibre. I also associate myself with the comments made about the late Sir Raymond Gower, whose contributions to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs

were always particularly helpful. He was the senior Conservative Member on that, Committee and I could always rely on him for astute advice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) was right to say that, when a great tinplate plant such as Velindre closes, as it will in September, it is no use replacing the jobs lost by such a closure with low-paid or part-time jobs, often employing female labour. I am sure that the Welsh Office will work with the Welsh Development Agency and other agencies to replace those jobs with manufacturing jobs which will use the skills of the men and women previously employed at Velindre.

St. David's day in Wales probably means most to the young, dressed up and performing in schools throughout Wales, and to the old who this evening will be carrying on the tradition of community entertainment followed by cawl and caws suppers in village halls throughout the Principality. It is appropriate to take this opportunity to highlight the problems faced by more than one in six of the population of Wales—the over-65s. Although a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that we are not doing so well as some of our EEC neighbours in raising life expectancy, especially in Wales where the inroads into alleviating poverty and associated deprivation and lifestyles have been too long neglected, the proportion of the Welsh population aged 75 years and over has continued to increase and almost doubled between 1971 and 1986.

Looking forward, as Governments are supposed to do in formulating policy, the population of Wales is expected to increase by less than 2 per cent. between now and the year 2000, while the proportion of people over the age of 75 is expected to increase by more than 8 per cent. An unprecedented and increasing number of older persons, having made their contribution to the security, economy and well-being of Wales, therefore look to us as their Members of Parliament to represent their interests. It is clear that the Government are failing them. The Local Government and Housing Bill, affecting those 35 per cent. of pensioners in rented housing, has caused great anxiety. Many elderly people will be reluctant to move into more suitable rented accommodation when they do not know whether rents under an assured tenancy will remain low enough to be passported on to housing benefit.

In the social security changes of April 1988, pensioners were among those worst hit by losses. The Social Security Advisory Committee estimated that 74 per cent. of pensioners dependent on social security would be worse off after the changes. The Welsh house condition survey shows that 11 per cent. of Wales's housing stock is in a state of serious disrepair. A disproportionate number of elderly people in Wales live in houses which are damp, draughty and in need of repair.

Such housing is notoriously difficult to heat, yet in last April's benefit changes the heating allowance for difficult-to-heat housing was scrapped. Under the new system, general heating, diet and laundry additions have been rolled into one premium payment for pensioners. The system makes calculating benefit entitlement easier, but for the elderly encountering special problems there is no extra help when they need it. Out of the new rolled-together benefit they have to find 20 per cent. of rates and all their water bills. In the past, only 15 per cent. of single payments went to elderly people, and even fewer pensioners are likely to put themselves in debt to the social fund. Many could not afford the repayments on loans in any case.

Six million people lost entitlement to housing benefit last April. In Wales, more than half the losers were pensioners. Thousands of pensioners, mainly those with small occupational pensions, were worse off by up to about £3·25 per week after paying at least 20 per cent. of rates as well as increased rents and water charges. For those people there was no help—it was called "targeting" and they were deemed able to bear the loss.

In response to the public outcry, when it became known that some people were losing up to £20 per week, the transitional payments scheme was introduced for those who lost more than £2·50 per week after meeting rent and rates rises and paying 20 per cent. of their rates, but what a tragedy that has turned out to be. Next month, when benefits are increased, those on transitional payments will not have an increase in income because their transitional allowance will be reduced by the amount of the benefit or pension increase, but their rents, their rates, their water rates and their electricity bills will go up. With inflation at 7 per cent., all their costs will rise, but their income will not. Moreover in April 1990 and in April 1991 those who lost most last April will still be paying off the transitional allowance against benefit increases, so their incomes will still not have increased. Truly, they will still be paying for the changes of last April.

There is nothing in the policy pipeline which recognises the special needs of pensioners and the elderly. They are not benefiting from the chaos in local community care services caused by the Government's reluctance to respond to the Griffiths report. The latest estimates show that there are 9 million disabled people in Britain today, most of them in need of some special provision. The OPCS clearly identified and quantified the link between increasing age and disability. Of the 575,000 people in the most serious disablement category, 64 per cent. are aged over 70. Of those, nearly two in three—a quarter of a million people —are living at home, on their own or with their families. The OPCS study showed also that the highest prevalence of disability was found in Wales. To the credit of dedicated carers, Wales was second only to the north of England in terms of caring for the disabled at home.

The West Glamorgan health authority is currently deciding its long-term strategy for care of the elderly, but how can it make long-term plans when it does not know who is to be responsible for community care, what the health authority's role in community care will be, whether the Government will commit the necessary resources to fund beds in private-sector residential and nursing homes or whether the authority will have to provide beds because those elderly people without savings or capital receive too little help from the Department of Social Security in the form of income support payments to cover the cost of care in such a home?

I conclude by associating myself with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on the Government's health proposals. It is entirely unacceptable that pensioners should be expected to shop around for hip replacement or cataract operations. Providing a market for patients or GPs does not increase choice when the pool of expertise is constant. One can shop around only if one knows what one wants and when one wants it. Unfortunately, illness and need do not yet appear or go away solely at the whim of the Prime Minister. Like my hon. Friends, I hope that the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) will go away at the whim of the grey vote in this country, and

*[Mr. Gareth Wardell]*

I hope that Conservative Members will reflect that, unless far more is done to protect this group of people unless —they urge Ministers to come down into the real world and ease the pressure and stress that have been created—the fate of the Government will be sealed by the effect that they are having on the most vulnerable groups in our society.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** Order. The Chair is very grateful to the House for co-operating so well with regard to the 10-minute limit on speeches. A number have lasted less than 10 minutes, and, as a consequence, it is now possible for me to relax the limit. That does not mean, of course, that I am inviting long speeches.

8.36 pm

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): I suppose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is my misfortune to be told, just as I stand up with a 10-minute speech in front of me, that I may speak for 20 minutes.

**Mr. Morgan:** Or half an hour.

**Mr. Davies:** Or half an hour. I shall not do that, however, because my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) now has 10 minutes' notice to extend his speech.

Most hon. Members who have spoken have paid tribute to two Members that we lost during the last 12 months. I want to say a word particularly about our most recent loss. I refer to the hon. Member who represented the Vale of Glamorgan and, before that, the constituency of Barry, Sir Raymond Gower. I lived in part of what was his old constituency of Barry. He represented what was then the Cardiff rural district council area, which included the parishes of Llanfed, Rhydygwern, Rudry and Van. It is in the parish of Llanfedu that I currently live. Many of the villages in my constituency were in his constituency then.

It is no exaggeration to say that his reputation was legendary. All who knew him had the greatest respect for him. The work that he did on behalf of his constituents was deeply appreciated. He had the support of many people through the ballot box, who in no other circumstances would have considered themselves Conservatives or would have given a moment's consideration to lending any support to the Conservative cause. That really was recognition of the care, attention and diligence with which he approached his constituency responsibilities. I am sure that many people who live in what is now my constituency held him in great affection and mourn his passing.

We on this side of the House have sustained a tragic loss with the death of Brynmor John, who was a dear friend to us all.

I want to talk for a moment about the Secretary of State for Wales, who has been the subject of much vilification during our debates on Wales. I have to confess that I rather like the man.

**Mr. Morgan:** We all like him.

**Mr. Davies:** We all like him, but that does not necessarily mean that we have to agree with all that he does. However, it is rather easier to like him when we compare him with his predecessor. Certainly the approach of the current Secretary of State, when he comes to the Dispatch Box, and in his dealings with Welsh Members, is very different from the distant and arrogant approach of his predecessor.

I have to say, in passing, that the previous Secretary of State committed what I believe was an act of the utmost folly when he accepted the paid post of chairman of the National Rivers Authority, having been a member of the Cabinet that had created that very post. If he had been a member of a local authority he would have been imprisoned for corruption—for doing the very thing that he did as a member of the Government. It was most reprehensible.

I have said, I have some affection for the current Secretary of State. His style is different and we must give him credit for the fact that he has achieved something during his tenure as Secretary of State. We have to recognise that he has brought about some real achievements. There is a mood of confidence in south Wales which did not exist before the election. Wales has a much higher profile and, in terms of investment, business confidence and business activity, the Secretary of State has achieved a turnround. There is no point in denying that he has had some remarkable success in achieving inward investment for Wales. Those are real and positive achievements and it would be foolish of us to deny them.

Despite those achievements, and although there is an element of affection, the Secretary of State has not achieved the respect of the people of Wales. That is due entirely to his obsession with raising his personal profile and claiming that everything good that happens in Wales is a direct result of his initiative or intervention. He does his cause no good at all.

I can give one example which occurred in my constituency and which affected me directly. When he announced his much vaunted review of the valleys initiative in Merthyr on 21 February, he said—I quote from the press release—

"This week there will be announced a new £30 million development at Caerphilly that will create 2,000 new jobs."

That came under the heading, "The Urban Programme".

Understandably, my office was besieged by telephone calls from journalists asking about the new £30 million investment in Caerphilly ~~and where the~~ 2,000 jobs would be. I had to find some answers. I thought that if, two days before the Pontypridd by-election, the Secretary of State could suddenly conjure up £30 million he must have a little pot of gold that he has raided or have made provision for it in the estimates for his Department. I made inquiries. I asked the House of Commons Library to check the estimates of the Welsh Office and the provisions made by the Land Authority for Wales. The Library let me have the results of its investigations. We should bear in mind the fact that that announcement was made under the heading "The Urban Programme" and if anybody disputes that, I have the Welsh Office press release with me.

That £30 million was like a rabbit out of a hat. I will not divulge the name of the researcher in the Library but she told me:

"I have spoken to an official at the Welsh Office and it appears that the £30 million development is a purely private development . . . The Public Relations company acting for the developers (Peter Gill Marketing of Cardiff) tell me that they have not yet applied for any Government grants . . . The developers might apply for infrastructure grants in the future but have not yet done so."

Yet two days before the Pontypridd by-election the Secretary of State was trying deliberately to claim in a press release credit for that project.

I happen to know something about that project. It is the Pontypandy development in Caerphilly, a constituency in which I have lived for a long time, and I was aware of the plans that the local authority laid a long time ago for that development. Therefore, it came as no surprise to me to read at the end of that week in the local newspaper the comments of the leader of Rhymney valley district council. They were illuminating. The newspaper said:

"Welsh Secretary Peter Walker has been accused of claiming credit under his Valleys Initiative scheme for projects that have been in the pipeline for years.

Councillor Graham Court, leader of Rhymney Valley council, said the announcement by Mr. Walker of the £30 million business and retail park at Pontypandy, Caerphilly, was a con. 'He's claiming credit for something that was being planned long before the Valleys Initiative and it would have gone on without Peter Walker or the Valleys Initiative' . . . The application for the out-of-town retail park was actually submitted to the district council on June 3 1987 and called in by Mr. Walker which, said Councillor Court had actually delayed the scheme. 'I am really annoyed by this'"—

that is an understatement—

"'Members and officers have put in a lot of work and along he comes and claims credit."

If the application had not been called in the project would probably have been in existence before the Valleys Initiative."

The present Secretary of State for Wales might be regarded with some affection because of his new approach, but that is why he will never gain the respect of the people of the valleys. What he is doing is fundamentally dishonest.

That is nothing new in the career of the Secretary of State. We saw the same characteristics when he was the Secretary of State for Energy. Despite all the delegations we took to him when he was Secretary of State for Energy explaining that Wales was different and needed different treatment during the miners' strike, and despite the soothing words and pleasant conversations, the end result was pit closures. We were not spared the consequences of the retraction in the coal industry.

We can look at the time that he spent as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I remember that time well because some of my constituents came to me after having to face the consequences of his policies. In 1984, months before the introduction of milk quotas, the Secretary of State for Wales—then the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—was going round the country telling farmers that they should produce, produce, produce. He was encouraging them to involve themselves in development schemes using Government money. He was encouraging them to invest.

Many farmers in my constituency came to me saying, "We did exactly what the Minister wanted us to do. We took out bank loans and have invested £50,000, £60,000 or £70,000 a year thinking that we would be able to increase our milk production, meet the bank overdraft and the needs of the Minister while bringing about an improvement in our standard of living." What happened? Within months of him urging them to invest, milk quotas were introduced. In Wales there was a massive cut in the level of milk production and massive job losses. About 2,000 people were penalised. That is the record of the Secretary of State for Wales, and it is why he will not obtain the respect of the people in Wales.

What is happening, as has been made clear during the debate, is that the Welsh economy is changing. The nature of Welsh society is changing, as is the nature of our Welsh communities. We are losing—it is something whose passing we will not mourn—our dependence on the coal and steel industries. However, in place of those secure, highly paid, full-time jobs, we are being offered a panoply of part-time, low-paid or temporary jobs. They are no substitute. They do not give our communities the stability they had before. They do not provide the wealth that is necessary for our communities to flourish. As a result, we are living in a much poorer society. The Secretary of State hypes it up by saying we are on course to some brave new world. The truth is, as was shown dramatically by the Low Pay Unit's report in the *Western Mail*, we are slipping further and further behind the standard of living of the majority of people in Britain.

I want to deal with a sector of the community that has not yet been mentioned—the people who live and work in our rural communities and are most closely associated with what has been happening to our environment. I want to look briefly at the environmental record of the present Secretary of State and his predecessor.

The Secretary of State for the Environment, who is responsible for environmental protection in England, to his credit, after the Budget changes to forestry last year announced that there would be no further afforestation in the English uplands. We have urged the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Scotland to extend to Scotland and Wales the same protection as the Secretary of State for the Environment has given to England. We have been denied it in Wales. As a result, we see the destruction of some of our finest lowland, for example, at Llanbrynmair in mid-Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales could have done the same as the Secretary of State for the Environment has done in England and protected our fragile moorland ecosystems. He has not done it. He could have done something about the acid rain problem. The whole catchment area in mid Wales has been damaged—not irrevocably—as a result of acid rain. Some of our great water catchment systems, such as the Llyn Brianne, are virtually lifeless, because the problem has not been tackled with any urgency either by the Secretary of State or his predecessor.

Last Monday's report by Greenpeace on an analysis of water pollution in Welsh rivers shows a dramatic decline in the quality of class 1 rivers over the past 10 years. The best waters have declined. There has been a 50 per cent. increase in the number of grossly polluted rivers. The greater part of that increase took place between 1979 and 1987—during the tenure in the Welsh Office of the man who is now head of the National Rivers Authority, charged with the responsibility of looking after river quality in Britain. His record on defending Welsh interests does not bode well for those of us who hoped that he would defend the true interests of British water.

**The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts):** The hon. Gentleman was the main signatory of early-day motion 188, which referred to the deterioration of Welsh water over the past eight years. My information is that it is not 175 miles of water that are dead or dying, as he put it in his early-day motion, but no more than 26 km.

There is another error in the early-day motion. It puts class 3 and class 4 rivers together. There has not been an increase in class 4 waters in Wales over the years 1980-87.

**Mr. Davies:** The hon. Gentleman and I dispute the facts. When I saw the report, which was widely publicised on Monday, I took the trouble to ring Morlais Owen, who is the chief scientific officer of Welsh Water. As a direct result of the information that he gave me, I tabled the motion to which the hon. Gentleman referred. If he considers that anything in the motion is incorrect, and he gives me his version of the level of pollution, I will happily re-word my motion. I assure him that that information was made public and was verified by the chief scientific officer of Welsh Water. Based on my own experience and on my conversation with Morlais Owen, I am prepared to claim that my motion represents the facts.

**Mr. Richard Livsey** (Brecon and Radnor): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Welsh Water's research on acid rain and its effects has been of a high quality? Does he agree also that it is important that Welsh Water should continue its research on the destruction of our environment? A proper code of practice, with statutory powers in respect of forestry in the watershed, should be presented in the Water Bill with great force.

**Mr. Davies:** The hon. Gentleman and I are in full accord on that matter. A powerful case has been made against water privatisation. The hon. Gentleman shares my concern about the 100,000 acres of the highest quality landscape that will be threatened by the proposed privatisation. I agree that safeguards should be built into the Bill if privatisation is to go ahead. All hon. Members know how rigorously the Government have enforced the guillotine and are preventing proper debate on such matters.

Some developments dufing the past 12 months have demonstrated that, in his role as guardian of Welsh farming interests, the Secretary of State for Wales has been neglectful. Earlier this week the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food admitted that the variable premium on land is to be phased out. That matter is important to the people of Wales, but we will not get any safeguards or protection. We will not get special treatment in respect of stabilisers. Vital Welsh interests will be sacrificed.

The same applies to the beef premium. Welsh interests are particularly important in the livestock sector. The Secretary of State was happy to go along with the deal that was done by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in selling out the variable beef premium. The livestock sector in Wales is taking a severe blow.

The farm and conservation grant scheme that is currently being introduced is shifting resources from less-favoured areas to the low counties of eastern and southern England. There has been a deliberate diversion of resources from Welsh farmers to prosperous English farmers. The Secretary of State has refused to use his powers, which were conferred by Brussels, to introduce direct income aids to assist farmers in mid and north Wales who are struggling as a result of the succession of blows that British agriculture has been struck through the reorganisation of European policy. All those matters are of concern to Opposition Members.

As can be judged from the debate, there is little to divide Opposition Members' views on what will happen in future. Three or four political parties are represented here, but, by and large, we speak with a common voice. If there is a gulf in Welsh politics, it is not between the Labour party and the SLD. There is no gulf between the SLD and Plaid Cymru. I am not an advocate of pacts—far from it. There is a gulf in the recognition of what is happening to our communities, and that gulf is represented on the Floor of the House. If there is a difference, it is between Opposition Members, who argue that there is a Community perspective to Welsh problems and that they can be addressed only by a co-operative approach as we move towards the next century, and Conservative Members, who argue that everything can be left to deregulation, market forces, and the glitz and gloss of admen.

That system is not working. It is alien to the people of Wales, and that is why the Secretary of State for Wales, although he may be regarded with some transient affection by politicians or communities in Wales, will never be regarded with respect by the people of Wales and will never command their allegiance through the ballot box.

8.58 pm

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): I begin by adding my words of welcome and congratulation to my hon. Friend the new Member for Pontypridd (Mr. Howells). He seemed to get the hang of things quickly in his speech and we all feel that we have acquired an hon. Member who will make a distinguished contribution to the House.

I would also like to add my words of condolence to the family of the late Sir Raymond Gower to those already uttered by all hon. Members who have spoken. I have spoken of my condolences already in the House, but I want to repeat them, especially in the light of the remarks by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). He mentioned that in 1964, he was a resident in the constituency of Barry, which was then the constituency represented by Sir Raymond Gower. He said that he had first gone out canvassing in 1964 and that that was his first political experience. I can beat him. As a small boy, aged 12, my first political experience was to attend an election meeting addressed by Sir Raymond Gower in the local baptist vestry in the constituency of Barry. I asked him a question about peace in Europe and our relations with Germany. I had the odd experience tonight of realising that I had asked a similar question of the Prime Minister yesterday. I had the chilling thought that we politicians give the same speech over 38 years and that although we might try to polish it up a bit, we are always saying the same thing.

To be sure that I do not make the same speech after 40 years in politics, I want to speak tonight about gallium arsenides and indium phosphides. I am on safe ground in saying that I did not refer to those in 1951 because they had not been discovered then. If anyone is wondering what those substances have to do with the future of Wales, I shall explain. If Wales is ever to move away from begging-bowl politics, regional development politics and grant-aided politics, it must have the chance to have a stake in the technologies of the future.

We had such a stake before the first world war because we led the world in industries such as tinplate, strip mills and some aspects of coal mining, especially marine coal, which we then lost with the loss of stable industries and the McKinley tariff in the United States. We have never managed to get back again. We have always been catching the last bus with the aid of a Government grant and hand-me-downs from the south-east of England. It is time that we started to give some thought not only to devising a generous regional policy, but a self-extinguishing

regional policy, whereby grants are paid out and public money is put down as seed capital, but with the specific aim of trying to get rid of the need for a regional policy in 10, 20 or 30 years, or however long the job takes.

I raised the topic of gallium arsenides and indium phosphides because those substances are the raw materials of the semi-conductor industry after the silicon chip has gone. The silicon chip, I am assured by technologists, will be replaced by epitaxial products made of those two sophisticated crystalline compounds. We are at the beginning of the stage whereby south Wales, especially the Cardiff area, has a significant stake in the intellectual infrastructure in its university departments and in the application of those products for industrial purposes.

In the new university of Wales college of Cardiff, a merger of the university of Wales institute of science and technology and University college, Cardiff, there is a substantial proportion of the world's expertise in epitaxial products, the post-silicon chip age materials for semi-conductors. The reason that I want to draw the matter to the attention of the Secretary of State is that although strictly speaking, the matter is not within his province, but in the province of higher education, it is a matter on which he can use his broader power of oversight and interest in the future of Wales.

By the efforts of the local authority in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), a new factory is being set up, one of the first in the world, which will be manufacturing on a significant commercial scale, with the advantage of venture capital from Shell, a substantial multi-million pound investment in indium phosphides and gallium arsenides—semi-conductor space age materials. That must be welcomed because it is giving Wales the chance of a share of 21st century technology, not hand-me-downs from south-east England and Germany, industries that are too dirty to comply with Scandinavian environmental controls or industries in which the wages that would have to be paid in the home counties do not enable them to compete with Taiwan and Singapore and which have provided so many of the new jobs over the past 40 years under Governments of both colours.

To get away from that, it is important that the Secretary of State keeps an eye on what his fellow Cabinet Ministers are doing and says, "This may not be strictly my responsibility, but I want to see what I can do to get Wales the same kind of stake in the post-silicon chip materials that Scotland got when silicon got off the ground 30 years ago". That was when transistors and computers had their first impact on the European scene in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We in Wales missed out on that and there is not much point now in trying to grab a big share because we would still be making the mistake of catching the last bus.

I should like to make another plea to the Secretary of State although, again, this is not in his province. He should keep an eye on the development on the exciting new engineering faculty at the combined University college at Cardiff because it may be the last big public sector, public-funded development in higher education in this country. The University Grants Committee has given a budget of £30 million to develop a new engineering faculty as a kind of dowry to encourage UWIST and University college to merge. We all know how difficult it is to get students on to engineering courses at the moment in this country and how dependent we frequently are on overseas students to make up the numbers.

The Secretary of State should keep a close eye on that development to ensure that it is a genuine centre of excellence with links with industry and job creation in Wales. It should be an intellectual powerhouse and a centre for training for the future decision-makers and technology leaders of Wales and provide us with a stake in the 21st century so that we can create more of our own jobs instead of having to give grants to import other countries' hand-me-down jobs when they cease to have use for them.

Although it is not his province, I hope that the Secretary of State will keep a close eye on that matter and work closely with his colleagues in the Cabinet who have more direct responsibility for education and science. I hope that that new engineering faculty will be stuffed full of fellows of the Royal Society and fellows of the British Academy of the highest quality to ensure that we in Wales do not just have the ability to churn out the poets, preachers, doctors, professionals and even the politicians for which Wales is known, but the technicians, scientists, engineers, and technologists—the people who can help Wales to churn out a fair proportion of its own jobs. That would give us a chance that we have not had since the first world war to be a self-sufficient region in terms of job creation.

There will be a place in that for both the private and public sectors and for organisations that are neither one thing nor the other, but a halfway house. I remind the Secretary of State of the importance of the public sector in providing new jobs in Wales. Indeed, what we think of as private sector companies often turn out not to be so when one looks at them more closely. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North and just across the boundary from my constituency is Amersham International, which is an absolute pillar of the industrial society in Wales. It was a public sector company when it came to Wales but it is now a public limited company. Another example is the royal mint—a public sector development that was brought to Wales 20 years ago. The new financial services initiative companies that have moved into Wales are not plcs, at least not by background. The Trustee Savings Bank Group plc, for example, was a mutuality as the TSB, and likewise National Provident which is moving to Cardiff and bringing 500 jobs is not a plc, but a mutuality. The public sector is extremely important in terms of providing technology and training.

People may mention in pubs that they have been working for the royal mint and are being promoted to the royal ordnance factory in Llanishen, saying, "I was making good money down at the royal mint but now I am making a bomb at the ROF in Llanishen."

Such companies are important because they provide apprenticeships. I draw the Secretary of State's attention to the extremely important report issued yesterday by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and Professor Praïs—not Pryce in the Welsh sense—who is one of Europe's greatest experts on comparative levels of engineering apprenticeships and graduate engineering apprenticeships and on industrial training in general, which compares Britain, France and Germany.

Although it is not directly his function to do so, the Secretary of State should look at that very closely. Wales is basically without an engineering tradition because of the kinds of industry that it contains. We need to fill the gap,

*[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]*

providing craftsmen, technicians and engineering graduates so that we are no longer dependent on bringing people in from outside. Although there will be interplay across the regions, we should not depend on importing technology or technologists.

It is particularly sad for that reason to see how many white-collar, decision-making and research-based jobs have moved out of Wales in the past couple of years. The only Medical Research Council establishment in Wales has been closed down—the pneumoconiosis research unit attached to Llandough hospital. The only reasonable science establishment funded by the Government, the research vessel services base at Barry, has moved, and we learned this week that—again in Barry—BP is running down its research and development base for the second time.

I did, however, approve strongly of one feature of the Secretary of State's opening address: he did not use a strangely colonial phrase that he has been using throughout Wales. He has said that it is a good thing for Wales that the economy of the south-east has been overheating, because Wales has benefited from the spin-off—the outward push from the south-east, which can no longer attract workers. The right hon. Gentleman must stop using such language, for what he is saying is that we in Wales will always have the crumbs from the rich man's table. It is not his job to sweep the crumbs from the rich man's table in the south-east into Wales. We want more than crumbs: we want a loaf of bread.

9.11 pm

**Mrs. Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): First, I must say how much I welcome the arrival of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) in the House, although the circumstances are particularly tragic. I know that he will make a good contribution, and if his maiden speech is anything to go by we can expect to hear many entertaining and informative speeches from him over the years.

I thank the Secretary of State for Wales—although I may look slightly amazed to be doing so—for his action over the phurnacite plant. People in Cynon Valley appreciate his having forced British Coal Products to go through the planning process. As he knows, we have put up with the pollution problems caused by the plant for long enough, and we are very concerned at any suggestion that a new process—virtually untried in England—is to be tried out on us.

We have been given similar promises in the past. The Ancit plant, for example, was supposed to improve the environment, and after a good many teething problems it made some contribution to improving it in that area, but there is still considerable concern about extensive pollution from the phurnacite plant, because people do not know what British Coal Products intends to do next. Those who recently visited the works in Hamilton, Scotland, were not very pleased at what they saw there, particularly the use of mild heat treatment.

Over the past few weeks I have been urging Ministers to deal with the situation in Mountain Ash, the second major town in my constituency, which is currently experiencing considerable decline, particularly in its commercial centre. Most of the main chain stores in the area are closing down or have already done so. A letter that I received from one of my constituents this week reads:

"Please help us here in Mountain Ash . . . if you can. Our main shopping centre is a disgrace—other valley towns are being improved, but ours seems to be the Cinderella of the Valleys. Boots, Woolworths and our Post Office and the gas showrooms are all being closed and the litter is absolutely revolting—not to mention the decrepit condition of the main street buildings. Please, please continue to help us in our fight to improve our town."

She enclosed a bay leaf from her garden—the Secretary of State is aware that Mountain Ash is also plagued by pollution from the phurnacite—and commented:

"As you can see, I would have to scrub it before using it for cooking."

I wrote to the companies that are or have already closed down their branches in Mountain Ash. I received a letter from a representative of Boots saying:

"For many years the Company has been represented in the Town and as one who was born and bred in Mountain Ash, I can understand the concern of many in the community who will lose the advantages of shopping in a local Boots store.

For the past three years the Store has experienced a decline in the level of busines and unfortunately, it has now reached such when it cannot sustain a viable operation and therefore I can conform that a decision has been made to cease our representation in the town . . . I am sure you are aware that the company is continuing to invest in other Valley towns"

It is the same story with Dewhurst, the butchers, from whom I received a letter which stated:

"Many of the problems of small towns and neighbourhood centres over crime and vandalism have arisen because there is no longer a heart to the neighbourhood. When there was a butcher, a baker and greengrocer, a dairyman and newsagent, people would shop and meet conveniently and safely. Now, all the day-to-day food traders have gone and there is just an off-licence, a betting shop and a multi-commodity general purpose store. This is not an attractive environment for young children and old people."

No doubt the Secretary of State saw the *Western Mail* this week which showed dereliction in Mountain Ash on one of its pages. That dereliction is indicative of the problems of high unemployment and low wages in the area. The Secretary of State is well aware that the Cynon valley has been identified by all the indices as the poorest district in Wales. Sixty per cent. of households live on less than £4,000 per year—that is a shocking figure—while a quarter live on incomes between £4,000 and £8,000, more than half the people have no savings and only one in five has savings worth more than £1,000. Many exist on small benefits because of the area's high unemployment.

However the Secretary of State or the Government present the figures, unemployment in the Cynon valley has gone up this month, and the figure is already much too high as we have the highest male unemployment in Wales. One in six of the people live in unfit houses and half of houses need repairs costing £1,000 or more. Moreover, the kind of jobs available in the Cynon valley—there are not many compared with other parts of Wales—tend to be low paid and part time, so people are exchanging poverty line benefits for poverty line wages.

Low pay is rife throughout the Welsh economy in both the public and private sector. There is a double pressure on the wages of the low paid because public sector cash limits keep low wages down. Many people in the Cynon Valley are employed by the public sector. Discarding wage regulation drives public sector wages down even further. There is a smug, arrogant assumption that we should ask only enough for the low paid to get by on, as though they, unlike everyone else, do not want to live a full and

rewarding life. Under the present Government, the rich have received tax breaks while those who are already poor have been punished and goaded into effort by the imposition of a harsh, inflexible benefit system.

In Wales, one in four men earn less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold, and average male earnings are the lowest of any region in the country. I am sure that the Secretary of State cannot applaud that. The situation is even worse for women, whose average earnings are a mere 66 per cent. of the national male average. Six out of 10 women in south Wales earn less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold and with the abolition of the wages councils such small protections as exist will disappear.

Wales has suffered particularly badly from the staff reductions in the wages inspectorate. Nine years ago there were seven inspectors and an office in Cardiff. That office has now closed and its responsibility has been transferred to Bristol and Manchester. As a consequence, illegal wage rates are widespread. Last year, inspectors visited only 9 per cent. of establishments, so Welsh employers can expect a visit only once in 11 years and it is estimated that one in three pay illegal rates.

The position for women in Wales is particularly bad. The Under-Secretary of State for Wales has said:

> "Who would have believed, 20 or 30 years ago, that we would have lady bus drivers? Of course, with power-assisted steering and all the electronic aids, one does not have to be a muscle-bound man to swing vehicles around. Whether driving buses or operating computers in the office, and so on, a woman is on an equal plane with a man for any job. In some circumstances, she is better placed. Just ask Hitachi and other electronic firms that want to have components put together. The small fingers then come into their own."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1987; Vol. 111, c. 628.]

That is indicative of the Government's attitude towards women at work in Wales. They have low paid part-time jobs and their wages are disgraceful.

9.22 pm

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): First, I echo the words of the many hon. Members who have paid tribute to the two friends and colleagues who have passed on. We all feel a grievous loss at the death of Brynmor John, who was such a wise and generous friend to many of us. He would have been proud to hear his successor's maiden speech today, with its mixture of humour and passion. He would have enjoyed that.

Sir Raymond Gower, as I well know because I was a former constituent of his and represented a neighbouring constituency, was another consummate constituency Member of Parliament. His last representations were, as ever, on behalf of his constituents, on two issues about which we saw eye to eye. These were the need to save Sully hospital and to plan a positive role for it in the future Health Service, and the need to preserve research vessel port services in Barry. The best memorial to him would be for Ministers to pay heed now to the case that he made on both issues.

Today's debate began with an attempt by the Secretary of State to decry the criticisms of his stewardship as a form of ritual dance between Government and Opposition in which he himself had formerly participated from the Opposition Benches. He may have merely gone through the motions when he was in opposition, but he must understand here and now that we are serious in our criticisms. Our criticisms of his programmes have been both detailed and fully justified. The Secretary of State did a disservice to the work of the House and to public service when he said at the beginning of the debate that he regarded it as a game, although we had long suspected that that was his view. We regard being in opposition as a serious, important and responsible job, and it was in that spirit that we approached today's debate.

Our seriousness about Wales has been demonstrated through the 10 locust years, not just when things were going well. I was involved in the redevelopment of the centre of Cardiff, the considerable efforts to encourage home-grown industry, to attract incoming firms and to develop Cardiff as a financial centre, so I know how long a struggle that was. That is just one example, and my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) described another with passion and enthusiasm. I know the very positive lead that our local authorities have given and how hard they have worked in my area and other parts of Wales to co-operate with the private sector to the benefit of their local areas and of Wales. That has also involved seeking support from Europe and from the Welsh office. That co-operation is vital, and it is shameful that the Secretary of State has rewarded the common sense of our councils by cutting back on their rate support grant contributions. It is even more shameful that he should claim the fruits of our labours as though the credit were his alone.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) made it clear that we would praise positive proposals from the Government, but we shall also pinpoint their failings. That response is called for by several of the self-satisfied contributions that we heard from Conservative Members today. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said, appropriately, that he always recycles his speeches and showed it by going around in circles when he spoke. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) gave us a typical bit of partisan knockabout and opened the Vale of Glamorgan by-election a little prematurely in a way that I would describe as robust but foolhardy. It was like mounting a kamikaze attack in an unarmed glider, and his answer preceded him in the humorous but serious way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) showed the quality of debate that we shall enjoy hearing from him in the future. I welcomed my hon. Friend's excellent contribution as much as I welcome him to the vigorous and lively team that we have on the Welsh Opposition Benches.

In contrast with some Conservative Members, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who courteously explained that he had to leave the debate, spoke generously of the confidence of Labour Members following the Pontypridd by-election, and he was right. He also rightly criticised the poll tax, the Water Bill and the reform of the National Health Service, and condemned the Government's excessive belief in market forces. I welcome his honesty on each of those points and I note that Conservative Members are listening rather more quietly now. The hon. Gentleman tried to distance himself and the Secretary of State from the Government, but I must point out that both of them bolster the majority which gives the Prime Minister the sense of being above criticism and encourages her and the Cabinet's extremism.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West and the Secretary of State share responsibility for the very measures that the hon. Gentleman criticised. He was right

*[Mr. Alun Michael]*

to say that there is a sense in the country that the things which are best done by collective action should continue so to be done. The people of Wales say that enough is enough. Let the hon. Gentleman and any others who have had enough of the Government activities show in the Division Lobby that they mean what they say.

I issue that challenge particularly in respect of the Water Bill, which is wholeheartedly rejected by the people of Wales. The bardic steamroller should recognise the telling criticisms voiced by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and others in today's debate, but will the Government be defeated on that Bill or will there be another nominal revolt like that on the eyesight and dental charges, which allowed some Conservative Members the luxury of protest so long as it did not put the Government's majority at risk?

There is an attempt by the Secretary of State and his Ministers to create a myth with which to kid the Welsh people that somehow they act as a buffer against the worst excesses of Thatcherism and that we should be grateful to them for bringing a gentler, kinder branch of Conservatism to Wales than is brought to the rest of Britain. The legend of King Arthur has far more truth in it than the legend of Walker the Wet, and the packaging of the Tory message will not stop it hurting our people in Wales.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have eloquently outlined a range of issues and concerns in Wales which the Secretary of State completely ignored today. What legacy will he leave the people of Wales? He talks a great deal about records, so I am sure that he will be satisfied with his expected entries in the "Guiness Book of Records"—for the largest output of press releases, the most exhaustive use of superlatives, the most consistent overuse of the word "initiative", and the lowest creativity and impact of any ministerial team.

What of education in Wales? When the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) galloped to the rescue of the small beleaguered band of Welsh Tories, he called for money to be spent on Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. He is right. As one whose children have been through and benefited from them I believe passionately that they provide the positive and constructive key to the future of the Welsh language. However, we also want proper funding of education, decent school standards for all our communities from nursery to higher education, and the removal of the loans barrier which threatens to undermine access to higher education.

With regard to incomes and wealth in Wales under this Secretary of State, more of those who are in work in Wales are now earning less than the Council of Europe threshold compared with 1979, a year that the right hon. Gentleman likes to mention when the figures favour him. The 1988 figures show that Wales is the lowest of all regions in respect of the weekly earnings of full-time employees, and that is without taking into account the increasing dependence on part-time work.

I will illustrate that by describing the situation of a constituent of mine. The death of the husband left his widow, Mrs. Linda Moles, in limbo because of a change in the age of entitlement for widow's benefit from 45 to 40. The Government argued that she, by a matter of hours, did not qualify for a widow's pension. When it became clear that the Government had got it wrong, a ministerial decision was apparently taken to fight her and others like her through the whole appeals apparatus. I was delighted to hear today that she had won that appeal—and quite right, too. The Secretary of State for Wales should tell his Cabinet colleagues to let well alone and to restore the entitlement of those widows of several years' standing who have had their widows pensions snatched from them after perhaps 12 or 13 years of widowhood.

Pensioners who have lost £18·10 per week per couple and £11·40 per week for a single pensioner will have their own view of the Secretary of State's legacy to the people of Wales. The right hon. Gentleman and Conservative Members should know that to have been a member of a Government who have stolen from the widows, the old, the poor and the young will be a major part of that legacy.

As for law and order and the environment, the Prime Minister has shamelessly pretended to have an interest in the environment and claims to support the rule of law. Yet the Secretary of State is part of a Government who are notorious for breaking the law, even their own laws, and has himself been guilty of introducing retrospective legislation during the last year to steal money from local authorities—for example, nearly £3·5 million from the people of south Glamorgan. Nowhere is the Government's record worse than in their neglect of the environment. They are reluctant to meet EEC minimum standards until dragged to the door of the European Court, guilty of complacency over the dumping of toxic waste, and infamous throughout Europe for being negative and obstructive. Welsh Office Ministers must share the blame for all that.

The long-standing issue of ReChem, repeatedly highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), is but one scandal which demonstrates the complicity of the Secretary of State for Wales in this shameful neglect. We have on numerous occasions asked the right hon. Gentleman to intervene on behalf of Wales with his colleagues in the Cabinet, but he fails to do so. Despite its excellent record, the environmental research station at Bangor is being torn apart. The Secretary of State has so far failed to intervene to save research vessel services at Barry, even though that is a significant source of employment and expertise. The right hon. Gentleman is allowing, if not encouraging, asset stripping on a grand scale.

This week I questioned the Secretary of State for Energy about plans to use a new process which would utilise low-grade coal and bring environmental benefits at Aberthaw, surely a development that should be encouraged. In fairness to that Minister, he has spoken to me since then and has shown greater interest and enthusiasm than he did at the Dispatch Box but he also said that he had received no representations from the Secretary of State for Wales on the matter. That is shameful because the Secretary of State for Wales should be taking a lead on jobs, energy and the environment, all of which are affected.

Two topics, above all, demonstrate the abject failure of the Conservative party to look after the interests of the people of Wales—the attack on the National Health Service and the sell-off of our water industry. Water privatisation gives the lie to any claim that this Government are good for Wales. There are so many details which are dangerous and wrong about that piece of

dogmatic, crazy legislation that I shall concentrate on just one aspect today—the right of Welsh people to a say about Welsh water.

First, however, I digress to remind the House of the Walker technique. As with the so-called valleys initiative, it is to leak a rumour, to announce an announcement and then, when asked about it, to say that it is premature, but to issue a modest half-denial, then to let things go quiet for a while and then to repeat the process, with an announcement of an imminent announcement, a shy denial and another notch in the legend of Walker the Wet. It is a technique for packaging a product which does not exist and seeking credit for action without having to do anything. The Secretary of State knows the truth of that.

Rumour exists that the Secretary of State for Wales plans to give away council houses to the tenants living in them. Hand over the deeds and the keys and the problem is gone—that seems to be the idea—but the owner of any older house knows that will not solve everything. Inner cities, towns and rural areas all contain privately owned houses which need more money spent on them than most private owners can afford. That is why we have home grants for home owners and tax relief on mortgages, although that is under threat in the Thatcherite revolution.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** Is not the hon. Gentleman delighted at a piece of legislation which, for the first time under any Government, will give the people of Wales, no matter how low their income, 100 per cent. grants to improve old houses? Does he not agree that that is a radical reform that will benefit Wales?

**Mr. Michael:** I am always delighted at an improvement, but the Secretary of State has taken away grants from many other people in Wales. By stealing money from local authorities, he has taken away opportunities for people in Wales to have their own homes. He is guilty of neglecting the homeless in Wales. In any event, to return to the matter which embarrasses the Secretary of State, the Chancellor will not allow council houses to be given away without a price and such a solution would still leave local councils and communities with the scandal of homelessness and the lack of homes. The *Western Mail* described the Secretary of State as being coy on the matter. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State admitted in a recent reply that the Government

"have no immediate plans to make changes under the right-to-buy scheme."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. *17*.]

Nevertheless, the rumours persist.

I can give the Secretary of State an easier alternative. If it is such a good idea to give the people of Wales what they have already paid for, let him give them Welsh Water. All he needs to do is to issue 2,836,000 shares—one for every man, woman and child in the Principality—without their having to make any payment. Alternatively, he could issue 100 or 1,000 shares each, as that would look even more generous—2,836 million shares to the people of Wales—and give them to us. They would be transferable only to the Government only on death or removal from the Principality. Reservation could be made for a fresh issue of shares—the water birthright—to each baby born in the Principality or to people who come to live in Wales. Shareholders could elect representatives in each area—we could call them local councils—and send them to the board of Welsh Water so that all the shareholders could have a voice in the industry.

The Secretary of State could then live up to the title of his book and trust the people. The Government say that there is an advantage in operating the water industry as a plc. That system would be a plc and would have all those advantages, if they exist, so the Government could not object. It could borrow to invest, which the Ministers tell us is a good thing, but the people of Wales would still own that which we own now.

Let the Secretary of State put his money where his mouth is and give the Welsh water industry to those who own it now—the people of Wales. That will not happen, of course, because the Chancellor will not let it happen and the Cabinet will not let it happen. The Secretary of State is part of the team who will not let it happen. He knows that the Chancellor desperately needs the income from selling another bit of our birthright to fund his mismanagement of our economy. That is what it is all about—the Tories have the dogma and we pay the cost.

The time in Committee considering the Bill has been instructive, as the Government's case for privatisation has crumbled and fallen apart. Our plea for a Welsh rivers authority has been rejected, there is no credibility left in the Government's claims that the measure will help our environment, improve water quality or clean up our rivers and beaches. None of that will happen unless the public pay. Our environment, our public access, our water supplies, even our health, are under threat from that measure.

Our health will be further under threat by the Government's plans to abandon any pretence of wanting to develop a high quality, all-purpose, universal Health Service. The Welsh Office document on the future of the Health Service showed that far from working for patients, as its title suggests, it is a plan for furthering dogma at the expense of public health. The creaking and groaning evident in the Health Service now has been deliberately created by Conservative neglect. If a week is a long time in politics, 10 years is a political lifetime—and for that length of time the Conservative party has used funding arrangements, Cabinet power, administrative arrangements and the nomination of its own quiescent loyalists to undermine our Health Service.

If the Secretary of State does not believe the Opposition, let him examine the *Western Mail* commentary of Monday which gives example after example of problems with waiting lists in Wales. The White Paper will do nothing to help people on waiting lists any more than it will help the Health Service as a whole. Indeed, it will make the planning and delivery of a high-quality service harder than ever before.

The Minister's answer last week was:

"The diagnosis and treatment of patients is and will continue to be a matter for the professional judgment of doctors."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. *608*.]

That cannot be so if the doctor is constrained by his computer forecast and monthly cash flow and he cannot give his single-minded concentration and commitment to the health care of his patients. I do not say that costs should be disregarded, but the Government pendulum has swung too far towards the extreme and the Secretary of State for Wales has swung with the worst of them.

Health Service planning is dependent on the 10-year plan currently being considered, but I am no longer sure what credence to be placed in them. I want a coherent, long-term plan for my area on which we can depend. I

*[Mr. Michael]*

want to see problems overcome in south Glamorgan, because there are problems with the plan as drafted. The third district general hospital in Cardiff docks cannot be afforded without undermining Llandongh hospital, killing off Sully hospital, distorting the whole service. A decision is also needed now because the idea is casting a blight on a piece of development land which is desperately needed in the Cardiff bay area, but it is vital that it should be the right decision and part of the right overall plan for the Health Service in south Glamorgan and in Wales as a whole, within a coherent approach which puts patients first and does not depend on dogma and political fashion in the way that the White Paper does.

Some time ago, the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) gave the game away when he was quoted as saying that the problem with the National Health Service was that there was no relationship between what we pay and the service that we receive. I had always thought that it was a virtue to get the treatment that we need at the time when we need it—when we fall ill—and the people of Wales feel the same. The Secretary of State and his colleagues have failed to defend our Health Service against people like the Prime Minister, just as he has failed to defend our water, environment, education service, housing and local government in Wales. As on so many other issues, his proposals are an abject copy of the proposals in England. He has failed the people of Wales.

9.42 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Ian Grist):** All I can say is that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has not undermined my faith, or that of my family, in the Health Service. I have to go for an operation in a few months' time. It was a disgraceful attack, and very disappointing because I think that the hon. Gentleman can do a great deal better.

Today has taken the usual course of a Welsh day debate —we have had constituency representations and hobby horses from all sides, as might be expected.

No hon. Member made a more notable contribution than the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). I too made my maiden speech on St. David's day 15 years ago but I only wish that I had had half the assurance—and even half the majority—of the hon. Member. He will know, as indeed he has told us, of the gap that he is filling through the death of his predecessor, Brynmor John, a man held in respect and affection by all his colleagues on both sides of the Chamber. We look forward to hearing the hon. Member on many occasions in the future. I feel sure that we shall not be disappointed and he may then expect a more lively response than he received today.

I cannot mention constituency representation without paying a deep personal tribute to our old friend and colleague, Raymond Gower. I feel sure that I speak for all my parliamentary colleagues when I say that we shall greatly miss Raymond and that uncertain support which he sometimes gave Ministers on his own side, or the often sympathetic attacks which he launched in days gone by on Labour Ministers. Raymond was ever looking for compromise, for the best part in us all and not the worst. We all know how warm and caring a friend we have lost.

But what a change Raymond saw during his 38 years in this House in the economic and social condition of Wales, and at no time during that long period was change more basic or more rapid than during the past 10 years. As we have been reminded, none of us who was in the House 10 years ago can ever forget St. David's day 1979. That was a fateful day.

**Mr. Michael Foot** (Blaenau Gwent): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Grist:** No. I have just started my speech and my time has been cut short as it is.

On St. David's day 1979 the Labour Government, the Liberal party, Plaid Cymru, the media and the clerical crochach all proved that they were wholly out of step with the people of Wales and that it was the Conservative party alone which understood how Wales felt about devolution and the future of the United Kingdom. Clearly the opinion of the man and woman in the street, and certainly the poll in the streets of Pontypridd, show that devolution still gets the lowest marks of any subject.

Where do the opposition parties now stand on devolution? Are we to be forced to accept a Welsh assembly under any future Labour Government—or perhaps three assemblies? Are we to be refused any chance to vote again on such a proposition? Surely the only reason the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) did not vote against the Welsh Bill was the promise of a referendum. I trust that he has not changed his mind on that, however much he may have wavered on the question of devolution itself.

I remember a most interesting broadcast debate in which the right hon. Gentleman and I were partners against the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and the then Labour Member for Wrexham, Mr. Tom Ellis. The right hon. Gentleman spent most of his time fending off a Trotskyist member of his own association who protested about the right hon. Gentleman being on a platform with me.

**Mr. Foot:** I have heard almost every word of this debate. Would the Minister be good enough to give us the employment and unemployment figures for 1979 and the figures for today and tell us what conclusions he draws from the comparisons?

**Mr. Grist:** I shall give the right hon. Gentleman quite a few figures before I have finished.

We have never doubted that on that St. David's day 10 years ago the Conservative party spoke for the hopes and fears of most of our fellow citizens. We understood the burning desire of our neighbours to own their own homes. Now, 68 per cent. of people own their own homes, compared with 59 per cent. when we took office. But giving council tenants the right to buy their own homes was opposed by the Labour and Liberal parties. Now we are told that they no longer oppose the right to buy. How is that for recognising reality?

As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) admitted, Opposition Members seem to hanker after the old corporatist, controlled, planned society from which we have rescued the country only for Mr. Jacques Delors to revive their hopes. Now we hear that the Labour party is in favour of our membership of the EEC. Perhaps we, or at least the electorate, ought to be told.

**Mr. Morgan:** Before the Minister leaves the subject of council houses, could he tell the House how it can be a good idea for people to buy their council houses when the Government are preventing people from building any more houses? How are the next generation to benefit from that wonderful gift?

**Mr. Grist:** The hon. Gentleman is again showing that he does not understand why so many of his constituents living in former council houses wished to own those homes. Would he like to tell them that he opposes such a scheme? Does he think that selling those homes to the people living in them reduced the number of houses? Of course it did not.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said proudly that the Opposition were saying no to the free market. That is an extraordinary claim for any political party. That is the reason why in 1975 and 1976 this country took such a dive and why we had to cut capital expenditure on roads and housing. Hon. Members may remember the A470. That road made it to Winchurch but never got any further. It was not until a Conservative Government came to power that it got to Merthyr. The Labour Government had to go to the International Monetary Fund on their knees. That was the level to which the Labour Government brought us. Our time in the Chamber thereafter was filled by endless debates on devolution. That was the one thing that kept the Labour party going.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) quite rightly made a plea on behalf of her constituency. A great deal has been spent on it. We appreciate the points which she made about the phurnacite plant. She will know that under projects of regional and national importance there was a capital allocation of £850,000 for each of the three years to 1988-89 to bring the railway to Aberdare. She will know about the Aberdare bypass, which has been paid for. In housing, she will know about the five enveloping schemes costing £3·3 million, when her own authority could not spend its money until it was shown how by the Welsh Office civil servants. She will know that since 1984 expenditure of over £565,000 on urban development grants, leading to private sector investment of £1·216 million, has created or safeguarded 153 permanent and 63 temporary jobs.

As for Welsh Development Agency units, from May 1979 to the end of January 1989, 53 units, comprising 521,000 sq ft, were completed. Since 1976, seven land reclamation schemes, comprising 40 acres and costing £600,000, have been completed. There are three projects in progress involving 294 acres. There are seven projects in the programme but not yet in progress, involving 300 acres and estimated to cost £3·3 million. The hon. Lady will know about all those and many more things which are being brought to Cynon Valley. It is now connected to the A470, which had not reached the valley under her party. That is opening up the area and we are providing the factories and spare places which she wants.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), who is sadly not with us, talked about the Welsh language. They will know that grants for the Welsh language will rise by almost 40 per cent. in the coming financial year. That shows our intent for the language. We have a problem in ensuring an adequate supply of Welsh-medium teachers. The demand for Welsh-medium teachers for bilingual secondary schools has been growing for some time. We awarded 30 supplements of £1,200 last autumn to encourage more students to train in Welsh. Those were taken up and we intend to offer supplements again this year. We intend to take other steps to satisfy the demand for Welsh teaching.

Hon. Members have raised time and again our proposals for the Health Service. When my right hon. Friend announced his proposals for Wales in the White Paper, he said that the Health Service had served the people of Wales well; indeed it has. The level of achievement over the last decade has been remarkable. Between 1979 and 1988, the number of staff directly concerned with patient care increased by over 17 per cent. So did the pay of staff in the Health Service, whereas it fell under the Labour Government.

I do not know how the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who stood in my place in those days, felt as the pay of nurses, consultants and everyone else in the Health Service went down. How did he feel when the number of out patients dealt with in Welsh hospitals fell by 3 per cent. during his period as a Minister, whereas under this Government 88,000 new out-patients have been dealt with? Nearly 100,000 more in-patients and 45,000 more day cases have been dealt with under this Government. Yet Opposition Members have the gall to talk about cuts in the Health Service. Would they willingly tell the people of Wales or Britain that we should go back to the Health Service that we had in 1979? Is that really what they would hold up as their banner? Not at all.

All that has been achieved at the same time as we have been improving dramatically the service in Wales for people with mental illnesses and mental handicaps. Our all-Wales mental handicap strategy is widely recognised as a unique and innovative development which is bringing considerable improvements to the lives of thousands of people with mental handicaps, and their families. We have established in our mental handicap strategy something which is admired not just in Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom but in other countries. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) will appreciate and understand that.

We published our draft strategy for the development of mental illness services in May last for a six-month period of consultation. The responses to our proposals have been very favourable and encouraging. We will publish a final version later this spring, and we shall move to the new strategic planning framework in the financial year 1990-91. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about the Griffiths report?"] I can promise hon. Members that that will be dealt with in the coming year. In helping the least capable people in our society—the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill—the Welsh Office has set a fine example, not just in Britain but abroad.

**Mr. Rowlands** *rose*——

**Mr. Grist:** No, I shall not give way. I have far too many points to reply to.

Like many other hon. Members, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) failed to understand the competitive basis of our water privatisation proposals. There will most certainly be competition. Nor did he appreciate that the Director General of Water Services will control price rises and lay down the conditions under which the new water authorities will operate.

**Mr. Ron Davies** *rose*——

**Mr. Grist:** The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and others guyed the idea that Welsh Water, the new plc, could be owned by the people of Wales. Opposition Members may have a surprise coming to them because it is our intention to give the people of Wales every opportunity to take a stake in their own water company in a way that has not been possible before.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Grist:** No, I will not.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North called for a north-south road—a rather old idea. The Government have undertaken 47 major motorway and trunk road schemes and 140 miles of roads have been provided. Spending on new capital schemes and structural renewal and maintenance exceeds £1 billion since 1979. Sixteen bypasses have been completed. Four are in and 25 more are programmed for the 1990s. Sixteen miles of road are presently under construction on schemes costing some £270 million. That remarkable development, the Conway tunnel, costing over £160 million, is due to open in 1991.

**Mr. Geraint Howells** *rose*——

**Mr. Grist:** No, I shall not give way.

I sum up the Government's record by saying that there has been record home ownership of between 59 and 68 per cent. A record number of patients has been treated. There has been a record number of consultants, nurses and doctors. There has been a record number of patients on renal dialysis—the highest in Europe at 55 per million of the population. There has been a record number of Welsh students in universities and higher education—25 per cent. up on the figure when we took office. There has been a record number of new company formations. A record amount has been spent on training, about which we have heard precious little today. Spending on training has risen from £60·7 million in 1979-80 to nearly £150 million today.

There has been a record number of exciting new developments, such as Cardiff bay, Swansea marine, the Ford plants at Bridgend and Swansea, the Newport barrage, the valleys programme, the Ebbw Vale garden festival, and the A55. All those projects are bringing hope, new life and new interest to Wales.

The Government are transforming the Principality. They are transforming it from the declining employee-centred economy that it had become over several generations, to a thriving modern society which has faith and confidence in itself. That confidence comes as jobs are created by Welsh-based men and women who are already eager to strike out on their own account rather than wait for the Government, or whoever, to bring them work and benefit from outside like some sort of cargo cult. In that respect, I fully support the hon. Member for Cardiff, West. He talked a great deal of sense and I welcome what he had to say.

This Administration are intent on reforming educational standards. Enterprise agencies are appearing. This is a world in which Marxism is becoming increasingly passé, whether in China, Moscow, Poland or Hungary. All those countries are privatising and discovering the need for profits and losses and that there is no need for the Labour party's old-fashioned approach. I believe that they know that, otherwise there would not be such a deafening silence about renationalising former state-owned businesses and firms, or so little talk about reinforcing municipal monopolies or hamstringing private coach and bus companies. It is not just that they could not afford to repurchase British Gas or the National Freight Corporation; they no longer have the stomach for it.

If the Labour party no longer stands for state ownership, or even for unilateral or other disarmament, what does it stand for? I cannot believe that, in their hearts, Welsh men and women really see the right hon. Member for Islwyn as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, or the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside as a replacement for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. My right hon. Friend has brought a new spirit and a new confidence to political and public life in Wales.

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

## Competition Policy

*Motion made, and Question proposed*, That this House do now adjourn. *[Mr. John M. Taylor].*

10 pm

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): I am pleased to have the opportunity of raising the important subject of competition policy in the United Kingdom, particularly as it relates to the public interest and to the workings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. In developing my case, I wish to ask the Minister a number of relevant and important questions.

Is he satisfied that the Government's preoccupation with competition issues will not lead to substantial parts of British industry being put at risk by the level of investment in United Kingdom companies by highly geared entrepreneurs? It appears to be recent Government policy to have regard only to the financial difficulties likely to flow from high gearing and low interest cover where such financial difficulties could have an adverse effect on competition. Why do the Government no longer consider that the possibility of financial failure of itself involves real public interest issues?

Does the Minister think that companies with extremely complex and opaque shareholding structures, established in countries such as Australia, that do not have the same disclosure demands as this country, should be forced to make full disclosure of their precise shareholding structure and of directors' remuneration before being permitted to acquire United Kingdom companies? In particular, should an overseas company with a record of very different, and less acceptable, accounting standards be considered by the London international stock exchange for a full listing and share quotation?

Does my hon. Friend the Minister feel that overseas companies attempting to take over British companies with substantial assets and large numbers of employees should first adopt accounting standards and conventions practiced in the United Kingdom? I believe that this is very much a matter of public interest.

Does the Minister agree that the needs of highly geared companies for cash flow mean that there is inevitably a potential adverse effect for the consumer and the employees in acquisitions by such companies, since this will inevitably create a need for higher prices on the one hand and lower costs on the other? For example, in the case of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and Elders IXL, Scottish and Newcastle would be likely to shed some 3,500 jobs.

For the benefit of my hon. Friend, let me say that if Elders is permitted to proceed with its bid for Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and is successful in taking over the company at £5 per share, Elders will be paying approximately £2 billion for the company. This would cost it £260 million a year in interest. As the Scottish and Newcastle profit is likely to be about £160 million in 1989-90, the interest cost of Elders IXL borrowing, above the company profitability, would be £100 million per annum. This would equate, first, to a sell-off of some £800 million worth of assets of Scottish and Newcastle and, secondly, redundancy for 3,500 employees. In short, this is what an Elders IXL takeover could mean for Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, for British industry and for employment in this country.

Is not the Minister concerned that the proliferation of bids from companies based outside the United Kingdom may result in important areas of British industry being controlled from outside the United Kingdom, thereby moving the centre of decision-taking outside our country, with adverse consequences for United Kingdom regions and for the infrastructure of services provided in those regions, which are so often dependent on local demand?

Companies with high levels of gearing and low levels of interest cover by reference to normal United Kingdom standards tend, in time—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister knows this—to face financial difficulties. Such pressures also lead such companies to seek acquisitions which are rich in cash flow and assets and where extraordinary profits on break-up can help fund the companies requirement for dividends and debt servicing. Is that not just typical of the record and reputation of Elders IXL? The activities of certain foreign companies, notably Australasian companies, in the United Kingdom takeover market, having high gearing and low interest cover levels, is a matter of deep concern to me, the House and the British public.

There is, in many quarters of finance and industry in Britain, a considerable unease over the motivation and influence of that group of Australasian entrepreneurs whose sights appear to be set on raiding United Kingdom assets. Can we be happy that the unfettered activities of those modern-day buccaneers are achieving anything constructive for the future of the United Kingdom economy, or is their motivation largely self-interest, with the inherent risk remaining that assets will be moved offshore and United Kingdom taxes skilfully avoided to the long-term disadvantage of this country.

Taxation has been an issue in Australia where, inter alia, Elders has been a thorn in the flesh of the tax authorities. They have been in considerable disagreement about the amount of tax paid by the Elders group of companies into the Australian national coffers. There must be a likelihood as already recently demonstrated by Equiticorp and Mr. Holmes á Court, to name but two, of serious risk to others in the financial strategies of those companies.

A good example of highly geared Australian companies seeking to acquire United Kingdom industrial interests is the present attempt by Elders IXL to acquire Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. Elders is a company with various cross-shareholdings, common directorships and other links with numerous further companies. A company called Harlin, which is based in Monaco, has some 20 per cent. of Elders ordinary share capital undiluted together with various options. Another company called Petitio owns a further 18 per cent. of Elders undiluted share capital. Petitio is owned 50:50 by AFP Investments Ltd. and Goodman Fielder Watty. Harlin and Petitio together control nearly 40 per cent of Elders undiluted share capital and if Harlins options were exercised it would control nearly 46 per cent. of undiluted capital.

It is crucial to understand the shareholding structure in order to appreciate the indebtedness and crippling level of gearing that surrounds Elders IXL. Harlin has gearing of some 600 per cent. and Petitio has a gearing of nearly 200 per cent. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware that gearing ratios show the ratio of debt to shareholders' funds. Fairly calculated, the gearing ratio of Elders is

*[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]*

about 218 per cent. now and will rise to just under 400 per cent. on the acquisition of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. That is a ratio of nearly 4:1.

Harlin is a rather interesting company. Elders' 1988 report stated that Harlin was jointly owned by senior executives of Elders and their associates, the Elders superannuation fund and AFP Investments. However, it appears that all the shares in the company, as at February 1988, were held by the directors of Elders, the majority being owned by John Dorman Elliot. At that time the company was known as Pyalong Ltd.

What is worrying is that that appalling monumental indebtedness and fearsome gearing is not getting any better for Elders IXL, as can be seen from its interim figures for the six months to 31 December 1988, which appeared in mid-February. It announced an increase in profits of 12 per cent., although that depended on a low tax charge of about 20 per cent. of profits. Profits before tax and abnormal items would be down by 18 per cent., and, before interest, down by 23 per cent. The supposed increase in post-tax profits of 12 per cent. was stated by Elders to represent an increase in earnings per share of 5 per cent. However, for the present statement, Elders has recalculated earnings per share on the basis of the number of shares outstanding at the end of the period. Had it continued to apply the basis that was used last year, earnings per share would have fallen by 5 per cent.

That shows the sort of fraudulent activities that that company is prepared to get up to hide its true indebtedness and gearing.

In September 1986, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—I refer to the Elders-Allied Lyons report—asked, first, that the Bank of England and the stock exchange should consider whether the appearance of highly leveraged bids in the London market made desirable the introduction of any new powers of control; and, secondly, if so, whether effective control could be exercised by reference to levels of capital gearing or interest cover. Thirdly, it suggested that the Department of Trade and Industry, represented by my hon. Friend the Minister, and the appropriate City regulatory authorities might consider whether any change was desirable in the rules to require the consent at a general meeting of the shareholders of the bidding company before a bid may be completed.

Will the Minister report on what consideration has been given by him and his Department—and with what result—to whether any such new powers of control or rules are desirable? If it is considered undesirable to introduce guidance or new powers of control in relation to gearing and interest cover for all companies, large or small, would it nevertheless be desirable in relation to large takeovers, in which significant United Kingdom assets, substantial United Kingdom employment and other issues are involved, for minimum standards of gearing and interest cover to be insisted on by the Government of this country?

Does the Minister support the concept of a future British brewing industry which two or three mega-companies dominate, as in Australia, where Elders and the Bond Corporation supply over 90 per cent. of the beer market? Is that in the public interest? Is that not a danger to competition? More particularly, is the Minister aware of the statement by Elders which was reported in *The Sunday Times* of 12 February of this year that Britain will follow other major beer markets such as Australia, America and Canada, which are characterised by market leaders with up to 40 per cent. market shares, and that it expects to be able to drive up its share of the United Kingdom beer market to more than 40 per cent.?

The House should know that in Australia there is a body called the National Companies and Securities Commission—rather like the United States Securities and Exchange Commission—which, in 1988, conducted an inquiry into Elders' relations with the Broken Hill (Proprietary) Co. Ltd.—Australia's largest company.

Is the Minister aware that the NCSC report was highly critical of Elders and that, had its detailed findings been known in time, the MMC might not have given Elders the clearance that it gave at the time? Elders now claims that that clearance by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is proof positive of its fitness to own important parts of United Kingdom industry; hence its attempts to acquire Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and also its attack upon Metal Box.

More particularly, from the NCSC report, is my hon. Friend the Minister aware that Elders was in a position to present itself to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the Allied Lyons referral only as a company strengthened by the subscription of BHP to 1 billion Australian dollars of capital by, first, inducing at least two of the banks to participate in the loan to finance that transaction by misrepresentations as to the true nature of Elders' intentions; secondly, failing to disclose to the banks the forthcoming issue of preference shares to BHP for 1 billion Australian dollars; and, thirdly, "green mailing" BHP to make that subscription using leverage which Elders had acquired by its acquisition of a 19·9 per cent. interest in BHP?

Is the Minister aware that Elders caused the terms of the separate undertaking it had given to the banks in relation to Allied Lyons to be given in a side letter for the purpose of shielding its terms from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, that the NCSC declined to accept the evidence of Elders on some matters and that the evidence it gave conflicted directly with the evidence given on behalf of at least one of the banks?

In allowing Elders to acquire Courage in the autumn of 1986, after the publication of the NCSC report, did my hon. Friend the Minister and his Department take into account the findings of the NCSC report; and, if not, why not? If they did, why was it not thought right for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to be asked to reconsider the issues in the light of the detailed findings of the NCSC concerning Elders?

Does the Minister consider it desirable for one major brewer—Elders-Courage—to achieve its desire to control one of the three major suppliers of cans to the British brewing industry? I refer to Metal Box. That may have the result of denying a source of can supply to the rest of the United Kingdom brewing industry and may increase the concentration in the supply of beer and cans. I put a straightforward question to the Minister: does he think it desirable for one major brewer—Elders-Courage—to purchase a major supplier of cans to the British brewing industry? Is that what competition is about?

I shall now move briefly to the issues raised by the unsavoury events of the morning of 10 November 1988. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am grateful to my hon. Friends for coming to this debate and showing their

support for what I am about to say. I was speaking about the morning of 10 November 1988 when Elders chose to fly in the face of accepted City conduct by ignoring the gentlemen's agreement between industry, the Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Trade and Industry that after a reference no further purchases of the shares of the company being bid for should be made.

That shameful 45 minutes of casino trading was described by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry merely as "regrettable", but was apparently considered by Elders to be acceptable financial conduct. It resulted in Scottish and Newcastle Breweries suffering from actions that have now been rendered impossible by the Department's new practice of issuing what are known in the City as "Elders orders". Such practice is now reflected, as the Minister will know, in clause 100 of the new Companies Bill. In the light of that, does the Minister not consider it outrageous for dealers and market makers associated with a bidder in a bid situation to have sold short to the bidder shares in the target at considerable profit to the parties concerned? I put that question to him, and I hope that I will receive an answer.

Where holdings of material influence are acquired by bidders prior to, or after, a bid being referred, can the Minister assure the House that in the event of an adverse finding by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission he will take all the necessary steps to ensure that the divestment of such material interest contrary to the public interest will be achieved as swiftly and effectively as possible?

I fervently hope that at no time, or under any circumstances, will anyone be able to claim that Elders IXL and Mr. John Elliott were in a privileged position because he is the president of the Australian Federal Liberal party, which is the Australian equivalent of the Conservative party in the United Kingdom and because he has employed the services of a former Conservative Member of Parliament who lost his seat in 1987 and who, for a time, served as a Minister in the Scottish Office and in the Department of Trade and Industry.

Can the Minister give an assurance to those who are deeply interested in the whole issue and in the principles at stake that, if the Monopolies and Mergers Commission finds that the merger between Elders-Courage and Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, creating the largest concentration in beer supply and pub ownership in the United Kingdom, would be against the public interest, the Secretary of State will not overrule the finding of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

In conclusion, I give a clear message to Mr. John Dorman Elliott, who brags to the Australian press and to the boys back home that he has easy access to No. 10 and to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. His colleages in the Australian Liberal party may be impressed but—and I say this rhetorically—"You cannot buy after hours shares in 10 Downing Street." Again I say to Mr. John Dorman Elliott of Elders IXL that I do not believe that his taking over of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries is in the national interest or the public interest, and that No. 10 Downing Street is certainly not for sale.

10.20 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude):** My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has put a number of comments on his characteristically forthright way and has asked a great many questions. I know that this subject is of great concern to him and to the whole House and we have listened with respect to the way in which he has put his views. I am glad to see in the Chamber my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). I know that they have a close interest in this matter.

I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield, who said in what I suspect was an optimistic frame of mind that he hopes that I will answer all the questions that he asked. I think that he understands that, because of the subject matter, it simply is not possible for me to do so.

My hon. Friend spoke principally about the Elders IXL bid for Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. Those issues are now in the process of being investigated thoroughly by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The MMC is to report by 8 March this year, which is next week.

It is for the MMC to decide whether the merger would be against the public interest, in accordance with the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973. It would be entirely inappropriate for me to comment on this particular case while it is in the commission's hands, as any such comment might prejudice the conduct of the MMC's inquiries. The MMC has a duty to take all relevant matters into account when preparing its report.

My hon. Friend—and indeed any other interested person or body—has had ample time to put his views to the commission during the course of its inquiry. I do not ask whether my hon. Friend has done so, but he is experienced in such matters and I am sure that he will have taken that opportunity.

The reference of this bid to the MMC thus falls full square within our usual policy on mergers—that the main criterion for deciding whether to refer a bid or merger to the MMC should be the effect on competition in the United Kingdom. However, it does not follow that the bid will automatically be blocked. There is a power to block the bid only if the MMC finds it to be against the public interest. If it finds that the merger is not against the public interest, my right hon. and noble Friend has no powers to take any action.

While competition is the main consideration in considering whether to refer a bid or merger to the MMC, my right hon. and noble Friend retains the power to make a reference on other public interest grounds. I understand, of course, that the uncertainty associated with a merger can be disconcerting for those concerned, especially for the work force of a company that is the object of a bid. I know that all those who are employed by Scottish and Newcastle are making their fears and anxieties known and—perfectly properly—my hon. Friend has written to me on their behalf on several occasions.

It has been for the MMC to examine the issues put to it over the past months. Although we have made it our policy to make competition the principal consideration when deciding whether to refer a merger, the MMC is not

*[Mr. Francis Maude]*

restricted by that consideration. It can consider all aspects of the public interest, and has a duty as well as a power to take all relevant matters into account.

My hon. Friend mentioned takeover bids for companies based in the United Kingdom by companies based overseas. There is perhaps a tendency to infer from the remarks that he has made tonight, and from remarks by others concerned about the issue, that the process is entirely one way. I think that my hon. Friend will know that the reverse is the case. It appears from the past 12 months for which figures are available that Britain is very much on the offensive.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** I am not concerned about straightforward fair competition takeovers of companies here by companies abroad, or vice versa. I am concerned —and I associate my concern with this takeover—about the extraordinary share structure of the company and its massive indebtedness. Will my hon. Friend direct his remarks to those issues?

**Mr. Maude:** I think that my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot do that, because those are precisely the sort of matters which, no doubt at his instigation and that of others, the MMC is investigating at present. It would be quite wrong of me to express an opinion now.

My hon. Friend expressed views on overseas takeovers of British companies in general. Over the past 12 months for which figures are available there were considerably more than twice as many takeovers by British companies of overseas companies as the reverse, certainly in terms of value. We are rather good at that in this country; it is a sign of the confidence and expertise of British business. I am sorry that I am not able to answer my hon. Friend's interesting questions, but I think that, with his considerable experience in these matters, he will understand why I cannot do so.

**Mr. Winterton:** Will my hon. Friend direct his mind to one or two other questions that I put about the MMC's observations on other occasions, relating to earlier issues referred to it, suggesting that the Government might act?

**Mr. Maude:** In so far as those observations relate to a previous inquiry by the MMC into Elders IXL, I think that my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot do as he asks. I will, however, set out clearly our views on the general issue of "leveraging". We will not decide to refer a bid or merger to the MMC simply on the basis of leveraging. We regard competition as the principal criterion for referring a bid. If competition is likely to be damaged, or if a serious competition issue is raised by a merger—my hon. Friend made much of competition in respect of this case—we will refer it. Competition, indeed, was the issue that prompted my right hon. and noble Friend to refer the bid. All that that means is that an issue merits full investigation by the MMC, and that is taking place.

Although it is our policy not to make a reference to the MMC on the basis of leveraging alone, if a bid is referred on competitive grounds—as this bid was—the MMC wil not be debarred from looking into all such relevant matters. I can say no more than that, but my hon. Friend has had the chance to make representations to the MMC.

**Sir Hector Monro** (Dumfries): May I take up the issue of the public interest? Will my hon. Friend give me an absolute assurance that he will take into account the fact that a major loss of jobs in Scotland, particularly the loss of one of Scotland's biggest businesses, would be catastrophic?

**Mr. Maude:** That issue also will no doubt have been put to the MMC, and, as I have said, the MMC has a duty to take all relevant matters into account—certainly the matters put to it. My hon. Friend has made his point vigorously.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 2 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS HULL BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*

INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL *(By Order)*

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 March.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Crime (Greater Manchester)

1. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Greater Manchester for 1988.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten):** We hope to publish the final crime figures for 1988 shortly. Current indications are that the figures for Greater Manchester are likely to show a drop of about 8 per cent. compared with 1987.

**Mr. Burt:** May I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply? Will he confirm that it seems that within those statistics, there will be a pleasing drop in robberies and burglaries, for which all those involved in neighbourhood watch should be thanked? Will he also note my constituents' concern about the continuing unwelcome growth in violent crime? What reassurance does he have for us in Greater Manchester that we shall see more bobbies on the beat?

**Mr. Patten:** My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has recently ensured just that by allocating Greater Manchester an extra 45 police in his recent announcement, which is the second highest number given to any police authority. I also believe that the fact that burglary rates and property crime are declining so fast will continue to free more time for the police to concentrate on violent crime. The Greater Manchester police are already concentrating on various initiatives concerned with public disorder and I am sure that they will continue to have the desired effect.

**Mr. James Lamond:** Does the Minister realise that his rather complacent attitude will not go down well with the many thousands of pensioners who were represented in the House recently with a petition calling for more police in the Greater Manchester area? Although the Minister may boast that the Home Secretary has been able to allocate an additional 45 police men, that does not measure up well to the request by the Greater Manchester police authority for 258 extra police men, whom it needs to carry out its duties correctly. He gave less than one fifth of the number requested.

**Mr. Patten:** I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not set greater store by first, the increased numbers of police my right hon. Friend has made available to the Greater Manchester force and secondly, the increased amount of time that that will make available for the investigation of serious crimes against elderly people. Thirdly, burglary rates and property crime are coming down so fast that the Greater Manchester police will have considerably increased time for the investigation of crimes against the elderly. Fourthly, I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not welcomed the recent excellent initiative financed by the local gas, water and electricity boards in a specific crime prevention campaign aimed at helping the elderly in the Greater Manchester area.

## Television Companies

2. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the participation by non-European Economic Community nationals in the ownership and operation of United Kingdom television companies.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton):** We have received over 2,200 responses to our broadcasting White Paper, many of which touch on ownership questions. We propose to continue the prohibition on control of television and radio franchises by non-EC companies, except that we are considering further whether that restriction should apply to local delivery franchises.

**Mr. McCrindle:** Does my hon. Friend share my concern about the concentration in ownership of the media and, in particular, about the fact that, to a considerable extent, the printed media are in the same ownership? With the arrival of satellite broadcasting, should we not be considering the introduction of new safeguards to keep the matter under some control?

**Mr. Renton:** I understand very well my hon. Friend's point. In the White Paper we propose extensive and effective ownership rules against the excessive concentration of ownership. The White Paper sought comments on a set of principles on which such rules might be based and, as my hon. Friend knows, the Director-General of Fair Trading is currently considering the changes that have taken place in newspaper publishing in the past few years and the growing involvement in other media of leading newspaper groups.

**Mr. Worthington:** Given the wholly regrettable concentration of power in the newspaper industry, is it not clear that there should be no cross-ownership between the newspaper industry and television industries and no ownership of television companies by individuals or companies outside the EEC?

**Mr. Renton:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. We are considering carefully the suggestions that have been made to us by those who say that newspaper interests in, for example, the ownership of regional Channel 3 licences, should be strictly controlled.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** Can my hon. Friend assure the people of Britain that proper standards, in terms of the non-exploitation of violence and sex, will apply to the non-English channels as they come into this country?

**Mr. Renton:** Yes, Sir. We are, we hope, within sight of agreeing a convention in the Council of Europe and that is likely to be followed by an EC directive. The convention and the directive will set minimum standards of taste and decency and provide mechanisms for enforcing them. That will give some control over trans-frontier satellite channels not uplinked in this country.

**Mr. Hattersley:** Does the Minister recall that during our debate on broadcasting there was support on both sides of the House for the idea of the Government making a general reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the subject of television ownership—particularly by newspapers and foreign companies? Are the Government prepared to make such a general reference?

**Mr. Renton:** As the right hon. Gentleman knows, those matters are more within the remit of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The right hon. Gentleman should take on board the fact that the Director-General of Fair Trading is reviewing the matter, taking into account the White Paper on broadcasting and the concentration of ownership of titles, as well as recent developments in newspaper wholesaling. Clearly, that is potentially a wide-ranging review.

## Prisoners (Medical Treatment)

3. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what medical treatment is being given to Paul Hill, Paddy Armstrong, Gerard Conlan and Carole Richardson, currently in Her Majesty's prisons.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg):** Specific clinical information relating to individual prisoners is confidential and is not normally disclosed. Appropriate medical treatment under the care of prison medical staff is available to all prisoners.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Is the Minister aware that there is considerable concern among the families of the four prisoners convicted of the Guildford pub bombings about their medical condition? Paul Hill, who is in Albany prison, had to wait two years to have a saliva gland removed, and even then, the operation was only half done. Paul Hill is at least 3 stone underweight. The other three prisoners are all receiving various forms of medical and psychiatric attention. Is not that a condemnation of the prison service in which they have been held for the past 14 years?

In the light of that, will the Minister make arrangements to ensure that the four receive all the medical treatment that they require, that their mothers are allowed to visit them on Mothers' day next Sunday and that they are moved to London prisons, where it is easier to get medical support and where it would be easier for their legal representatives to visit them in the run up to the reference to the Appeal Court, which I assume is expected some time later this year?

**Mr. Hogg:** The hon. Gentleman and I corresponded about this matter last year and I looked into a number of the points that he raised then. I concluded that there was no ground for anxiety—indeed, two of his suggestions proved to be incorrect.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman, however, that every prisoner has a right to proper medical treatment. I shall examine the specific criticisms that he has made today to see whether I can satisfy myself on them and, if he would care to expand his criticisms in writing, I shall, naturally, give him a full reply.

## Police Efficiency

4. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made to improve the efficiency of police forces in England and Wales and to obtain value for money.

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** The Home Office works with chief officers of police and local police authorities to secure value for

money in the police service. Significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness have been achieved, with the encouragement and support of my Department and Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary. Through the civilianisation of police posts some 3,900 police officers have been released for operational duty in the past five years. Procedures have been streamlined and unnecessary paperwork eliminated. Support services have been contracted out. Efficiency scrutinies have been carried through and much has been achieved through local initiatives. Still further improvements in value for money in the police service will remain a high priority.

**Mr. Bennett:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Dyfed Powys police force which covers Pembrokeshire and which, yet again, has the highest clear-up rate in England and Wales and has been especially vigilant in catching a number of drugs-smuggling gangs in recent years? Does he share my concern that the clear-up record of a number of police forces is pretty poor? When does he intend to introduce performance indicators so that the police and the public may judge the records of individual police forces?

**Mr. Hurd:** I join my hon. Friend in congratulating Dyfed Powys on the achievements that he mentioned and on securing better value for money by bringing in divisional operational support units which release officers for operational work and provide a better service. One cannot be too mechanical about performance indicators as it is not easy to measure the value of police work, but Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary is working on it as an aid, but not a total answer, to the crucial job of ensuring value for money from the police service. It is worth noting that it now costs £2,000 to provide cover for any particular place by one uniformed police officer for one week. That is the measure of the cost and the reason why we have to emphasise value for money.

**Mr. Duffy:** Does the Home Secretary agree that two important steps that he could take to improve the efficiency of the police would be to adopt the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs to end the disturbing under-funding of forensic services and to harness genetic fingerprinting?

**Mr. Hurd:** I need to study very carefully the Select Committee recommendations on forensic services. Forensic services have been through a turbulent and unsettled time with many inquiries, the reasons for which were analysed by the Select Committee. I hope that, under new leadership and with extra resources and staff, they are now emerging from that and will continue to provide a service of a quality which the Select Committee recommended and proclaimed. I also agree with the hon. Gentleman's second point.

**Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that in spite of local Labour opposition, one of the greatest aids to police efficiency in Wolverhampton has been the introduction of video cameras? Wolverhampton is the first town in the United Kingdom to introduce video cameras and in a very short time there has been a dramatic reduction in criminality, which is now at an all-time low. In paying tribute to the police will my right hon. Friend consider recommending that other police authorities follow suit, particularly in inner-city areas that need a considerable police force to man the streets and town centres?

**Mr. Hurd:** The west midlands police force, which serves my hon. Friend's constituency, is certainly a pioneer in working out new techniques and methods of effectively using police officers. Her point about video cameras in public places aroused a certain amount of apprehension at first, but if they are properly placed and organised, the public regard them not as a menace to individual liberty, but as part of the protection of the citizen which they expect the police to provide.

**Mr. Wigley:** Is the Home Secretary aware that in the north Wales police force there has been a civilianisation of some 54 per cent. compared with an average of only 22 per cent. for all forces during the past 10 years, yet despite that the North Wales police force is still 120 men on the beat short of the figure that was established in 1972? Is he aware that that was the only force out of the 36 that applied for more policemen on the beat to be refused? Given the serious problems in north Wales, of which he is well aware, will he reconsider that decision?

**Mr. Hurd:** There has been a particular problem in north Wales which I shall not describe in detail today, in regard to the allocation of people for the new probationer training. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman on the specific point that he raised.

**Mr. Rathbone:** My right hon. Friend will be aware of the shortage of police in Sussex as well as in Wales. In an attempt to ease their burden, will he encourage greater recruitment and the use of special constables, who can perform a useful function particularly in rural areas?

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree with my hon. Friend. One of our aims has been to encourage police forces throughout England and Wales to step up the recruitment of special constables. We held a conference on that matter in London not long ago. After a period of decline, I hope that people will come forward and that police forces will step up their efforts to recruit. A key element is sensibly to work out the exact tasks which special constables can do, and I hope that substantial progress is being made on that.

## Police Manpower (Leicestershire)

5. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the level of police manpower in Leicestershire.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend has approved an increase of 27 police posts in the establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary with effect from 1 April 1989, bringing it to 1,760 officers. Fifty four extra posts have now been approved for the force since May 1979. In addition, the chief constable has been successful in recent years in returning about 130 police officers to operational duties through civilianisation and other efficiency measures.

**Mr. Janner:** Is the Minister aware that in 1985, chief constable Goodson asked for an increase of 256 officers and got none? The following year, his successor, chief constable Hurst, asked for a total of 136 additional officers by this year. He got none in 1986, 1987 or 1988. The allocation of a total of 18 officers plus nine probationers

this year is ridiculous, inadequate and ludicrous, when violent crime has doubled since the Government came to power, and all types of crime are still increasing throughout Leicestershire.

**Mr. Hogg:** I have increasingly noticed that the hon. and learned Gentleman is so excitable that he has a tendency to leave his judgment at home. That being so, I shall tell him a few facts which, if he cares to reflect on them, he will find rather comforting.

For example, in 1978-79, £15·65 million was spent on his constabulary police force. Today, the figure is £52·77 million. The police and civilian strength of the force has been increased by 222. The chief constable has managed to bring 130 more officers on to operational duties by way of civilianisation, and he has identified a further 63. That is a considerable expansion in the number of policemen on operational duties.

**Mr. Latham:** Does my hon. Friend recall replying to an Adjournment debate which I introduced on this matter and which was supported by most, if not all, Leicestershire Members? Is he aware that Conservative Leicestershire Members do not speak in the dismissive way in which the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) speaks? We are glad that there has been an increase in manpower, but we look for further increases in years to come.

**Mr. Hogg:** I do, indeed, remember the Adjournment debate which was moved by my hon. Friend. He put the case infinitely more persuasively than the excitable question that hon. Members have just heard from the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

**Mr. Vaz:** Is the Minister aware that his Department has just approved the establishment of a 3 divisional headquarters in my constituency, at a cost to the taxpayer of £2·3 million, as a result of a campaign by local residents? Bearing in mind the figures that have been correctly put by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), in real terms there are only a couple of officers available per subdivision. Sickness, training and other matters must be taken into consideration. How on earth will the Government assure my constituents that they take law and order seriously? Does the Minister suggest that the chief constable should order cardboard cut-outs of police officers and stick them in the windows of Hambleton police station? Would he be minded to have a cardboard cut-out of the Home Secretary, to enable him to go around the country, lecturing and frightening the Asian community?

**Mr. Hogg:** The hon. Gentleman might have spent some of the time on his feet doing some homework. I have a bit of good news for him. The clear-up rate for his force, at 44·7 per cent.—I am using the 1987 figures—is much better than the rest of England and Wales, and there are 37 other forces with poorer records than his.

## Violent Crime

6. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to combat violent crime.

**Mr. Hurd:** Police manpower has been increased substantially, and we will add a further 1,100 officers in 1989-90. We have increased maximum sentences and tightened up the law on the possession of knives and other offensive weapons as well as on under-age drinking. Last month, there came into force a prohibition on the private ownership of certain of the more lethal types of firearms such as the Kalashnikov rifle. Stricter controls on the issue of shotgun certificates and on the safekeeping of licensed firearms will follow later this year. We also introduced last month the new right of reference to the Court of Appeal by the Attorney-General of an over-lenient sentence.

**Mr. Jack:** Encouraging though that information is, my right hon. Friend would receive a different response from the members of the women's institute in my constituency in particular and from the women of Lancashire in general, who have vigorously campaigned to express their concern about the repugnant and violent crime of rape. What message does he have for them about the strong stand being taken by the Government on this crime? Can he reassure them that he will look again at the figure of eight extra officers in Lancashire next year and perhaps give us some more?

**Mr. Hurd:** I share the concern of my hon. Friend's constituents about rape. I hope that they will have noticed that in the last three years the sentences passed by the courts on convicted rapists have increased by 63 per cent., so that the average sentence is over six years. My hon. Friend will be aware that the clear-up rate for rape is relatively high at 71 per cent. As for police strength, Lancashire police force has 264 more officers than it had in May 1979, and we shall continue to consider the claims of Lancashire, as of other forces, as part of the substantial programme of further increases on which we are working.

**Mr. Heffer:** The Government say that we are now doing well, that people are better off than they ever were and that the country is doing better economically. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why, if that is the case, there is an increase in violent crime? Is it perhaps because of the nature of the society that has been created by Conservative Administrations in the last 10 years?

**Mr. Hurd:** There has been a decrease in some quarters in the total of recorded crime, and that decrease applies in Merseyside as well as in the country as a whole. But the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there continues to be an increase in the one in 20 crimes which are violent and which cause the most anxiety and anger. In the old days the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends attributed that —which of course has gone on for 30 years—to unemployment and poverty. Now he is attributing it to affluence and irresponsibility. I do not think that either explanation is right. But whatever is the right explanation, I am perfectly clear that given the drop in the total of recorded crime, we should concentrate increasingly—as the police will be able to do—on violent crime.

**Mr. Wheeler:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that one reason why recorded crime is increasing is that we are much better at recording it and more welcoming to women who wish to report rapes? When my right hon. Friend next writes to the women's institute, will he explain that women are more at risk within the family, or between known parties, and not so much at risk from strangers outside their own homes?

**Mr. Hurd:** Both of those points are correct. The police have altered the way in which they handle allegations of rape. They have followed a much more welcoming approach to the rape victim and that, as my hon. Friend says, has probably increased the number of recorded rapes and reduced the number which tragically happened but were not in the past recorded. My hon. Friend is right in the second part of his supplementary question, and the figures we published last week bear that out.

**Mr. Randall:** Is the Minister aware that while the Home Office has invited my city of Kingston upon Hull to participate in the safer cities initiative, which I support in principle, the Department of the Environment has slashed our inner-city money, which helps to reduce crime, by one third of a million pounds this year? How do the Government justify this Home Office initiative being undermined by the actions of another Government Department?

**Mr. Hurd:** I do not believe that it will be undermined. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman's city has accepted my invitation to join the safer cities scheme. The whole point is that the schemes are inter-agency and involve different Government Departments, local government and voluntary agencies so that we can identify a local specific profile of crime and then a local specific answer to it.

## National Identity Card

7. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the proposal for a national identity card; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hurd:** In addition to the advice of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the recommendations of the Home Affairs Committee, I have received some 380 letters on the subject of a national identity card from hon. Members and from the general public; most have expressed support for some form of identity card system.

**Mr. Bellingham:** Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that before we get too carried away with the idea of a national ID card scheme, we should listen very carefully to the advice of bodies such as ACPO, which urge caution? Does he also agree that there are strong arguments for a voluntary scheme and does he have any ideas and proposals in that direction?

**Mr. Hurd:** I am certainly not carried away by the idea of a compulsory identity card scheme. But with regard to advice, my hon. Friend is right. When I asked the chief police officers and chief constables to update the traditional police view on this matter, they wrote back saying that there were pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages; but they did not establish that there was a clear advantage as regards crime prevention in having an identity card scheme.

There would be some clear advantages in a voluntary scheme from the viewpoint of easy travel across Europe. There would be other advantages, too. We are considering whether a sensible scheme could be devised and put to the public and to Parliament.

**Mr. Marlow:** Would my right hon. Friend agree that without a compulsory national identity card scheme, it would be impossible to have a system of free movement between European countries and the United Kingdom for personnel, and that as there is not going to be a compulsory national identity scheme, we must continue to have frontier controls between the United Kingdom and other European countries?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is a wider question. Within the European Community, we are considering very closely what kind of checks would be sensible to carry out the declaration annexed to the Single European Act, which says that nothing in the Act should weaken our defences against the drug traffickers, terrorists and organised criminals.

## Public Transport (Safety)

8. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure the safety of citizens travelling on public transport.

**Mr. John Patten:** The security of passengers and staff on public transport is central to the responsibilities of Government, public licensing authorities, operators and the police. I understand that London Underground Limited is implementing a range of passenger security measures financed by a £15 million grant from the Department of Transport. The complement of the British Transport police on the Underground has been increased twice since 1986. Good progress has been made in investigating recent serious incidents on the Underground and British Rail.

**Mr. Graham:** Is the Minister aware that a posse of American vigilantes is educating and training a group of young men and women called the Guardian Angels to protect the interests of the travelling public on the Underground? Is he further aware that the security of mind among the travelling public, especially the elderly, has been disturbed, as they are terrified at the Government's lack of action and commitment to ensure that law and order are restored to transport in Britain? Will the Minister ensure that the public do not need to rely on vigilantes to ensure their safety on the Underground in London?

**Mr. Patten:** It is for that reason that the establishment of the British Transport police is to be increased from 350 to 400. That is exactly why the Government are encouraging the British Transport Police Authority to consider changing its statutory authority so as to allow British Transport police to recruit special constables. We do not want individual private citizens to take up the policing of this country. We wish them to join the special constables, to get a proper training and uniform, and to do a proper job.

**Sir Anthony Grant:** Has my hon. Friend seen an article in today's *Daily Mail* referring to an internal report and inquiry by British Rail showing a great and disturbing worry about crime by riff-raff on the line between Cambridgeshire and Liverpool street? Will he urge British Rail to publish the report so that all the facts can be known? Will he have discussions with his colleagues in the Department of Transport to see what can be done to help British Rail to stamp out those pests?

**Mr. Patten:** I have not read or seen the report by British Rail, although I have seen the report in the *Daily Mail*. I

shall pass on my hon. Friend's concern to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I am sure that British Rail is well aware that customers—as it increasingly refers to them, rather than passengers—need to feel safe and that if it wants to increase rather than decrease the number of its customers, it will need to address the issues firmly.

**Mr. Darling:** The Minister does not seem happy with his lot. As robberies on the London Underground doubled in the last three years, and the clear-up rate has fallen from 20 per cent. to 12 per cent., and bearing in mind the British Rail survey that showed that many women travel in fear on trains, will the Home Secretary lend more police to the British Transport police, or will his shoddy and short-sighted attitude towards spending public money where it is needed mean that more people will continue to travel in fear on the railways when, with a sensible allocation of resources, they would not need to do so?

**Mr. Patten:** The hon. Gentleman is ignoring the facts. An additional 50 police are going to the British Transport police. Before the establishment reaches the new level of 400, both the Metropolitan police and the City police are making available 80 of their own police forces to help. In addition, the considerable sum of £15 million for security measures in Underground stations, initially in some 13 stations on the Northern and Central lines, plus Oxford Circus, has been made available by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

## Metropolitan Police (Recruitment)

9. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Metropolitan police recruitment.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** A total of 2,160 officers were recruited to the Metropolitan police force during 1988, an increase of about 100 on the figure for 1987. On 31 January 1989 the strength of the force was 27,932, the highest ever and some 5,680 higher than in May 1979. The present establishment is 28,115 which could be reached by the end of March this year.

**Mr. Jessel:** Is my hon. Friend aware that those figures show an encouraging and welcome trend which is a considerable achievement both for the Metropolitan police and for the Home Office, considering all the other employment opportunities in the south-east? Does he agree that, as part of the fight against crime, the commissioner should aim to increase the number of police officers on the streets and on the beat in areas of outer London such as Twickenham?

**Mr. Hogg:** May I deal first with my hon. Friend's constituency of Twickenham? At the end of last year there were 349 police officers policing the Twickenham division, which was 18 more than in the previous year. I am aware that on 1 January the arrangements were changed and that my hon. Friend's constituency is now being largely policed from Richmond-upon-Thames station. Consequently, precise figures and comparisons are not possible. On the more general question, my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that at the end of 1987 the number of days worked on street duty had increased by 13 per cent. compared with the end of 1986, and that during 1988 there was a further improvement of 7·5 per cent. in hours spent on street duty. That will continue.

**Mr. Maclennan:** Does the Minister believe that the Metropolitan police are satisfied with their resources to deal with white collar crime?

**Mr. Hogg:** I very much hope so, because when the hon. Gentleman's party, as it then was, was in power in 1978-79 it was spending £295 million on the Metropolitan force and today we are spending over £1 billion.

## Police (Manning Levels)

10. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received as to whether the police manning levels which he has announced for 1989-90 are adequate to combat present and prospective rates of crime.

**Mr. Hurd:** I have received several representations from hon. Friends and hon. Members concerned about this announcement. Many of them have asked for more. The 1,100 extra police officers allocated this year will be followed by a further substantial programme of increases. Along with the other measures which we are taking, increases for 1989-90 will help to build on the recent welcome falls in total recorded crime so that we can concentrate more effectively on dealing with crimes of violence.

**Mr. Gow:** Despite greater police manpower and efficiency and better value for money than ever before, the reality is that crime in almost every part of the country is still increasing. Was my right hon. Friend's failure to meet the request from the chief constable and the police authority for a larger police establishment in Sussex due to the fact that he believed that more police men would fail to protect the innocent, or was it because he could not get any more money from the Chancellor?

**Mr. Hurd:** Although my hon. Friend's statement would have been true for almost all the past 30 years, it is not true now. The latest figures show a decline, year on year, across the nation of 3·7 per cent. in recorded crime. In my hon. Friend's own county of Sussex, where the crime level is well below the average, there has also been a very slight fall of about 1 per cent. Obviously, increasing the number of police officers is not in itself the whole answer to crime, but, nevertheless, I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise that the 1,100 additional policemen that I have announced for the coming year is on top of a record series of increases which have increased total expenditure on the police by 52 per cent. in real terms. That is a bigger proportion than for any other major public service, and it will be followed by a further substantial programme of increases in which any further claims from Sussex will be considered.

**Mr. Alton:** Does the Home Secretary agree that in inner city areas, especially those such as Liverpool, a powerful pressure for crime is the low street value of hard drugs such as crack and heroin? Does he agree that, when considering the establishments for local police forces next year, he should reconsider the size of drug squads to ensure that their activities are better co-ordinated and that the powerful drug barons are apprehended?

**Mr. Hurd:** Yes, indeed, I entirely agree with that. The building up of the drugs rings of regional crime squads has been a priority in policing. I am glad to say that they are increasingly effective and are gaining more and more accurate and timely intelligence from overseas. They will remain a priority.

**Mr. Alexander:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the special constabulary has an important role in reducing crime? What reassurance can he give the House that its role will be expanded and recruitment to it increased?

**Mr. Hurd:** As my hon. Friend knows, we are certainly pressing for that. I hope that, after the conference on the subject that we organised in London and after the lead given by many chief officers of police, we shall see a steady build-up of special constables, not just in quantity but in the quality and importance of their work.

**Mr. Corbett:** Will the Home Secretary confirm that West Midlands police have received an increase of only 70 uniformed officers since 1981, despite a crime rise that has been faster than the national average and ever-rising levels of crime against the person? Will the Home Secretary further confirm that those 70 extra officers came in response to a plea for 350 extra places, and that for 1989-90 there will be only 62 extra officers although the police authority asked for 1,500 over the next five years? Why does the Home Secretary insist on denying the west midlands the police officers that it needs to prevent and combat crime more effectively?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is ripe coming from the hon. Gentleman sitting on the Opposition Front Bench, repersenting the party which left the police in such a state in 1978. The west midlands has shared fully in both the main developments in this field in the past two or three years: a steady increase in the size of the police force and a welcome fall in the total of recorded crime.

### Radio

11. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he is doing in advance of any future broadcasting Bill to increase the choice available to radio listeners.

**Mr. Renton:** We have endorsed IBA proposals to award 20 incremental contracts for community radio and a further contract for a station covering Heathrow and Gatwick. In addition, we have authorised BBC and independent local radio stations to provide separate programmes if they wish on each of their current frequencies.

**Mr. Knight:** My hon. Friend mentioned the setting up of 20 community radio stations. Will he confirm that that is not the final figure, and that there is ultimately a good case for allowing a few hundred such stations to be set up? Will he tell us whether independent local radio stations will be allowed to apply for franchises, and will he confirm that in no circumstances will pirate radio stations still broadcasting be eligible?

**Mr. Renton:** I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced in January that anyone convicted of an illegal broadcasting offence committed after 1 January 1989 would be debarred from applying for a Radio Authority licence for five years.

In answer to my hon. Friend's first question, he is quite right: in due course, as more frequencies become available —particularly on VHF—the new Radio Authority will be able to license up to several hundred community radio stations if the demand exists.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher):** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Fearn:** Does the Prime Minister accept that her statement on BBC2's "Nature" programme yesterday that new fridges need new solvents and chemicals conflicts considerably with what was said by her Environment Minister, who earlier in the day ruled out such an observation?

**The Prime Minister:** The programme is being broadcast tonight.

New chemicals are of course required for refrigerators, and it is only on the assumption that those new chemicals can be found that we can dream of an 80 per cent. cut in the use of CFCs.

**Mr. William Powell:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that tomorrow will see the 10th anniversary of British Steel's announcement that it proposed to close the Corby steelworks, in which no fewer than 73 per cent. of those living in the town were then employed? Is she aware that in the past 10 years Corby has experienced the most dramatic industrial recovery, and may I pass on to her the thanks of my constituents for the massive help that the Government have given in the past 10 years?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The steelworks had to be closed. It is greatly to the credit of both the British Steel Corporation and the people of Corby that they rose to the challenge of enterprise, have created many new jobs and are now flourishing. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said about Government help.

**Mr. Kinnock:** What is the Prime Minister's excuse for the appalling trade deficit?

**The Prime Minister:** The trade deficit is being financed by people who are prepared to invest in Britain and who have full confidence in the country's economy, which has never produced a higher standard of living for our people than it does now.

**Mr. Kinnock:** It is obvious from that answer that the Prime Minister has no excuse. Will she therefore give the country an apology, as one is certainly due?

**The Prime Minister:** An apology for the fact that we have a higher standard of living, more jobs than ever before in history and a higher standard of social services than ever before? If the Labour Government had had such a record they would have been shouting it from the house tops.

**Sir Fergus Montgomery:** Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on the "Environment in Trust" leaflets that the Government published yesterday, which show the Government's commitment to improving the environment and rivers? Does she consider that a good deal more useful than being photographed in a white coat testing the waters of the Regent's park canal?

**The Prime Minister:** The booklets to which my hon. Friend referred, in a folder called "Environment in Trust", are excellent and give the full, the accurate and the very good record of this Government on the countryside, the environment, water, getting down pollution and reducing the difficulties which we have had previously with our bathing beaches. It is a better record than any previous Government in this country.

Q2. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Ashley:** Before the Prime Minister boasts too much about the Government's record on the environment and before she makes this famous broadcast, will she recognise that the consumer and environment problems now swamping her Government are a direct result of her personal philosophy of non-intervention? She is reaping her own whirlwind and people will be protected from the ravages of industry only by a Government who are committed to positive intervention. That applies whether the problem is eggs, the ozone layer or anything else.

**The Prime Minister:** I point out to the right hon. Gentleman that this Government have positively intervened to spend far higher capital on water than ever the last Government did, to spend far higher capital on the National Health Service, and to spend far higher capital on roads. That is because we have had far bigger prosperity under this Government than any previous Government and, in fact, we have been able to spend money on those things. I also point out to the right hon. Gentleman that, with regard to water matters and the state of the beaches, the bathing water directive was agreed in 1975 and the Labour Government did nothing about it for four years.

**Mr. Ashby:** When meeting Environment Ministers next week, will my right hon. Friend please take time to explain to them the most excellent Water Bill that is now before the House? Will my right hon. Friend explain to them that in relation to the environment the Bill takes measures to improve the waterways, the rivers and the beaches? Will she suggest that perhaps they should emulate us and produce a similar sort of Bill in their countries, specifically in Europe, to clean up the Rhine?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is correct. The most polluted rivers coming into the North sea are those which discharge into the German bight, which are the Rhine, the Weser and the Elbe, and they are responsible for most of the pollution in the North sea. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the water privatisation Bill will do two things. First, it will set up a separate National Rivers Authority and, secondly, it will make certain that the provision of water is very much more efficient than it has been in the past. I also point out that, although the Opposition talk a lot about water, they cut the capital expenditure on water by 20 per cent. We have put up the capital expenditure on water by 30 per cent.—*[Interruption.]* Have the hon. Gentlemen got the figures? Labour cut it by 20 per cent; we have put it up by 30 per cent.

Q3. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Canavan:** As yesterday was the 10th anniversary of the last Scottish referendum, did the Prime Minister attend any of last night's anniversary beanfeasts, where the Scottish representation appeared to be confined to Tory placemen, such as Lord Goold and the Duke of Buccleuch, and Tory rejects, such as Iain Sproat and Michael Hirst, whose opposition to a Scottish Parliament helped to lose them their seats in this Parliament? If the Prime Minister is that confident that Scottish opinion is truly and adequately expressed and reflected by such a parcel of rogues, can I call her bluff and dare her to hold another referendum now—or is she too scared?

**The Prime Minister:** I noted that it was the 10th anniversary yesterday. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is very glad that the referendum was rejected by the Scottish people, because otherwise he would not be here now, and he does, in fact, add greatly to the entertainment of the place.

Q4. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Porter:** Is my right hon. Friend aware—I know that she is—of the plight of the pre-1973 war widows? Is she equally aware that a large number of hon. Members from all quarters of the House believe that the case made by those ladies deserves early, sympathetic and positive consideration?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, but we have tried and, I think, have succeeded in giving both sympathetic and positive consideration to the case of war widows. There are two distinct pensions. One is that administered by the Department of Social Security and the other is the occupational pension, which differs according to whether service continued beyond 1973. The changes made in the occupational pension, coming under the Ministry of Defence, were not retrospective. Most occupational pension improvements are not retrospective. All war widows receive a tax-free pension under the war pensions scheme administered by the DSS, regardless of their husband's date of death or period of service. Those pensions are at preferential rates, some 30 per cent. higher than the national insurance widows' pensions, with age allowances ranging from £5·75 a week at 65 to £14·45 a week at 80. We have done a great deal for the war widows' pension which, as my hon. Friend knows, is tax-free.

**Mr. Flannery:** Has the Prime Minister taken note of Her Majesty's inspectorate's report on the alarming situation in our schools? Does she realise that virtually all the press, with the possible exception of Murdoch and company, are saying such things as *The Independent* said yesterday, when it described the situation as "a creeping

educational disaster"? Does she realise that the shortage of teachers, the imposition on teachers of the national curriculum and all the other difficulties that we are experiencing, are of such a nature that the Prime Minister and her Government are creating a situation in education that we have not hitherto witnessed in our lifetime?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me just quote from that particular report. It said:

"In the majority of schools and colleges standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory or better; initial teacher training and in-service training are in much better shape than a few years ago, and the introduction of the GCSE has shown that a combination of central direction and grass-roots professional development and commitment can bring about worthwhile change and improved standards . . . In many ways, then, the education service is well placed to face the future with some confidence."

Q5. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Malins:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation to house some of our homeless families is expensive and, in terms of quality, damaging to families and young children? Does she further agree that we should try to move towards the abolition of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but meanwhile we should encourage local authorities to use some of their empty stock and to insist that landlords should provide better conditions for the homeless?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Some local authorities in London have very little occasion to use bed-and-breakfast accommodation because they use their council properties very well indeed and they do not keep them vacant. It is absurd that inner London should have about 10,500 empty properties while Labour councils keep some 2,300 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** What about Westminster council?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**The Prime Minister:** If they used their vacant properties better they would have very much less need for the adverse bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

**Mr. Sillars:** Let me take the Prime Minister back to the ground where she was weakest this afternoon, the balance of payments deficit, which is cumulative. Is not the manifestation of that due to two factors? One was the destruction of manufacturing capacity during her first period of dictatorship, which was obscured from people by the fact that year after year she managed to filch billions of pounds in oil wealth from Scotland. Has she any plans for the future when we are not here to steal from?

**The Prime Minister:** Manufacturing output is at an all-time record. In Scotland people have done very well. Manufacturing productivity has increased by 5·6 per cent. per annum since 1979 and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the amount spent per head in Scotland vastly exceeds that spent in England and Wales.

Q6. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Couchman:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that 1992 offers a unique opportunity for British industry and commerce to take advantage of our membership of the European Community? Does she agree that the director-general of the Institute of Directors would do better to exhort his members to exploit that opportunity rather than make unconstructive and foolish criticisms of the EC's structure and personnel?

**The Prime Minister:** I have not read the speech but, as my hon. Friend knows, we are fervent believers in the single market. We believe in free and fair competition between all members of the Community. We agree that when we get that free and fair competition we shall have an excellent chance to do extremely well out of it, in both visible and invisible trade, and we are working to ensure that 1992 completes the single market because it will be to the benefit of our people here. I hope that all industry and financial and other services are taking maximum advantage of the time between now and then to prepare for it very well indeed.

## Business of the House

3.31 pm

**Mr. Frank Dobson** (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham):** The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 6 MARCH—Second Reading of the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Motions relating to Scottish community charge regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Access to Personal Files (Housing) Regulations.

TUESDAY 7 MARCH—Estimates day (1st Allotted Day). Debate on class IV, vote 3, so far as it relates to assistance to the egg industry. Details of the relevant Agriculture Committee report will be given in the *Official Report*.

Debate on funding of overseas students on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. Details of the relevant Foreign Affairs Committee report and the Government's observations will be given in the *Official Report*.

At Ten o'clock the Question will be put on all outstanding Supplementary Estimates and votes.

WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH—Motions on the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987 (Continuance) Order and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations.

Motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

Debate on a motion to take note of EC document relating to derogations in respect of weights and dimensions of heavy lorries. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 9 MARCH—Debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 10 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 13 MARCH—Motion for the Easter Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that subject to the progress of business it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Easter Adjournment on Thursday 23 March until Tuesday 4 April.

*Relevant documents.*

*[Monday 6 March*

*Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations (SI 1989 No. 32)*

*Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations (SI 1989 No. 63)*

*Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations (SI 1989 No. 241)*

*Tuesday 7 March*

*Estimates Day, class IV, vote 3 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: agricultural support, animal health, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection) so far as it relates to assistance to the egg industry.*

*First Report of the Agriculture Committee Session 1988-89 "Salmonella in Eggs" (HC 108)*

*Overseas Student Grants:*

*Fourth Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee Session 1987-88 FCO/ODA Expenditure 1988-89*

*Observations by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs on the fourth report from the Foreign Affairs Committee Session 1987-88 on FCO/ODA Expenditure 1988-89 (Cm. 518)*

*Minutes of Evidence taken on 1 March 1989 on the Funding of Overseas Students (HC 242)*

*Wednesday 8 March*

*Relevant European Community Document*

*4311/89 Weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles*

*Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee HC 15-xii (1988-89) para 4]*

**Mr. Dobson:** I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

Who will be replying to Tuesday's debate on eggs? Will it be a Minister from the Ministry of Health, or will it be a Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture—or will we be getting one of each?

Will the Secretary of State for Transport himself be introducing or replying to Wednesday's debate on heavy lorries?

When are we to get the long-promised debate on the Fennell report into the King's Cross fire? The report was published in November and, in view of the business that we have had this week and the business that he has announced for next week, it is getting a little bit difficult for the Leader of the House to argue that he cannot find time for that promised debate.

When will the Leader of the House be able to find time for the promised debate on the substitution of student loans for student grants? If he can get the Secretary of State for Education and Science into the House, rather than for a few photo-opportunities outside, could he get him to take part in a debate on Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools' report on the current state of our schools and, in particular, a debate on the shocking and growing shortage of teachers of mathematics and science?

When are we to have the promised debate on what the Government say is an all-important review of the National Health Service?

**Mr. Wakeham:** The hon. Gentleman asked me five questions about next week's business. In particular, he asked me which Ministers were to reply to certain debates. It is not usual for the names of Ministers responding to debates to be announced at this time, but I shall try to be helpful to the hon. Gentleman. Tuesday's debate on assistance to the egg industry will be answered by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government have only just received the report of the Select Committee and will be responding to the report in due course, in accordance with normal practice. The question of any other debate will have to wait until the response arrives.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has some very strong views on the subject of heavy lorries. As I said, it is not usual to announce who will speak in a debate, but I shall be extremely surprised if he does not take part in the debate next week.

I regret to tell the hon. Gentleman that I have nothing more to add to what I have said before about the Fennell report. There is to be a debate, but I cannot announce the date for it at the moment.

Again, I have nothing further to add to what I have said previously about student loans. The White Paper asked for a response to a number of points and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is considering them. I know that he would delight in taking part in a debate, but I cannot arrange one at the moment.

I agree that the National Health Service is a subject for debate, but I am not at present in a position to announce a date.

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): Will my right hon. Friend take steps today to ensure that the Government and British Rail have brought to their attention the proposals by a group of individuals who support a scheme called TALIS, which seeks to replace the four options proposed by British Rail for a high-speed rail link through the county of Kent? Is he aware of the total opposition in Kent and south London to British Rail's current proposals? Will he tell the House why he thinks that the Garden of England should be destroyed by British Rail for the sake of saving quarter of an hour on the journey time from Paris to London?

**Mr. Wakeham:** My hon. Friend tempts me to answer questions which go rather wider than the business for next week. The right procedure is for British Rail to consider all the options and to make its proposals known. Those proposals will require, as I understand it, legislation and the matter will, therefore, come before the House.

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): Is there to be any opportunity for a debate on remand prisoners and the proposals that the Home Secretary announced yesterday?

Given that the Secretary of State for the Environment yesterday ruled out legislation banning chemicals that damage the ozone layer, and as it is widely reported that the Prime Minister will tonight announce such legislation, will the Leader of the House clarify the position?

**Mr. Wakeham:** This is neither the time nor the occasion for me to announce legislative proposals of the Government. There is a proper procedure for that, and it is not for me to do so at the Dispatch Box today.

As for the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, he indicated the further work that was being considered, and I have no proposals for a debate on this subject.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson** (Newbury): Can my right hon. Friend say when there will be a debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in view of the fact that the period for the review which is taking place at present is not open-ended?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I realise that a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends would like a debate on this subject, and I recognise the need for one, but there are no immediate plans for a debate. It is a question of judgment as to what is the right time. On Wednesday there will be debates on a number of Northern Ireland matters, and it seems to me that, with a bit of ingenuity, my hon. Friend might then be able to make some of the points that he wants to make.

**Mrs. Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 498 concerning the report produced by three London boroughs on airline food safety?

*[That this House is appalled that nearly a quarter of all airline meals tested at Heathrow Airport contained excessive levels of potentially dangerous bacteria; notes that the survey was conducted by Hillingdon, Hounslow and Spelthorne Boroughs which cover the airport; further notes that most of the foods were prepared by the cook-chill method which has been implicated in many of the cases of listeria food poisoning, but notes that the foods were not tested for listeria and therefore calls for a further test by environmental health officers; is further concerned that an excessive level of E.coli, the bacteria associated with faecal contamination, was found in 209 separate dishes; and calls on the Government to take urgent action to ensure the safety of food eaten by airline passengers and to consult with all national and international agencies involved in food hygiene in air transport.]*

One quarter of all meals tested at Heathrow were found to contain potentially dangerous bacteria. Should not the Government initiate their own debate on food safety in the light of this report? Does the right hon. Gentleman advise airline passengers to take their own sandwiches?

**Mr. Wakeham:** As the hon. Lady will know, the report of the survey of airline meals undertaken between June 1984 and December 1986 is a useful document and is being drawn to the attention of national and international agencies involved in food hygiene in relation to air transport. When the survey was being conducted listeria was not regarded as a problem. In any case, there have been no reports of such problems with airline meals. The overall standard of airline catering is well controlled, and reported instances of food poisoning are relatively rare. However, the House may well discuss these matters whether or not I initiate a debate.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): My right hon. Friend will be aware that it is some time since the White Paper on planning and structure plans was published. In view of the deep interest that has been shown in this important matter—on both sides of the House, but especially amongst my hon. Friends representing constituencies in the south-east—can my right hon. Friend say that there will be an early debate on it?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I agree that it is an important matter, but since, at the moment, many other matters demand time, I cannot promise that there will be an early debate. However, I will certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's point.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House recall that a few weeks ago I called for a public inquiry into the methane explosion in Arkwright Town, in my constituency? Is he aware that Ministers are still at sixes and sevens over this proposal, that 40 families had to be evacuated, that these people lost substantial sums of money, that their houses have been devalued as a result of the explosion, and that there is continuing worry concerning the village? Will the right hon. Gentleman call upon the heads of the two Departments concerned—Energy and Employment—to try to ensure that there will be a public inquiry into the explosion so that my constituents may be assured that something is being done?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I will certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friends. I cannot accept the premise of the hon.

*[Mr. Wakeham]*

Gentleman's question, though it is perfectly proper that he should put it on behalf of his constituents. He deserves an answer, and I shall get him one.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): It is nearly 12 months since the Griffiths report was published. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend could find time for a debate on the recommendations in that report and on care in the community generally.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I cannot add anything to what I said last week. Active consideration is being given to the Griffiths report, and we hope to be in a position in the near future to bring forward our own proposals.

**Mr. James Lamond** (Oldham, Central and Royton): Can the Leader of the House tell us whether any consideration has been given to the possibility of inviting President Gorbachev, during his visit this country next month, to address both Houses of Parliament, perhaps from the Royal Gallery?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I know of no proposal to do so, though the suggestion certainly has its attractions.

**Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop** (Tiverton): Now that January 1989 has passed, can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether it will have an opportunity to take decisions on the crucially important report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure in time for its decisions to be implemented before the next tranche of private Bills is introduced in November?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's question, but I can add nothing more to the second part other than to repeat the answer that I gave a week ago—that I recognise the need for a debate. Much consideration had to be given to that very important report, and I have undertaken to have a debate shortly after Easter.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will remember that I have asked before about the possibility of clarification of press speculation concerning the British-Irish parliamentary tier. The right hon. Gentleman was not able to help me on that occasion. Since then announcements have been made. Is the right hon. Gentleman in a position to give the House some data about the matter? Will it be in a position, for example, to summon Ministers before it?

**Mr. Wakeham:** There have been some discussions, and some progress has been made, on the setting up of a parliamentary body that would seek to encourage contacts between the Westminster Parliament and the Parliament in Dublin, and I welcome closer contacts on it. There is considerable work still to be done before final arrangements are achieved. Of course I will see to it that discussions take place through the usual channels with all parties in the House before any announcement is made.

**Mr. Roger Moate** (Faversham): With regard to next week's debate on the proposal by the Community to impose heavier lorries on this country, can my right hon. Friend confirm that, in the Government's view, that matter is subject to the unanimity rule, and therefore is subject to a British veto? Does he agree that it is unsatisfactory that the House will be allowed simply to take note of that matter rather than express a view?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I agree that it is an important matter. I do not feel that it is appropriate at this time for me to go into the substance of the subject that the House will debate later next week, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will take part in it, and no doubt he will be able to give my hon. Friend satisfactory answers to his questions.

**Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse** (Pontefract and Castleford): Is the Leader of the House aware of the statement by Sir Robert Haslam on "Newsnight" last night, confirming a forecast made by myself and other hon. Members some time ago, that, arising out of the privatisation of electricity, he may find it necessary to close profitable pits? Is he also aware that, during this week, the closure of another two Yorkshire pits has been announced? Given that the average age of a miner is only 34, a man who will receive no weekly protection payments, and who is at present having great difficulty because of high mortgage interest rates, lives in fear of what may happen if he is thrown out of work. Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate to enable the Government to tell the House and miners what policies they have to provide alternative employment in mining communities which have already been savaged?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I recognise the hon. Gentleman's interest and concern in matters relating to mining. I suspect that many of the questions that he put to me are matters for the management of British Coal. Nevertheless, I shall refer his points to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I do not see an early opportunity for a debate on the coal industry, but we have debates from time to time, and I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's suggestions.

**Sir Richard Body** (Holland and Boston): Further to the question concerning next week's debate on heavier lorries, is it not the case that the House will not be able to take a decision on that matter? Therefore, if the matter is out of our hands what is the point of having a debate?

**Mr. Wakeham:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport wishes to hear the views of the House, and he will be reporting to the House. If I were to try not to have a debate, more of my right hon. and and hon. Friends might complain than the number of those who are welcoming the debate. On balance, I have probably done the right thing. If my hon. Friend does not wish to take part, I do not think that he need worry.

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the appropriate Minister to make a statement next week on the way in which the Government have operated in the past decade the Croham directive of 1977 on the provision of Government background factual and analytical material in arriving at decisions? To assist the House, does the Leader of the House consider it appropriate for all background factual and analytical material and the briefings relating to the British Antarctic Survey, and the alleged discovery by the Prime Minister of the gap in the ozone layer, to be placed in the Library? Without that information, she will not be believed.

**Mr. Wakeham:** The last part of the hon. Gentleman's question is not worthy of him. On the more general point, this Government have been very forthcoming in giving background information on many matters that are for the House to decide. They have been rather better in doing so than their predecessors. I know that there are difficulties, and that a number of Select Committees seem to be pressing the Government to make available the advice that officials give to Ministers. The Government are right to say that such information should not be made public.

**Mr. Ian Gow** (Eastbourne): Did my right hon. Friend really tell the House a few moments ago that we are to have a debate next Tuesday on the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture? Has he read that report? If he has, does he not think that, instead of having a debate next Tuesday, it would be better for the Select Committee to take its report away, rewrite it and get rid of all the muddled thinking and for us to have a debate on it after the revised report has been laid before the House?

**Mr. Wakeham:** The question whether we have a debate on the report is not primarily a matter for me. The Liaison Committee believed that the report should be discussed in relation to the Estimates day and I was happy to oblige. I have not read every word of the report, but I have read a number of parts of it. Perhaps my hon. Friend was referring to paragraph 101. If he was, I have some sympathy with his view.

**Mr. Eric S. Heffer** (Liverpool, Walton): In view of the fact that I have asked the Leader of the House for many weeks about safety in the construction industry—I think that I gave him a rest in the past two weeks—and that he will have noted that the early-day motion tabled by myself and other hon. Members had more than 220 signatures from hon. Members of all parties, will he assure me that we shall have a debate on that subject before the Easter recess? We may not be able to do anything about heavy lorries, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), but we can do something about safety in the construction industry. Is it not time that we had a proper debate and took some action to improve safety for workers in that industry?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about safety, as do the Government. The Government have a record that stands up to good inspection, while the industry itself has a record that, although it is improving, is not as good as it should be. I wish that I could meet his request for a debate in Government time, but I cannot do so. However, the Consolidated Fund debate and the Easter Adjournment debate would present opportunities for him to raise matters of concern, and it would be proper for him to do so.

**Mr. David Evans** (Welwyn Hatfield): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 494?

*[That this House notes the statement of the honourable Member for Lewisham East, published in the Birmingham Evening Mail on Friday 17th February 1989, to the effect that he was present at the football match Millwall versus Newcastle when, he is reported as saying 'I was at the Millwall versus Newcastle game when the club rooms, the directors and their guests were attacked'; further notes that the Chairman of Millwall Football Club, supported by senior officers of the police who were present, has repeatedly made it clear that this was a minor incident when two windows were cracked by visiting supporters who were under police escort at the time and that at no time were any directors of either club or their guests attacked or threatened, and that the Minister for Sport was unaware of this incident until his attention was drawn to it some time later; and, in these circumstances, has no hesitation in accepting the account of the Chairman of Millwall Football Club.]*

It is headed:

"Comments of the Minister for Sport"

and is thoroughly misleading. The motion states that my hon. Friend said:

"I was at the Millwall versus Newcastle game when the club rooms, the directors and their guests were attacked."

My hon. Friend actually said:

"In November, I was at the Millwall versus Newcastle game where the club rooms the directors and their guests were in were attacked."

Those who tabled the early-day motion should be brought to the House and made to withdraw it or resign from the Opposition Front Bench.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I have many responsibilities but, thank goodness, having to vouch for the accuracy of early-day motions is not among them. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have copies of both the *Birmingham Evening Mail* and of early-day motion 494. Either the hon. Members who tabled the motion were incompetent in their copying of the newspaper article, or they were misleading. I leave it to my hon. Friend to judge which it was.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): Is it not astonishing that the House has not been given an opportunity—and is apparently not to have the opportunity next week—to discuss issues arising from the publication of the book "The Satanic Verses"? As a committee of national British Muslim organisations first warned the Prime Minister last October of the grave offence caused by the book and the threat to public order posed by its publication, will the Leader of the House urge the Prime Minister to call upon the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary to see what fresh initiatives can be taken to defuse this dangerous and difficult situation? Will he also draw her attention to early-day motion 510, which some believe may offer the key to peace in this very difficult matter?

*[That this House urges Salman Rushdie to instruct his publishers in the United Kingdom and overseas to stop producing more or new editions of The Satanic Verses; and believes such action would persuade Muslims in Britain and overseas to end their protests against the book thereby stopping more death, injury and disorder, compel Ayatollah Khomeini to withdraw his odious death threat against Mr. Rushdie and enable Mr. Rushdie to live in peace and safety.]*

**Mr. Wakeham:** The hon. Gentleman is being grossly unfair. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary came to the House and explained the position on all the events of the past weeks. We made it abundantly clear that death threats against our citizens are totally unacceptable and quite incompatible with any kind of normal relations. Britain has the fullest respect for Islam and for Moslem communities here and abroad, and we fully understand the deep offence that the content of the book has given to Moslems, but that does not justify the statements that were made, which we think are totally unacceptable. The Government have made themselves very clear on this matter, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman phrased his question as he did.

**Mr. Robert McCrindle** (Brentwood and Ongar): Should we not have an early debate on the worrying and growing problem of personal debt? Among other things, we might focus on the seeming ease with which some people can gain access to credit cards and other forms of credit. Any citizens advice bureau will tell my right hon. Friend that the problem is growing throughout the country.

**Mr. Wakeham:** My hon. Friend, like me, represents part of the county of Essex, and I do not hear many of my constituents talking about the ease with which they get credit. Instead, I hear a number of complaints about the difficulty that they have in meeting interest charges on their existing borrowing. They all recognise, however, that this is a fundamental part of the process of controlling inflation. As my hon. Friend knows, there will be an opportunity after 14 March, extending to several days, to discuss such matters. It seems to me that his point would be highly relevant to the Budget debate.

**Mr. Greville Janner** (Leicester, West): In view of the characteristically offensive response given to me by a junior Home Office Minister at Question Time in reply to my question about inadequate policing in Leicestershire, and as the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) fairly said that this is not a matter of controversy between hon. Members on either side of the House who represent that county, may we please have a debate on the matter? The Minister of State, Home Office could then be called to account and would have to show some understanding of the concern of people who cannot go out at night without fear because there are not enough police men on the beat and because violent crime in our county has doubled since the Government came to power.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I was not present at Question Time and I therefore cannot accept the hon. and learned Gentleman's description of my hon. Friend's reply. I find my hon. Friend to be a most courteous and gentle person who usually gives good and clear answers. There is a solution available to the hon. and learned Gentleman. He could put in for a debate during our proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill. If it fell in the middle of the night, both the hon. and learned Gentleman and my hon. Friend would get their just deserts.

**Mr. Michael Latham** (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend arrange next week, or certainly before the beginning of April, for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to explain to the House how the abolition of charging for expeditions during school hours will work? Is he aware that there is considerable concern in rural schools about those proposals which I have raised with Ministers, but I cannot pretend that I have received satisfactory replies?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I recall that my hon. Friend raised the matter with me during a recent Adjournment debate. As the Easter Adjournment debate is coming up fairly soon, I shall get in touch with my hon. Friend before then so that I do not have to answer him again on that subject, but I regret that I cannot promise him an early debate.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): May I have a frank reply? Is the Leader of the House ever consulted by, or does he consult, members of the security services on matters relating to security? Before he replies, will he remember what happened during the Ronan Bennett affair? May I refer him to his reply to me last week?

"I am not prepared to answer questions on security."—[*Official Report*, 23 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. 1159.]

May I have a frank reply?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I have a very frank reply. I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave last week, except to say that I have not the remotest idea how the hon. Gentleman's question relates to next week's business.

**Mr. Kenneth Hind** (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the disinformation currently being circulated by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) about the White Paper, "Working for Patients". Will he give an undertaking that the House will have an early opportunity to debate the matter so that we can underline the fact that the Health Service will continue to be free, funded by taxation, and that my constituents will not have their hospital removed into the private sector, as the Opposition seem to suggest?

**Mr. Wakeham:** In regard to a debate, I have nothing to add to what I have said already. I do not know whether my hon. Friend refers to misinformation supplied by the hon. Lady before or after the White Paper was published.

**Ms. Joyce Quin** (Gateshead, East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 256?

*[That this House welcomes the opportunity to consider the Public Safety Information Bill, which comes up for its Second Reading on 24th February, and joins with the all-party group of honourable Members as well as such organisations as the British Safety Council, the Consumers' Association and the Scottish Consumers' Council, and also such local authorities as Slough Borough Council, Middlesbrough Borough Council, Harrogate District Council, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council, Wansbeck District Council and Bedfordshire County Council, in supporting the Bill; and further calls upon the Government to support the Bill and assist it in its passage through the House, thus ensuring that the Bill becomes law.]*

It relates to public safety information and it has been signed by more than half the number of right hon. and hon. Members. Does he accept that such widespread support fully justifies an early debate on the subject? Does he further agree that the Government should respond to the majority wishes of hon. Members and support the proposed legislation as soon as possible?

**Mr. Wakeham:** The Government have seen the proposals in the Bill and Ministers have asked the Health and Safety Commission to examine the Bill and let us have its views on the ideas behind it. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 provides a comprehensive framework for public safety and should not be altered without proper consideration.

**Mr. Richard Holt** (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the rally taking place in the House today of war widows and hon. Members from both sides of the House who support them in their quest for proper and equable treatment by the Government. Is it not time that we had a full debate on the matter? If there is difficulty in finding speakers to occupy all the time allocated to the RAF debate next week, perhaps we could use the time to debate the situation of the war widows who, after 40 years

or more in many cases, do not receive the same treatment as the widows and wives of those who were our enemies and are now our partners in Europe.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I cannot add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on the substance of the matter. Whether my hon. Friend's views would be in order in the debate on the Royal Air Force next week is a matter not for me but for Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): The Leader of the House will be aware that within five days of the storm damage to the south of England on 16 October 1987, the Secretary of State for the Environment rushed to the Dispatch Box, at the first available opportunity after the recess, to say that the Bellwin scheme would assist local authorities. The Bellwin scheme allows county councils, after spending the penny rate, to get 75 per cent. grant assistance. It is 17 days since there was storm damage in Scotland. In an answer to me yesterday, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that it is too soon to decide whether the Bellwin scheme should be used for Scotland.

What is the difference between Scotland and the south of England? Has it anything to do with the coming poll tax legislation? There is to be a debate on Monday on the poll tax regulations. Is it right to say that the Bellwin scheme has not been worked out in terms of the poll tax?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I have no idea of the answer to that question, but I can find it out. However, the hon. Gentleman's suggestions do not sound plausible. It seems to me that it was fairly clear whether the Bellwin scheme applied. I have no reason to believe that the proper procedures have not been followed in this case as in the previous case.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on the environment so that we may take note of the Government's latest views and examine the suggestions of the Opposition and their alleged keenness to preserve the environment? That is what they claim in their report, but in practice the Labour council in Ealing is determined to destroy 17 beautiful acres of children's playing fields at Cayton road, Greenford, surrounded by very fine trees, and to build on allotments and other nice, environmentally clean areas. Once more the House must take account of the Labour party's actions, which belie its words.

**Mr. Wakeham:** My hon. Friend raises an important matter which it is right that the House should discuss. My hon. Friend's best chance of discussing the matter is in the Easter Adjournment debate or in the debate on the Consolidated Fund.

**Ms. Marjorie Mowlam** (Redcar): Will the Leader of the House find time in the near future to ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to explain to the House why there is many months' delay in the printing and delivery of leaflets explaining mobility and disability allowances? I am sure that he is aware that those leaflets have not been available in libraries in Cleveland for many weeks. I hope that the Secretary of State for Social services does not tell the House about the lack of take-up. If people do not know about those allowances, the Secretary of State's figures must be questionable.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I do not have at my fingertips details of why leaflets are not available in Cleveland. However, I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend and get the hon. Lady an answer to her question.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): May I again draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 498 on airline food and ask for an early debate on the matter? Is he aware that about 209 separate dishes were identified as having been contaminated with faecal remains and that eight Members of Parliament, of whom I am one, will be going to the United States next week? I am sure that he would not want eight by-elections on his hands. I am a very nervous passenger. It is bad enough having the thought that one will be hitting the ground without realising that one will be having the galloping runs at the same time.

**Mr. Wakeham:** This place would be poorer without the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he has a safe journey.

**Sir Peter Emery** (Honiton): Although this may be the last question, I do not think that it is the least important. Will my right hon. Friend raise with the Secretary of State for Defence a problem faced by many people who served in the forces in Crete? An award granted by the Greek Government which was promised during the battle to the men who fought in it is being blocked by the British Government? Those men are extremely concerned, and it seems awfully petty that our Government should be willing to block the award. Will my right hon. Friend arrange for that matter to be dealt with next week and properly cleared up?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate on the matter, and I cannot confirm the analysis that he gave it, but I will certainly see that my right hon. Friend knows of his concern and writes to him.

**Mr. Ray Powell** (Ogmore): The Children Bill has now had its Third Reading in the other place. When can this House expect it?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I am pleased to hear the news from the hon. Gentleman. The Bill will come to this House fairly soon, and I will be arranging a debate. Obviously, I have to discuss the date through the usual channels. I have no fixed date in mind at the moment, but it will be fairly soon.

## Adjournment (Easter)

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill on Monday 13 March 1989.

Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Thursday 9 March. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later that day. Normally the time allotted will not exceed one and half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

### BILL PRESENTED

#### Housing the Homeless

Mr. Clive Soley presented a Bill to amend the Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Act 1988 to make better provision for housing homeless people; to limit the period of time during which homeless people may be accommodated in bed and breakfast hotels; to regulate the charges which may be made for such accommodation; to provide for the regular inspection of bed and breakfast hotels used to accommodate homeless people and to prohibit the use of accommodation which does not satisfy prescribed health, fire, safety and space standards; to extend protection from eviction to homeless people accommodated for a period of time in such hotels; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 April and to be printed. [Bill 91.]

## Early-Day Motion 494

4.11 pm

**Mr. James Pawsey** (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may not strictly be a matter for you, but I know how jealous you are about the Order Paper. I draw your attention to early-day motion 494, which is headed "Comments of the Minister for Sport".

*[That this House notes the statement of the honourable Member for Lewisham East, published in the Birmingham Evening Mail on Friday 17th February 1989, to the effect that he was present at the football match Millwall versus Newcastle when, he is reported as saying 'I was at the Millwall versus Newcastle game when the club rooms, the directors and their guests were attacked'; further notes that the Chairman of Millwall Football Club, supported by senior officers of the police who were present, has repeatedly made it clear that this was a minor incident when two windows were cracked by visiting supporters who were under police escort at the time and that at no time were any directors of either club or their guests attacked or threatened, and that the Minister of Sport was unaware of this incident until his attention was drawn to it some time later; and, in these circumstances, has no hesitation in accepting the account of the Chairman of Millwall Football Club.]*

It appears that the motion contains certain inaccuracies. It quotes my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), the Minister with responsibility for sport. The quotations in the motion are grossly inaccurate. As the Order Paper is the official organ of the House and this might bring the House into disrepute, I wonder whether you will join with me in calling for the sponsors to withdraw the motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was here a few moments ago, but the matter was raised by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), and dealt with by the Leader of the House. It is not a matter for me.

## Housing

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

4.14 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier):** The House has been patient for the last few weeks in waiting for this debate on housing. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and we, too, have been patient in waiting for it. Now that the moment has arrived, I welcome the opportunity of emphasising the Government's strategy on this important subject.

The Government's aim in housing is no different from that of any post-war Government. We want decent, affordable and suitable housing to be within the reach of all families. We differ from other Governments, and certainly the Opposition, on the best way of achieving that aim.

Immediately after the war, there were three main policies to restore a decent standard of housing in Britain: first, a huge public sector programme of housebuilding; secondly, restrictions on private house-building to give priority to the public sector programme; and, thirdly, controls to keep rents down in the private rented sector. With about 2 million fewer houses than households, that crash programme approach was fairly understandable. As a direct comparison, today we have more houses than households—in fact, 300,000 more—so circumstances are very different.

The post-war approach to housing worked by putting bureaucratic controls in place of market forces. One can do that for a while, but, in the end, market forces will have their revenge. If market forces and the resources of the private sector are suppressed, we will produce less, we will produce goods that people do not want, and it is certain that we will produce the wrong amount in the wrong places. Sadly, the post-war housing policies of big public sector building programmes and controls of private sector rents trundled on unchanged through the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, long after the crisis of housing shortage everywhere had given way to a much more varied pattern of local needs that could not be solved by that blanket approach.

As a result, we now have the largest state-owned or public housing sector in western Europe and the smallest private rented sector. Other countries have been far more successful in maintaining investment in the private rented sector by encouraging private investment, and by using public money to supplement private money rather than to replace it.

For example, despite the war's devastation and massive immigration from East Germany, Germany managed to bring demand and supply for rented accommodation back into balance more quickly and effectively that we did. It did that by encouraging private investment. Today, 60 per cent. of German housing is rented, over 40 per cent. of the total is provided by private landlords, 13 per cent. by bodies similar to housing associations, and only 3 per cent. by municipalities. But here in this country, by insisting that subsidised housing had to be built for the public sector, be public sector-owned and have public sector landlords, we also helped to create the major economic problems that were fuelled by the excessive public expenditure which characterised the 1960s and 1970s.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): A Conservative Government introduced the Rent Act 1957, which was meant to encourage private residential dwellings. As a result of that Act, by the time the Labour Government came to power in 1964, far from there being any increase in private dwellings, there had been a substantial reduction, as well as the scandal of Rachmanism and abuse.

People are desperate for accommodation. They come to our surgeries or write to us day in and day out. They cannot afford to become owner-occupiers because they cannot afford a mortgage. How can they afford the new rents which will not be regulated? They cannot afford market rents.

**Mr. Trippier:** If the hon. Gentleman had listened a little more carefully, he would have gathered that I made a clear distinction between the policy of this Government and that of past Governments. I included Conservative Governments, too. If the hon. Gentleman follows me a little more carefully and opens his ears instead of his mouth, he will hear my explanation of why the Rent Acts are disastrous.

I was referring to the inflation which characterised the 1960s and 1970s. There must be a limit on public expenditure. I accept that Opposition Members do not believe that there should be, but there must be, and I will develop that theme later. If the Government absorb too high a proportion of the national output, they will fuel inflation. That was why we saw the record level of inflation of about 27 per cent. under the last Labour Administration. That was why we had the IMF crisis, and why the last Labour Government were forced to cut public housing investment by one third in their last two years in office. Perhaps this is an opportunity for the hon. Member for Hammersmith to intervene.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): I will.

**Mr. Trippier:** In doing so, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will explain why the last Labour Government cut public expenditure in public housing.

**Mr. Banks:** I realise that the hon. Gentleman is not an economist and does not know a great deal about housing, either, but he is part of the Government. How can he say that the number of homeless has actually doubled since 1979? Surely that deserves an explanation as well?

**Mr. Trippier:** I will give the hon. Gentleman that explanation. Like Opposition Members, I do not believe that the problem of homelessness is a matter for housing policy in the round. I shall develop that theme throughout my speech. I noticed that the hon. Gentleman ducked the opportunity that I put to him, and which I now put to the hon. Member for Hammersmith, to intervene now or at some later stage and explain why the Labour Government cut public housing in their last two years.

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): I shall deal with it now. I shall not let the Government duck the issue. In their last year, the Labour Government produced over 70,000 houses. It was not one of our best years, not least because of oil price rises. The Minister is saying that he wants to cut public expenditure because it must be limited. Will he limit the public expenditure outlay on mortgage income tax relief, which is now up to nearly £6 billion, one quarter of which goes to those who earn over £25,000 a year?

**Mr. Trippier:** It could possibly be the greatest understatement we have heard in the House that the last year of the last Labour Government was not one of their best.

We can assume that that is correct because it led to the general election at which they were defeated. The hon. Gentleman, however, did not answer my question.

**Mr. Eric S. Heffer** (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we were building more houses than have been built since, but he asked a fair question. Why did the Labour Government cut back on housing? He should know—I do not think that he was here at the time—that many of us on the Back Benches fought strenuously against the housing cuts that were being made by the Labour Administration. They unfortunately had to make those cuts because they were asked to do so by the IMF, which adopted not the Socialist policies for which some of us were arguing but the capitalist Tory policies to which we objected.

**Mr. Trippier:** The hon. Gentleman knows that I have some respect for him, not least in the matter of his honesty, and that was an honest comment which I believe to be true. The only correction I would make is that, prior to the IMF coming on the scene, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury of the day, now Lord Barnett, had already cut that budget, and in the noble Lord's book "Inside the Treasury" he explains in clear detail what happened during the period to which the right hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) referred.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): We know all about that.

**Mr. Trippier:** I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman may know, but some may not. The noble Lord says on page 91 of his book:

"My main difficulties were with Peter Shore, who as Secretary of State for the Environment, controlled very large budgets in the local authority field. I felt some of them were eminently 'cuttable', especially in expenditure on roads and housing."

The hon. Member for Walton will agree with that, in view of what he said in his intervention. The Labour party still does not seem to realise that the old approach carried the seeds of its failure and of that Government's destruction.

In private renting, the fixing of rents at levels that could barely cover the cost of repairs has led to a catastrophic decline. Private renting provided 50 per cent. of the total stock of dwellings in the country immediately after the war. The figure is now only 8 per cent. That is in stark contrast to 30 per cent. in France and 40 per cent. in Germany.

That 42 per cent. of the private rented stock is in poor condition is a direct consequence of the interference in the market that prevented good landlords from making a modest return and encouraged disreputable landlords—*[Interruption.]* I thought that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) would come in at that remark. I referred to the disreputable landord, the type to whom the hon. Gentleman keeps referring; he dreams or has nightmares about Rachman and has already mentioned him in this debate.

**Mr. Winnick:** I have indeed.

**Mr. Trippier:** If anyone deserves to have nightmares, it is the hon. Member for Walsall, North. I admit that disreputable landlords were encouraged to get rid of their tenants to cash in on the price gap between tenanted properties with controlled rents and empty properties for sale. Some people, such as the hon. Member for Walsall, North, find it difficult to believe that the Rent Acts, which were designed to protect tenants, should, in the long run, have done so much harm, but they did. In fact, they were absolutely disastrous.

The council sector, like all centrally directed programmes, gradually lost touch with what people wanted and eventually produced the concrete mazes that we see in many of our inner cities today——

**Mr. John Battle** (Leeds, West) *rose*——

**Mr. Trippier:** —including the city which the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) represents.

**Mr. Battle:** Despite that remark by the Minister about my city, I am not sure that he knows that the Government of which he is a member did not give much assistance in sorting out the concrete jungle built by Shephards, but that is another story.

Why was public housing built in the first place? Was it not because conditions in the private rented sector, which predominated in cities such as mine, with 172,000 back-to-back properties, were so bad that public health legislation had to be passed? That led the Government to decide that the only way to provide housing with inside lavatories, bathrooms, and so on, was to build them through the public sector, supported from the common treasury. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that that is not the history of public housing?

**Mr. Trippier:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should have listened more carefully to my remarks about what happened immediately after the war. I have no doubt that there was all-party support for that crash building programme. That is no excuse for the decline in the private rented sector from 50 per cent. to 8 per cent. today, in contrast with the position in other developed western countries.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): My hon. Friend is right in what he says about concrete jungles. I lived in east London and saw how that area was reduced to a concrete jungle by Labour housing policy. Is my hon. Friend aware that Ealing council will do the same to Ealing unless it is prevented from doing so?

When the Labour council took over in 1986 there were 30 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation waiting to be rehoused. People were sucked on to that list from all over the nation and from all over the world, so that the list now comprises 1,300 families and the cost has risen from £300,000 to £16 million per annum. The only way to rehouse all those people in Ealing would be to build on every blade of grass and turn the borough into another concrete jungle, but that must not be allowed to happen.

**Mr. Trippier:** I understand the problem outlined by my hon. Friend and, if anything, he understates the case. Because of the dramatic development of public housing, the housing stocks in each borough were too great for people to manage efficiently.

I do not want to tar all councils with the same brush, but monopoly suppliers in any market tend to see their tenants as dependants instead of as consumers. The modern-day municipal paternalists and their defenders on

the Opposition Benches are genuinely confused—none so much as the hon. Member for Walsall, North—as to why their brand of paternalism does not work. They do not see that the root cause of the problem is the assumption that they know what is best for the tenants. In direct contrast, this Government's approach is that those tenants should be free to make their own choices.

**Mr. Skinner** *rose*——

**Mr. Trippier:** This is a short debate and I have already allowed perhaps half a dozen interventions. I have tried to be fair to the House, but I now must press on.

The first of our policies is to put the consumer first. We believe that people can, should and want to take personal responsibility for their housing. State resources should be concentrated on those people who are genuinely in need and who are not able to compete in the market. But they, too, should have far more choice than they have had in the past, including the right to change their landlords if they do not get a decent service.

The lack of response by the state-directed system of housing supply has meant that, although countryr j 3-8wide there are enough houses for everybody, there are severe local shortages in some areas. In areas of shortage, the most vulnerable households could suffer severely if Government support were cut off. So we intend to maintain a major programme of subsidised housing, but we cannot do that unless we make every penny of public money count.

The second part of our policy is good housekeeping in the use of that public money. Because public expenditure must be limited, choices have to be made. The old approach, with its insistence on the exclusive use of public sector resources, while rents were often kept low for local political reasons, entailed a huge amount of waste and inefficiency.

If we can get private investment to add to investment by the public sector in housing, why not do so and build more houses? If better-off people can afford to pay higher rents, why hold their rents down and so reduce the money available to support poorer people? Why should taxpayers, many of whom are not well off, pay subsidies to people who do not need them? Why should we use public investment where private investment will do the job?

We should focus public resources on those who need them most—the poor, the elderly, the chronically sick and the handicapped. That approach of consumer choice, good housekeeping and focusing support on those with the greatest needs, has shaped the Government's housing policy since 1979. We started with the expansion of home ownership, but the Labour party attacked our right-to-buy policy.

**Mr. Tony Favell** (Stockport): I have been waiting patiently for my hon. Friend to refer to private housing. The Minister has spoken of local authorities and the way in which they have restricted the supply of rented property. Would he like to say something about tight planning controls and their effect on the price of building land? Is he aware that during the 1960s agricultural land was being released at almost three times the rate it is today and during the 1970s at almost twice the rate, and that the price of building land is going through the roof? In the north-west prices increased by 90 per cent. in 1987 and are likely to have more than doubled in 1988. There will be a great effect on the price of housing. Figures issued only last week show that the price of housing in Southampton went up by 50 per cent. last year.

**Mr. Trippier:** I have sympathy with my hon. Friend's remarks. That is precisely why my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning recently announced measures that will help to ease the position.

I was saying that the Labour party viciously attacked the right-to-buy policy. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that it would not work. But it has worked well; in fact, it has been an astonishing success.

Well over a million council tenants have bought their own homes since 1979, which is bringing in billions of pounds of private resources to ease the strain on the public purse. They are taking the management of their housing into their own hands. There have been 4 million first-time buyers since we came to power in 1979. Two out of three households in England own their own homes. Now we are tackling the rented sector.

First, in the rented sector, new tenancies at market rents will encourage existing landlords to continue renting. The tax incentives in the business expansion scheme will accelerate that process. Secondly, in the housing association sector, a 70 per cent. increase in public resources will be supplemented by extra private money to give it new impetus. Thirdly, the financial system for councils' housing will be changed so that they cannot hide poor performance by subsidies from the rates. If they do not operate efficiently, the results will be only too visible to their tenants.

When authorities like Southwark can allow properties to remain vacant between relets for an average of 24 weeks, or nearly half a year, it cannot be denied that better management is badly needed. Just nine Labour-controlled inner London boroughs, and Liverpool, account for 38 per cent. of the national total of rent arrears, at £86 million between them. Large amounts of arrears, sometimes running into four figures, are owed by individual Labour councillors. It cannot be denied that better accountability is vital.

**Mr. Heffer:** I am sorry to interrupt the Minister once again. On the question of rent arrears in Liverpool, is he aware that, in Liverpool more than 15,000 people have been out of work for longer than five years? If the Minister wants to know about rent arrears and the problems of the unemployed, perhaps he should come to some of the estates in my area and see how the people survive on that basis.

**Mr. Trippier:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am well aware of his estates. He knows that because of my frequent visits to Liverpool.

My interview on Radio Merseyside this morning with Keva Coombes resulted in the leader of Liverpool city council admitting that it was totally unacceptable to have arrears at the level they are in Liverpool and that it adversely affected those who were paying their rents as well as the ratepayers, because the council has been taking money from the general rate fund to subsidise the housing revenue account.

Council tenants who feel unhappy with the service that they are getting from their landlords will be able to opt out and accept a new landlord, often a housing association. Whether they go or stay, their freedom to choose will act

*[Mr. Trippier]*

as a stimulus to efficiency and service. Indeed, it is already doing so. There are plenty of examples of deathbed repentance by councils who are trying to win back the affections of their tenants.

In addition, a new system for allocating resources for investment by councils would ensure that resources for renovation are much better focused on the areas of real need, rather than on areas that have the most receipts. Opposition Members should welcome such a change, if only they understood it, for many of the areas that they represent will benefit. In the recent Second Reading debate, the hon. Member for Hammersmith seemed to understand so little that he appeared to be quite scandalised by a reform that would help the poorer areas.

Alongside these policies, we are also introducing new arrangements for improvement grants, so that they are concentrated on those people who most need support, while maintaining a level of expenditure that in real terms is almost double the level of that it reached under the Labour Administration. Twice as much money will be available, and it will be better targeted on the less well off. I should have thought that Opposition Members would welcome that; but they would not recognise good news if it jumped up and hit them in the face.

When combined, these new policies will have a much more effective impact on the most severe forms of housing need, including homelessness. Housing provided with the help of public sector funds will correspond much more closely with what the tenants themselves want. That is why they will no longer be entirely dependent on their local councils. That is why the Opposition are so agitated.

Homelessness is one of the most bitter legacies of the old approach to housing that is still espoused by the Opposition. It really is amazing that with 300,000 more houses than households there should still be more than 30,000 homeless families in temporary accommodation. There can be no clearer demonstration of the misallocation of resources that always results from a State-directed approach to housing.

As the Audit Commission's report on homelessness pointed out, if the average period taken to re-let a vacant local authority property could be reduced by three weeks outside London and six weeks in London, the number of vacant properties could be reduced to such an extent that an extra 17,700 relets would become available.

I know that the Housing Act 1988 has been debated exhaustively but there is one topic that needs to be dealt with now—the Opposition's misleading and irresponsible propaganda. All over the country, material is being produced and circulated to tenants on tenants' choice and housing action trusts, which is full of untruths. I am naturally constrained, Madam Deputy Speaker, to use parliamentary language. But it is full of untruths and half-truths and economical half-truths and terminological inexactitudes. Elderly tenants are terrified by leaflets suggesting that their properties are to be handed over to the reincarnation of Rachman. What deceit.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith is party to that deceit. He undertook to condemn misleading propaganda about tenants' choice. He will recall giving me and the House that undertaking when we were considering the Housing Bill last November. The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that promise. I wrote to him on 19 December, enclosing a leaflet produced by Nottinghamshire county council, which is full of complete distortions of the truth. I shall give just one example. It says that rents will go up to market levels under tenants' choice. There was no mention of the fact that the only landlords allowed in tenants' choice will have specifically signed up to charge rents that those on low incomes can afford. There was no mention of the fact that rent levels and arrangements for reviewing them will be one of the matters on which tenants vote.

**Mr. Soley:** I must correct the Minister before he gets deeper into the hole. The leaflet was not issued by Nottinghamshire county council. I checked that, and I was going to tell the Minister later. The Minister is doing exactly what he has accused the Opposition of doing. The leaflet was issued at a much earlier stage in the Bill's consideration by a housing group that was not related to the council.

**Mr. Trippier:** The hon. Gentleman at least acknowledges that the material exists. I hope that he will denounce it publicly. It never is anything to do with the Labour party. I shall come back to that point in a few moments.

**Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo** (Nottingham, South): I am most grateful to the Minister for giving way, as Nottinghamshire has been mentioned. That material might not be technically or legally issued by county or city, but the House must know, and the Minister will confirm, that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) —I am sad that he is not in his place—has been the greatest peddler of the terminological inexactitudes to which the Minister has just referred.

**Mr. Heffer:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I distinctly heard the Minister say that it was Nottinghamshire county council that put out the leaflet. Now he says that it may not have been. He had better withdraw, because it is wrong for a Minister to come to the House and accuse Nottinghamshire county council and then not admit that he is wrong. I ask the Minister to withdraw that now.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** I am sure that the Minister will make his position clear on the matter.

**Mr. Trippier:** I shall, Madam Deputy Speaker. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if I am wrong and if Nottinghamshire county council never played any part in producing the leaflet, I shall be the first to apologise for that mistake, as I always do. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hammersmith should not open his mouth at this precise time because I am about to refer to other things that he said he would do but has not done. Having sent two letters to me within one week prior to Christmas, he has not yet replied to my latest letter. It was probably lost in the Christmas post. When he challenged me to debate these issues in public—I cannot think of a more public place than this—in the media or on television, I was happy to accept. I repeat that acceptance now. I am happy to debate the issue with him or with any of his colleagues anywhere, at any time.

I think that the hon. Gentleman has realised his mistake. I call on him seriously to condemn unreservedly the literature which is going round. If he does not wish to be associated with it—he clearly does not—let him

condemn it, say what is wrong in it, and spell out to the House what he does not agree with so that the House and the country may know.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith does not accept that some tenants may vote to pay slightly higher rents in return for better management and repairs. A recent survey by Glasgow university showed that almost 40 per cent. of tenants would be prepared to pay higher rents for a better service. Some may not, but it is their choice. It is not the Official Opposition's choice. It is not the Labour council's choice. It is not the choice of the wider Labour party or any one of its many divisions, and it has many divisions. It is not even the choice of the National and Local Government Officers Association. It is the tenants' choice. They, and they alone, should decide.

But when fantasy, imagination, and deception fail him, the hon. Member for Hammersmith has recourse to amateur theatricals. It would be laughable were it not clearly intended to prevent legitimate debate. The way that he and his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) tried to sabotage the wind-up speech in the recent Second Reading debate of my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) was a disgrace. I fear that it was all too typical of the way some Opposition Members are bringing on to the Floor of the House the deceitful scaremongering tactics used by their Left-wing activists against tenants. But in truth they resort to those tactics because they have nothing else to say, and because they are desperate to appease the bully boys who are no doubt crucial to their own reselection.

Behind the Labour party's banner stand those who want to scare tenants into believing that only the council can provide for them; those whose power is threatened by tenants' freedom; and those whose inefficiency will be exposed by tenants' choice.

The Labour party protests so much, as it has throughout my speech, because it is frightened at the prospect of competition for its municipal fiefdoms—

**Mr. Battle** *rose*——

**Mr. Trippier:** I will not give way. I have given way many times. I have just referred to the tactics deployed by Opposition Members, to which the hon. Gentleman is very much a party. He should sit down and listen.

**Mr. Battle:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think it ought to be on the record that if the Minister casts slurs and calls that a speech, and if he makes statements that are not true, hon. Members should have the opportunity to interrogate those statements. It is part of our duty——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. The Minister will deploy his argument as he sees fit, provided it is within parliamentary conventions.

**Mr. Trippier:** We have just had a first-class example of the type of tactics that I was talking about. The hon. Member for Leeds, West simply does not listen. That is the tactic with which we are all too familiar in the House and outside in matters concerning housing, and particularly housing association trusts, which the hon. Gentleman does not know much about, but which exist in his city. That tactic is deployed there. The reason why it is deployed by him, and by the hon. Members for Hammersmith and for Copeland is that they are frightened of giving tenants a choice. They are frightened of competition for their municipal fiefdoms. They are frightened because it is the last bastion of the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*

The Government are proud to be the champion of greater freedom, of consumer choice, of more competition and of greater efficiency. Our response to the challenge of today is to trust in people's judgment and their self-reliance, and to let the consumer rule.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Towards the end of the excellent opening speech by my hon. Friend the Minister, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), twice in my hearing, accused my hon. Friend of lying. He should not use remarks like that in the House simply because he does not like what is being said. He should withdraw.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Within my hearing no hon. Member accused anyone of lying. They used other words but they certainly did not accuse the Minister of lying. I have very good hearing. That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sitting nearer to the hon. Gentleman. I accept that you may not have heard it, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Leeds, West will be honest enough to admit to the House that that was precisely what he said.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Had he done that, I am sure the Minister, who is very much alive to what has been going on, would have taken up the matter himself. We must proceed with the debate.

4.46 pm

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): Anyone listening to the Minister's speech who had a housing problem would be appalled at what he had to say. One would think from his speech that there was not a housing problem. I wish to deal with various matters, including some raised by the Minister, but first I will make two other points. First, I want to be as tight with time as I can because it is a short debate. Secondly, I apologise to the House because I will have to leave half an hour early for a meeting on the poll tax at which the Secretary of State for the Environment and I are speaking. I would not like him to be without the advantage of the guidance and the assistance that I may be able to give him from time to time.

The point that we are making strongly, and with increasing support from across the political spectrum, is that there is a growing housing crisis. Every time the Government try to duck it by referring to the past or to individual local authorities or councillors, they bring shame on themselves because they cannot face up to the problem. What is it? It is a crisis of mortgage rates and market rents. It is a catastrophe of escalating homelessness. It is a lack of low-cost accommodation for rent or sale.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's disastrous reliance on interest rates has clobbered home owners with a vengeance. We should never let anyone say that the Conservative party is the party of the home owner. *[Interruption.]* Yes. The Labour party did far more with start-up schemes and with mortgage relief for first-time buyers than the Conservative party. Let us hear the facts.

**Mr. David Sumberg** (Bury, South) *rose*——

**Mr. Soley:** Let the hon. Gentleman hear the facts first; then he may intervene if he wishes. I want to limit interventions.

From January 1988 to January 1989 is just 12 short months. Someone on the average mortgage in Britain is now paying £81 per month more than in January 1988. In the south-east the payment is £112·44 per month more; in inner London it is £135·06 per month more.

**Mr. Sumberg:** The hon. Gentleman said that the Labour party is the friend of those who wish to buy their homes. Will he tell the House exactly what the Labour party did for council house tenants who wished to buy their homes?

**Mr. Soley:** It is a point that we have been making over and over again. I will repeat it for the hon. Gentleman, who missed it. There is nothing wrong with the right to buy, but it has to be matched by a duty to replace property in housing stress areas. If people are merely given a right to buy, with no duty to replace, the best houses go first. People become trapped in high-rise, grotty, rundown houses from which they cannot be transferred. Waiting lists and homelessness go up.

**Mr. Trippier:** If the hon. Gentleman is going to make a comparison with the one particular year on which he has focused, will he compare it with what people paid during the last year or two of the last Labour administration, when inflation was running at 27 per cent?

**Mr. Soley:** Significantly less in both percentage and an absolute figure.

**Mr. Trippier:** Will the hon. Gentleman give the figures?

**Mr. Soley:** I cannot supply them off the top of my head, but I shall supply them. I assure the Minister that he will be able to get them from my own source, the Building Societies Association. If the Minister looked at the figures and other evidence held by the BSA and other organisations, they would tell him something that he should already know.

When house prices begin to stabilise after house price inflation as a result of interest rates remaining high over a sustained period, homelessness goes up owing to mortgage repossessions. The fastest growing area of homelessness is now due to mortgage repossessions. One in every 10 families is going to the local authority and asking for housing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. They have been made homeless because they cannot pay their mortgages. *[Interruption.]*

The Minister makes the mistake, as he shouts from his sedentary position, of supposing that the problem relates only to individual mortgage companies such as the Nationwide Anglias of this world. However, it does not, because it affects many other lenders, including banks and other organisations. Many people have mortgages on which their payments are more than six months in arrears.

I shall give the Minister the figures. In 1979, the number of mortgages that were more than six months in arrears —the Minister is fond of talking about arrears, and I shall return to that point—was 8,420. In 1986, the figure was 66,930. In 1979, the number of repossessions was 2,530 and in 1986 it was 20,020——

**Mr. Trippier** *rose*——

**Mr. Soley:** I shall give way on this occasion, but I shall not do so many more times because if I do it will be at the expense of Back Benchers on both sides of the House.

**Mr. Trippier:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. He must have heard me give a statement at Question Time last week when I said that the Building Societies Association had made it clear that mortgage repossessions had actually dropped, and that Mr. Boleat had made it clear that there was no direct correlation between higher interest rates and mortgage repossessions.

**Mr. Soley:** Why does the Minister not listen before he intervenes? I said to him—to be correct, to a Conservative Back Bencher—that it was no good looking at just the building society figures, because building societies are not the only lenders. He must look at the figures of banks and other organisations that lend money.

It is not an accident or imagination that one in 10 families has been made homeless as a result of mortgage repossessions. Most of the building societies and a significant number of banks are quite good on this matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and I conducted a survey which showed that almost all banks and building societies were worried about their customers' ability to pay and were trying to find ways of making it easier for them. A common theme that came out of the survey was the need to ensure that people sought advice as early as possible. Otherwise, they would inevitably run into trouble.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett** (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Soley:** I shall give way once more, but the hon. Gentleman is biting into his own time.

**Mr. Bennett:** Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how the homeless, the residents and the ratepayers in his own borough of Hammersmith and Fulham will be helped by the Labour-controlled council's gambling in the City, in which it lost £50 million?

**Mr. Soley:** That intervention is an absolute gift and I shall tell him right now. If, as suggested, it is ultra vires, and the council has to freeze its position, it will walk away with £13 million profit. There will be no loss to the council —the figure in *The Independent* is wrong. The council would gain £13 million. But it pales into insignificance in the face of the problem that the Secretary of State has created for the Labour and Tory boroughs that have carried out such activities, by his refusal to introduce a proper system of local government finance. He tells local authorities to use business practices. Hammersmith and Fulham used them successfully and made £13 million profit. *[Interruption.]* It is questionable whether it is illegal.

We know one thing for sure: if a private company had acted in the same way, everybody would pat it on the back and say how well it had done. It would have been strictly legal in the private sector; it is only local authorities who must not trade in that way.

I must stick to the point about which the Government are increasingly worried. The Government are blind to the problem being caused by those seeking to buy. A couple of weeks ago the Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

"Mortgage rates show no correlation with difficulties over arrears or repossessions".—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1989; Vol. 145, c. 117.]

Let him tell that to the people who are being made homeless, or those 20,000 people whose payments are in arrears.

Do the Government think that money grows on trees for those people? The dream of home ownership is turning into a nightmare of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for increasing numbers of people, and the Government know that.

The other day, The *Daily Mirror* presented the case of Mr. Soussa—one of the many growing examples of the Rachmanite and Hoogstraten-type experiences about which we have warned the Government. The *Daily Mirror* said that a family of three—two adults and a child—paid rent of £161 per week for one room and a shower which they shared with 10 other families. Their meal times were limited to half an hour a day in the dining room and there was no fire escape.

When that story appeared in The *Daily Mirror*, Mr. Soussa gave the family two hours notice to quit and put them in the street. The council—which was not Labour—had to use other bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Other local authorities—including Conservative-controlled Southend—told the Minister that they could do nothing other than resort to bed-and-breakfast accommodation for such people because of the Government's housing cuts.

**Mr. Trippier:** The hon. Gentleman has made a silly mistake that he could have avoided if he had done a little more homework. He would then have found that the family to which he referred was the responsibility of Slough—*[Interruption.]* Oh, the hon. Gentleman knows that Slough is a Labour-controlled council.

**Mr. Soley:** The incident occurred in Windsor. The Minister does not understand that the accommodation is in Windsor and other local authorities use it. The argument is not about which councils place such families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Is the Minister really saying that Conservative councils do not use bed-and-breakfast accommodation? The argument is quite simply that local authorities—whether Labour, Tory or Liberal—are forced to use inadequate and inappropriate bed-and-breakfast accommodation because of the Government's policies.

The leader of the Conservative group in Hammersmith, Councillor Peter Prince, has some interesting suggestions. He says that there is nothing wrong with paying £100 rent per week for a two-bedroomed flat—and that it is all right. Can hon. Members say how ordinary people on average incomes are supposed to pay £100 per week rent for a two-roomed flat? He said something far worse, which I should like the Minister to think about.

In Hammersmith and Fulham, 19 people from Belfast who were threatened by the Provisional IRA have suddenly turned up. Two of the children had been kneecapped, one in both knees, with similar treatment to elbows and ankles. Quite rightly, Hammersmith and Fulham council put those people into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It had experience of other cases, knew the dangers of sending them back and realised that it must help them.

However, Conservative Councillor Peter Prince said they should be sent back to Belfast. That was not only inhumane but also seems effectively to be saying to the Provisional IRA that it can carry on policing Northern Ireland because it is doing a good job. That is what the Conservative party is saying.

I have encountered people in Hammersmith who are not in council accommodation but are running from both the Provisional IRA and the Unionist paramilitaries. What do I get from the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office? He says:

> "Hence, while I have every sympathy for the problems faced by local councils"

in cases of this kind, he cannot help. As a result of the crisis in Northern Ireland, local authorities in Britain must either provide bed-and-breakfast accommodation, send the people back or provide housing out of their own stock. What will the Minister do about that?

I have argued for many years that the Northern Ireland Office needs a policy to deal with people who are driven out in that way. I have every sympathy with Southend council, which has the same problems as Windsor, Slough and others. Indeed, Southend and the Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association and Association of District Councils say that they cannot cope without using bed-and-breakfast accommodation—because of the Government's policy.

How does the Minister think that a family copes with education, health and family stress when they have to live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and when the Government have no policy on homelessness? In 1978, a total of 53,110 homeless families were accepted. In 1987, the figure was 118,710. The sharp end of the problem is something that I never dreamt I would live to see in this country: men, women and children sleeping in cardboard boxes in the streets and parks of our towns, in both Tory and Labour areas. If the Minister and his hon. Friends really believe that that is the Labour party's fault, let me tell them that no one else believes it. Other people know that the housing crisis has been caused by the present Government. The Minister should not try to dodge that by blaming local authorities for the existence of empty properties.

Let us get the figures nice and clear. At present 2·5 per cent. of local authority properties are empty, compared with 3·1 per cent. of housing association properties. Both those figures are pretty good, and should be treated with a degree of flexibility. The figure for the private sector is 4·2 per cent. And who is the worst offender of all? The Minister. Nearly 6 per cent. of properties owned by the Government are empty. Houses and flats with three, four and five bedrooms, valued at £150,000 to £200,000, have been empty for up to nine years. The Government, who have known about it for years, are to knock them down to make way for car parking and landscaping around Wormwood Scrubs prison.

One in five police houses is empty, as are prison houses, defence houses and houses owned by London Regional Transport and other regional organisations. What the Minister likes to do is blame local authorities—to starve them of cash, undermine their morale and erode local democracy and to try to pretend that that solves the problem. He knows very well, however, that the problem lies at the Government's door.

Horsham council actually gave an empty council house to none other than the Horsham constituency Conservative party to use as an office. I understand that it

*[Mr. Soley]*

had to offer something because this was part of an improvement area—but an empty council house as an office? Are we joking?

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes** (Harrow, West) *rose*——

**Mr. Soley:** I will give way to the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he would like to explain.

**Mr. Hughes:** I agree entirely with what the hon. Gentleman has said about empty properties owned by the Government, and I think that the Departments responsible need to clean up their act. As he says, it is a scandal.

Would the hon. Gentleman comment on another scandal? According to figures produced by the London borough of Hackney, some 300 housing units have been empty for more than three years so that minor repairs can be carried out. How can that be justified in an area of such stress?

**Mr. Soley:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being the first Conservative Member to acknowledge that it is the Government who should be blamed.

**Mr. Hughes:** I did not say that.

**Mr. Soley:** I do not want the hon. Gentleman to suggest that it is the Department's fault. It is the Home Office Minister's fault. I took the Wormwood Scrubs case to him about a year ago, but the properties are still not being used. Admittedly the junior Minister said that we could use four of them on a short-life basis, and a housing association is trying to do that, although it will be difficult to use four properties on such a basis. The other properties are not going to be used at all.

Unfortunately, the examples that we give—including some that I have given about the Government—are irrelevant to the main cause, which is a drastic drying-up of the supply of low-cost accommodation for rent or sale. When the Minister opened the debate he revealed his naivety and inadequate grasp of the problem by saying that the country now contained more houses than people. In a technical sense, what he said was true, but it nevertheless showed a complete misunderstanding of the mismatch of properties to people.

Having said that he recognised the problem of linking people and properties, the Minister did not go on to say how he would deal with it other than through the private market. The Government are saying that the private sector will provide, whereas local authorities cannot. What they are doing constitutes one of the nastiest forms of bullying that I have seen for many a long year. I attend meetings up and down the country which are packed out, with up to 400 people present. Many are very elderly—in their sixties, seventies and eighties. They go to the meetings because they are scared. *[Interruption.]* If they are scared, it is not because of me. I attended meetings organised by people from the Minister's own council.

Rochester upon Medway council in Kent has put out a leaflet. People who went to a meeting in the area wanted to know what would happen to them, as the leaflet mentioned no agreement other than one that might result at the end of the day. They were worried because they were being told to vote for an arrangement under which they would have no contract. I beg the Minister to recognise that many elderly people do not understand that housing associations are not just like any old private landlord. When a leaflet about a housing association takeover drops through their letterboxes, they see a return to the 1930s.

**Dame Peggy Fenner** (Medway): The hon. Gentleman has already referred to what is happening in my constituency, where tenants are to be given a choice. I consider it, to say the least, slightly less than ethical for an Opposition Front Bencher to try to frighten the lives out of tenants when they have not even held the contract in their hands yet. Perhaps he would like to mention the scheme that my city council hopes to introduce. When the scheme is completed and the tenants know the details, they will have a choice.

**Mr. Soley:** Let me tell the hon. Lady what I told the people at the meeting. I told them what I always tell them: "There may be cases in which you want to transfer to a different landlord, but first you must know the facts." What scared people about the leaflet was that it said that an assured tenancy was the same as a secure tenancy, which it is not. When I read it, my knowledge of such matters led me to believe that what the organisers meant —and I suspect that their intentions are quite good—was that they would try to make it the same by drawing up a legal contract, but there is no legal contract here. If the hon. Lady took the leaflet along to a solicitor and asked "Should I buy this?" would he advise her to sign? Of course he would not. What is so wrong with her approach is that bullying and frightening people is unnecessary.

The Minister talked about Nottinghamshire. I eventually got hold of a leaflet published by the Notts Housing Bill Campaign—not by the Labour party. Why did it take so long to find? Because it was published about a year ago, when the Bill first arrived. Much of it is accurate. *[Interruption.]* It is difficult to see that it is inaccurate. There are some points which are incomplete. *[Interruption.]* It is not a new word. It is relevant to the case, because the Government's Bill had only just been published. As we all know, that legislation—with constant changes to it—went through on the hoof with a vengeance.

Of course, the Minister dodged the real challenge that I put to him. My challenge was not for him not just to debate it publicly but for him or me, if we came across any misleading information—which we could not agree on as being misleading and therefore have it put right—to put it to an independent organisation. The two organisations I suggested were the National Consumer Council and the Institute of Housing. However, the Minister has refused——

**Mr. Trippier:** No, I have not. I am quite happy——

**Mr. Soley:** The Minister has not done that and he has refused——

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** The hon. Gentleman is talking about my constituency.

**Mr. Soley:** Can I have a clear statement from the Minister? I pointed out 10 or 11 serious inaccuracies in the leaflets put out by the Minister's Department. I said that the leaflet entitled "Tenants' Choice" should go to the National Consumer Council or the Institute of Housing for an independent view. He has refused to do that.

**Mr. Trippier** *rose*——

**Mr. Soley:** I want only one answer from the Minister. Will he put the leaflet to either of those organisations in exactly the way I suggested in the debate some months ago?

**Mr. Trippier:** I know that one has to tell the hon. Gentleman something about 13 times before he is on to it in a flash, but I must make it clear to him again that I am prepared to debate that isue, and the contents of any leaflet in front of anybody in the public or the media. I am prepared to appear on any occasion—even for no money.

**Mr. Soley:** I am not talking about appearing or debating. I am saying that where we cannot agree on what is misleading, we should put it to an independent organisation, which is what the Minister is refusing to do. [HON. MEMBERS: "He did not."] Of course he refused.

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** The leaflet that has been mentioned affects my constituency. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that that leaflet may be a year old, but we have suffered such literature—press releases and public statements—in our city ad nauseum, month after month, and the majority of it is the most spurious nonsense and disgraceful literature I have ever read. In my constituency there is an estate of 9,000 homes and many old people have written to me saying, "The Labour party locally are saying that our houses will be sold to private landlords; is that true?" That is what is happening in our cities, and it is time that the hon. Gentleman repudiated it.

**Mr. Soley:** I will not do it now, for the sake of Back Benchers who want to contribute, but I would be happy afterwards to go through this leaflet with the hon. Gentleman to pick out any inaccuracies. I would say to him that at the time it was written it was basically accurate. —*[Interruption.]* Since then, the Bill has gone through Committee and has been changed thanks to our amendments.

We want to know also from the Government whether they intend to change the rigged voting system that has so frightened people that they know that their only solution is to group together as tenants and community groups to fight the Bill. One good thing, however, about that wretched Housing Act is that it has managed to create a sense of community in those areas, because they are so appalled by what is happening.

I ask the Minister whether the Government will spend the money that they promised on the housing action trust areas now that they know that they have lost the argument there, too. Effectively, all the tenants have said no to their proposals since they rumbled the Government's other dishonesty. They discovered that the real aim of housing action trusts, according to the report prepared for the Government, was

"to successfully transfer the properties to the private sector."

That was something that the Government never told the tenants. That is the dishonesty and the deceit which causes the tenants to be fearful and makes me say that the Government are guilty of bullying tenants.

What will the Government do about the new towns? The new towns will not even get a proper vote until in some cases they have waited two years to see how the new system works. Terrific: we will have a new government now; see how it works and then we will have a vote on it. How about that? Wht sort of democracy is that? Even some cheap dictator would not accept that as a form of democracy.

The housing statistics tell the grim story. In 1987 there were 30,000 fewer completions in all sectors compared to 1980. I warn the Minister of that, because that is what he was talking about when referring to public sector investment. Throughout the 1970s, housing investment was high when compared to European standards. Even investment in our worst year, which was 1979, was good compared to other European countries. What is significantly different now is that we are at the bottom of the heap—as we are with the National Health Service. Next year there will be a decline in the private building sector again, because of interest rates. The Government know that. In 1975, local authority completions were 103,000, in 1988 they are estimated to be 15,000 and in 1992 they will be 6,000.

The Government have suddenly turned to housing assocations as the way out, but housing association completions are only about 2,000 above what they were in 1975. Somehow the housing associations are supposed to swallow local authority housing and build more at the same time. The management implications of that are appalling.

In addition, there is the disaster of market rents in the private sector. We must remember that the rented sector has declined by 1·2 million houses, more than half of which are from the private rented sector. That decline has been caused by the Government's public expenditure. The Minister dodged my question about mortgage income tax relief. If he is prepared to accept someone on £7,000 per year getting a subsidy of about £300, but someone on £25,000 per year getting about £760, he had better work out where his priorities lie with Government expenditure. That is now up to nearly £6 billion.

The nightmare about market rents is that they will approximate to what people pay to buy, which is why the private rented sector is declining. Mr. Rachman, Mr. Soussa—not really Mr. Soussa—and Mr. Hoogstraten are not really bad landlords; they are bad property developers. They want to sell with vacant possession, which means getting tenants out, and that is what the 1988 Bill is designed to make much easier.

**Mr. Barry Porter** (Wirral, South) *rose*——

**Mr. Soley:** I cannot give way again, because there is the problem of time.

The Government refuse to say what a fair rent is, yet many people are spending up to 40 per cent. of their net income on rent. In some cases nurses are spending 39 per cent. of their net income, even taking account of their recent pay rise.

Rural housing has been hit, too. In the villages of England people are living in the holiday accommodation during the winter and are having to move out when the holiday period begins. They then move to the towns, present themselves as homeless or drift around.

**Mr. Richard Holt** (Langbaurgh): Give us one example.

**Mr. Soley:** I shall give lots of examples. I shall give the example of Dorset—*[Interruption.]* I am giving areas. The hon. Gentleman has not got ears.

**Mr. Holt:** The hon. Gentleman cannot back that up with known facts. It is just hot air.

**Mr. Soley:** The hon. Gentleman should listen. What I said was that in the villages of England——

**Mr. Holt:** Name one.

**Mr. Soley:** In Dorset right now——

**Mr. Holt:** That is a county; name a village.

**Mr. Soley:** I know that is a county. In Dorset right now people are using holiday accommodation lets and moving into the—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) does not believe me——

**Mr. Holt:** I do not.

**Mr. Soley:** The hon. Gentleman does not have to take my word for it. He can get the facts from the Association of District Councils, which is Conservative-controlled.

What else do people do when they leave their holiday lets? They move in with relatives or wherever they can find accommodation in towns. Of course, in many areas they cannot find accommodation, and they end up sleeping rough.

We are moving towards having ghettoes in our city areas where there will be the sort of crime and vandalism which the Government try to pin on local authorities. People have died behind their cast iron doors, which prevented the fire brigade from gaining access. The House should remember that those people installed such doors out of fear. People have to take such measures because the Government will not give local authorities the money needed to provide a good 24-hour concierge system. They starved my council of money for the Edward Woods estate almost long enough to push out of the annual programme the system that was designed to come into effect, but the council managed to keep it in. If the Government really cared, they would make sure that they helped good management.

The Government's problem is that they do not understand that housing is about supply and management. If there is bad management, whether in the private or public sectors, something must be done about it. It is no good picking one or two councillors one does not like and putting the boot in. A housing problem must first be acknowledged and then the solution sought. That means more building, renovating and repairing. It also means that something must be done about bad management.

The Minister said that he thought that people should have a choice of landlord, but he does not believe that. He believes that local authority tenants should be able to vote once only to change their landlord. But a tenant of Mr. Hoogstraten, Mr. Sonssa or Mr. Rachman would not have that choice. Let me give the House a commitment. The next Labour Government will give tenants of non-resident landlords the right to change their landlord, and, by God, we shall see some landlords changing then. We shall do what the Audit Commission and the internal report of the Department of the Environment said and we shall see people returning to the public sector because, as the report said, local authority housing management is better than that of housing associations and as good as the best.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Before I take any points of order let me remind the House that the debate has to finish at 7 o'clock and we should deploy that time sensibly so that I can call as many hon. Members as possible. Therefore, may we have brief speeches, please?

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will recall that the debate was originally due to take place on 1 February on an Opposition Supply day. Will you investigate the distribution of today's Order Paper, because, with only six Labour Back Benchers present, it is clear that not all Labour Members are aware that the debate is taking place?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there are sufficient hon. Members in the Chamber to keep the debate going well after 10 o'clock.

5.21 pm

**Sir Jim Spicer** (Dorset, West): I shall abide by your ruling to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) referred to holiday accommodation in Dorset. I hope that in the near future as a result of Government legislation much of that will cease to be holiday accommodation and become permanent accommodation. Landlords have holiday accommodation not because there is more money in it but because in the past they could not get the right sort of tenancy agreement to ensure repossession. I want to see more people living permanently in west Dorset rather than have the place flooded with holiday accommodation which is empty in the winter months; that is bad news.

It is right that the debate should focus primarily on housing problems in the urban areas, but, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith said, there are problems in the rural areas, too. The scale is different, but there are unhappy people in rural areas just as there are in the towns. It is in that context that I welcome the statement made by my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside the other day that there would be an increase in the rural allocation for rented accommodation in 1990-91 and 1991-92. No one would deny that that increase is a drop in the ocean. A figure of 900 extra houses in 1990-91 is small. That figure goes up to 1,100 in 1991-92. That is nothing in the rural areas unless it is supported and enhanced by the activities of housing associations.

Just a few months ago in my constituency a debate was organised by the Dorset county council which set out clearly our involvement with housing associations. I have set a personal target for west Dorset of 500 new housing association houses to rent or buy by the end of 1990. That target is achievable, but only under two conditions. The first and most important is that land should be given to housing associations, or at the very worst, provided at low cost.

One may ask where that land will come from, but I can tell the House that in Dorset and Somerset many landlords who are members of the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union, are perfectly prepared to give half an acre or an acre of land towards that end. They want to see local housing for local people at reasonable rents. That will come about, but not unless one particular area of mistrust is cleared up, and that is whether land given to a housing association for that purpose might be deemed at increased value for capital gains. This worry has not yet been cleared up.

Everybody says that the point is being addressed, but why on earth does it need to be addressed? If people of their own volition are prepared to make a gift of land or to let it go at one tenth of the sum that such land would make on the open market for housing, why cannot the Treasury say that that is in the interests of the community and those who need houses and give a categorical assurance that there will be no such tax?

Secondly, there is the matter of planning. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was right to make it clear the other day that he hoped that local authorities would look more sympathetically at planning approval for housing association schemes for local people at low cost and to rent. I pay tribute to West Dorset district council which is implementing that policy. It is a dangerous policy, because a few starter homes may be included in the hope that approval will be given for a larger scheme. That is not what this is about. I hope that planners will significantly bend the rules for housing association schemes to help small villages. We are not talking about an estate of 200 or 300 houses but about a block of six or eight houses at the most for small villages in my constituency. If such housing does not come about, we shall see the continuing depopulation of our rural areas, along with the closure of sub-post offices and pubs, which is the last thing that I want to see.

My plea to the Government is: please obtain that assurance from the Treasury. If we get that, we shall be able to get on with our building.

5.27 pm

**Mr. George Howarth** (Knowsley, North): After 10 years in office the Government have managed to land themselves in one enormous mess on their housing policy. The Minister laughs, but if he looks at what is going on sector by sector, the evidence is plain for anybody to see. One principal cause of that is the Government's market philosophy, which has been demonstrated not to work in housing matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has given some examples of that and I shall give some further examples.

The truth of the matter is that housing policy does not lend itself to a non-interventionist policy. The Government should recognise that they must continue to engage with local authorities, housing associations and others in order to do something about housing. The more one disengages, the greater the problems are.

The truth of what I say becomes more and more apparent when the situation is looked at sector by sector. For example, the owner-occupied sector, for which there is all-party support—*[Interruption.]* There may be the odd exception but, broadly speaking, all parties' official policy is to support owner-occupation.

High interest rates are now putting property, particularly for first-time buyers, out of their range. People simply cannot afford to get into the owner-occupier market—*[Interruption.]* That might happen in the long term but it has not happened across the board yet. We find that people cannot enter the market. Indeed, some people are having to leave that sector because of the problems of high interest rates.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) seems to think that there is something wonderful about high interest rates and mortgage costs. Perhaps I could summon up in support of my argument no less an authority than the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who writes in today's *Evening Standard* as follows:

> "High mortgage rates are very unpopular but it is mortgage rates in the year before an election, not the second year after one which affect the general election result."

That tells us a great deal about the cynicism of the right hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Holt:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman needs a basic lesson in the economics of housing. The mortgage is one thing; the price of the houses is another. Where houses cannot be sold because the mortgages are difficult to repay that stabilises and brings down the prices, which is what my right hon. Friend was saying in the article.

**Mr. Howarth:** I do not entirely accept that, because the point I am making is that all sorts of other factors are brought to bear. The burden of my argument is that, as a direct result of high interest rates, there are people who are being prevented from entering the market and, equally, there are people who are being forced to leave the market because they cannot sustain their mortgage repayments. That is a simple fact of life at present. Whatever the long-term effects on that of macroeconomic policy, as matters stand that is what is happening.

The other problem, which I have mentioned before in the House but which bears repetition, is that we have consistently falling standards of construction, space and materials. I make it a practice to go on a fairly regular basis and look at new properties that are being built, some of them co-operative—in which I am heavily involved in my constituency—and some in the private sector. We are seeing properties which in 20 years time will be slums which are either put on the market or rented. That is because of the great pressure on people to get into the market at almost any cost. People do not have the kinds of choice that the Government would have us believe exist and consequently are forced either to rent—or in some cases, tragically, to purchase—properties of an appalling standard which will be real problem properties in 20 years' time.

**Mr. Trippier:** I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's argument very carefully. He has not addressed the point that I touched on in my opening remarks when I talked about the fact that we have the highest percentage of public sector housing stock anywhere in the western world. In his constituency and that of the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) there is a very high number of council houses. One of the biggest problems that they face is the management of that stock. I do not want to make a political point, but that stock was not built during the period that this Government have been in office. He and I are trying to do something about it together, and I am with his local authority.

**Mr. Howarth:** I will cover that later in my speech. While there is disagreement between the Minister and me, he will accept that I understand the sort of problem that he is talking about.

Another part of the problem in connection with owner-occupation currently is the whole mess of subsidy. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith mentioned that mortgage income tax relief costs about £6 billion. No one is against the idea that people who need help to get into the market should be given it through tax relief or by some other means. But what we have now is a totally

*[Mr. Howarth]*

unselective subsidy that does not serve any housing policy of which I know. Furthermore, for a Government that seem so obsessed with targeting other benefits, it is very strange that this very general policy should be sustained. I suspect that that reflects a little of the cynicism of the right hon. Member for Chingford because there is a definite electoral sweetie or bribe in that housing policy. That has to be sorted out if something is to be done about housing.

I do not intend to go into the question of the private rented sector at any length. The Minister deplores the fact that only about 8 per cent. of the current stock in this country is private landlord stock. He might try and look at some of the causes of that. The Government have been in power for 10 years and that figure has not dramatically increased, but has declined, in that period. There are very real barriers to that market developing and one is that people do not trust it. Many of my constituents are familiar with the history of the Rachman era and are very cautious indeed about seeing that as a means of finding satisfactory housing. Other barriers have to do with the economics of housing in general, and the House will be familiar with the arguments which my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith adduced.

The 1988 Act, which was supposed to deal with that, will not change the situation at all, because it did not deal with the root causes of the problem; it dealt with a series of rather fancy measures that will not change the situation at all. I suspect that the Minister already knows that it has failed to reinvigorate the private rented sector as they had hoped. That being the case, that policy has failed even on the Government's own terms.

The Minister referred with some accuracy to some of the problems that exist in the borough of Knowsley, part of which I represent. I accept, and the Minister knows that my local authority accepts, that some of the problems connected with council housing in Knowsley stem from the difficulty of managing and maintaining a very large council stock. Originally, in 1974, there were, I think, 39,000 council houses in Knowsley, but with a combination of right to buy and some demolition and so on, the figure is now down to some 24,000. My local authority accepts that there is a problem in managing and maintaining a stock of council housing on that scale, so the policy of the borough of Knowsley is not to build any more properties. It feels that the policy for the foreseeable future should be concentrated on correcting the problems with the stock it already has and that any new housing needs should be met through housing co-operatives and associations, which it supports very well and vigorously.

I accept that it is not necessarily always the case that local authority housing is the only way forward. On the other hand, even in the borough of Knowsley—the Minister is aware of these figures—and even with that policy, we currently need, to put the 24,000 properties with which we are left into some sort of reasonable order, £20 million a year. I use this as an example to illustrate the problems of local authorities.

The housing investment programme allocation, even though it has recently gone up slightly, is still only about £4 million. With the use of capital receipts and other devices, perhaps that can be raised to £10 million, but that means that £10 million which needs to be spent on those properties every year is not being spent. Therefore, there will be an even further deterioration in the quality of life of the people who live in council houses, brought about not by the mismanagement of the local authority but by the scarcity of resources.

The Government's solution to that is to introduce market conditions through the provisions in part IV of the 1988 Act. I will not go through all the arguments that my hon. Friends make, but I know, the House knows and anybody who takes an interest in housing knows, that those provisions will not work. What they have done is spread fear and concern among council tenants.

What is quite staggering about this is that in many areas people who did not rate the council very highly as a landlord before this Act was put on the statute book are now saying that their local authority is wonderful. The Government hoped that they had denigrated local authorities, but they have succeeded in some areas in making the tenants appreciate the local authorities.

In the housing association and housing co-operatives sector, in which I take a great interest, with the changes in mixed funding, in areas where the cost-value relationship is wrong—and that includes London and the whole of Merseyside—the very device that the Government said would increase the supply of money to housing associations and co-operatives will simply mean that the schemes will not get off the ground. The financial institutions will not engage in that kind of arrangement where the cost-value relationship is wrong, as it is in many parts of the country. I suspect that, once we reach the end of the first year of this new mixed funding arrangement there will be a massive underspend because the scheme cannot be applied in many parts of the country. That is something of which the Government have also made a mess.

So after 10 years, in every sector imaginable, the Government have made an absolute hash of housing policy. They have done nothing to deal with the needs of people, nothing to create new housing for people in need. They have just let the market rip, and the market simply is not working.

5.40 pm

**Mrs. Edwina Currie** (Derbyshire, South): Before I came to the House, I had the privilege of being housing chairman in the city of Birmingham. I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) on his excellent speech and his grasp of the subject.

I wish to broaden the debate a little. It is worth pointing out that we have a record number of homes in this country. The housing stock now stands at 23 million dwellings, an increase of about a third since 1961, and as a result we have a lot more property of all kinds. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned that there were about 20,000 families in difficulties. What he forgot to do was to put that in the context of 14·5 million owner-occupiers, some 9 million of them with mortgages; 25 per cent. of those people own their properties outright.

In council housing, the subject of some of the speeches from the Opposition Benches, we have now about 6 million properties. If we compare that with 1961, we find that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in charge of a hell of a lot more council housing than her Conservative predecessors. I looked at the number of council house lettings and was surprised to find that the

figure is still running at some 450,000 a year. That is also a very high level. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is aware that she has one of the best records in charge of council housing of any Conservative Prime Minister since the war. I am not sure that that was her objective, but it is true.

The accusation by the Opposition that fewer houses are being built will not stick either. I listened with the greatest care to the hon. Member for Hammersmith. He talked about some of these little leaflets being incomplete. I hesitate to suggest that he is a bit incomplete, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you might rule that that was a little unparliamentary, but he certainly picked some incomplete statistics. His figures, for example, for the number of houses being built started at 1980. If we start at 1979, when we took power, we find that the number of public starts was 81,000 and the number of private starts was 144,000, giving us a total of 225,000 starts.

In 1987, the number of public starts was 32,000 and the number of private starts 191,000, giving virtually the same total, 223,000.

**Mr. Soley** *indicated dissent.*

**Mrs. Currie:** The hon. Member for Hammersmith may shake his head, but I got these figures not from the Government but from the House of Commons Library. My hon. Friend who will answer the debate may have more up-to-date information, as the figures in the Library are for only the first nine months of 1988, but if we gross up those figures for the whole year, we arrive not at 225,000—the figure for 1979—and not 223,000—the figure for 1987—but 240,000 in a full year for 1988. The simple fact is that we are not building fewer houses. Taking the two together, public and private, we are building roughly the same number.

It is certainly true to say that public sector new build has fallen. It has been falling for years—and a jolly good thing too. In 1979, there were 81,000 public sector starts; in 1987, there were only 31,000. But if we go back to the first year of the Labour Government of which I believe the hon. Member for Hammersmith was a very proud member, 1974, the figure was 146,000, an enormously larger number than they finished with in 1979. We all had the pleasure tonight of watching him standing there wriggling, a little embarrassed, a little ashamed, at the Dispatch Box, saying that he was not too proud of the housing record of the last Labour Government—and absolutely right.

There are three reasons why the Labour Government did not build council houses—whatever their policy was, they did not do it. First, they could not afford it. Secondly, it was not needed. The slum clearance programmes of the post-war period were coming to an end. We had shifted 1·5 million households and it was no longer necessary to do that kind of clearance. Thirdly, it was not wanted. People do not want council housing. They want their own houses, and the Labour party now belatedly recognises this.

Nobody has mentioned tonight the quality of the housing stock. There is a lot more of it, and it is a lot sounder than it has ever been in the nation's history. I am told that there are five basic amenities—an inside loo, a fixed bath in the bathroom, a wash basin, a sink and hot and cold water at three points. If we take the number of properties in England and Wales that lack those amenities, we find that over the past 20 years, despite a widening of the definition of these basic amenities, the proportion of the dwelling stock lacking one or more such facilities has fallen from 25 per cent. to under 3 per cent.—that is, fewer than three homes in 100. I would like to bet that most of them are in the areas covered by Labour councils.

Renovation of property is something that I was very keen to do in the city of Birmingham. We had enveloping schemes and we did our best to ensure that people could live where they wanted, in the homes that they wanted to live in, and that those homes were in good order. In the five years under Labour, 1974 to 1979—these are not incomplete statistics, and I have taken them again from the Library—over 160,000 houses a year on average were improved. In the past five years, an average of over 440,000 have been improved every year. Our homes are in better nick than they have ever been and that is because people want to stay in their own homes and they want advice and assistance and support to improve them. That is what we have been doing.

Of course, the hon. Members on the Opposition Benches used to build their council houses. They are welcome to them. The fact is that they built dismal, damp dumps—they have already been called "concrete jungles" twice—more tatty tenements, more miserable places, more tower blocks named after the Labour chairmen of the housing committees—and people do not want them. They did not want them then and they do not want them now. Nobody wants to live in those grotty estates that were built in those years. People want to live in modern, private houses, put up by private builders who have an eye to the market, an eye to the customers and what the customers want. When people had no choice, Labour built them junk. They expected them to be grateful. Now people have some choice and they do not want to live in those houses any more.

**Mr. Heffer:** The hon. Lady must be aware that it was a Labour Government that first brought in the idea of housing action areas and assistance to modernise houses. We were also responsible for bringing in enveloping. Perhaps she does not know that. Some of us do know it because we were here at the time when we were getting it through the House.

**Mrs. Currie:** It is a classic case, because I was on Birmingham council all those years——

**Mr. Heffer:** The hon. Lady was not here, doing the legislation.

**Mrs. Currie:** The hon. Gentleman is quite right. They passed lots of legislation, lots of it. They did not have the money to implement most of it and the resulting council property is still a slur on the face of the Labour party and the Labour councils.

**Mr. Heffer:** Get your facts right, luv.

**Mrs. Currie:** I merely say to the House that, as far as I and most of my constituents are concerned, the Labour party is welcome to its claims that it built council housing in the 1960s and 1970s. I look forward to the day when more councils will do what Solihull has just done and pull those properties down. That is what the tenants really want.

I want to make two more points, the first of which concerns mortgage rates. Again, I went to the Library and looked up the figures. Incidentally, as has been mentioned,

*[Mrs. Currie]*

this is something of a re-run debate. The first one was supposed to be held in Opposition time. I happened to see the original motion in the Table Office—it just happened to be lying there when I went in one day. The people who worded it cannot spell "mortgage"; the Table Office had to put it right. Anyway, I looked up the interest rates at the time the Labour party was in government and hon. Members opposite were Housing Ministers. In only one year, very briefly in 1978—what about this for cynicism? —was the mortgage rate in single figures. Almost the whole time the Labour party was in power the mortgage rate was over 11 per cent. Indeed, it stood at 12 per cent. in May 1979, just before the election. In those days it was a fixed rate; there was no shopping around. The banks were not giving loans to ordinary people, and borrowers did not have the opportunity that now exists to shop around for the best bargain or for whatever suited them.

I give the Chancellor my full support in his efforts to stabilise the housing market. The rapid house price inflation that we saw last year was unhelpful to everyone. No one could support or argue in favour of it. And it was aggravated by lower interest rates. Heaven only knows why, the moment interest rates go into single figures, everybody in this country thinks that it is a green light. Nobody in West Germany thinks that an interest rate of 9 per cent. is low. People there do not behave like that, but we in this country do. Well, so long as we think that as soon as the interest rate reached 9 per cent, we should borrow enormous amounts of money that we cannot afford, interest rates will have to stay where they are.

The Labour party should come clean about one topic that it has mentioned. The hon. Members for Hammersmith and for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) talked about mortgage interest tax relief, did they not? They talked about how much it costs, did they not? They should tell us whether they are going to abolish mortgage interest tax relief. They should come clean and say, "We do not like mortgage interest tax relief, and we are going to abolish it." They should say that that will be in their manifesto for the next election.

**Mr. George Howarth** *rose*——

**Mrs. Currie:** The hon. Gentleman has already had a go; it is my turn now.

The Labour party should come absolutely clean about mortgage interest tax relief. Hon. Members opposite should say that they do not like it and that they are going to abolish it, and that should be in their manifesto. If, however, they recognise that mortgate interest tax relief helps many people to get on to the housing ladder for the first time, and that it is welcomed by those people, particularly by people in constituencies like mine, they should stop criticising it and admit that it is a good thing.

My final comment concerns a thought for the future. As my hon. Friend the Minister will have realised by now, I am totally in favour of the Government's housing policies. We in this country are extremely lucky to have a Government who run the economy in such a way that we can all afford to buy our homes, a Government who are organising planning legislation in such a way that land will be released. That is happening in areas such as mine, and we are seeing growth. But I offer my hon. Friend one thought for the next 10 years of Conservative Government, the next 10 years we will be in power. One quarter of all households consist of single people, most of them elderly. Nearly 3 million old ladies live alone. Another third of all households consist of two people, mostly older couples whose children have grown up and gone away. We are talking about a large number of old people.

When we think ahead and take into account the fact that single person households are expected to increase from the current total of 5·25 million to over 7 million by the year 2001—and that will be nearly one third of all households—I wonder whether it is right that so many builders are continuing to build three, four and five-bedroom houses with double garages and no granny flat. For certain, by the end of another 10 years or so we will find that the crying shortage, unless there is a response to this need, will be in property that is suitable for elderly people, particularly those living alone. We will know that we have made progress on this issue when the price of bungalows is lower than the price of houses, not higher, as at present. However, I shall leave that thought for my hon. Friends. I congratulate the Government on the tremendous improvement that we have seen in the nation's housing, and I look forward to further progress.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The appeal that I made for brief speeches seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

5.55 pm

**Mr. Matthew Taylor** (Truro): I was going to say that the Minister had combined conceit and venom in a way rarely excelled in the House, but the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has managed to trump it.

In preparing for this debate, I took the trouble to read not various statistics—we all know how statistics can be juggled—but the debate that took place on 23 May 1988. The comments that were made then have been repeated today, and I am very sad that it should be so. On both occasions, despite the smugness of what the Government had to say, the message that came through—it is a message which must not be lost among the arguments about the Local Government and Housing Bill and about mortgage interest rates—was that the devastating impact of the continued policy of restricting expenditure on the development of public housing in all its forms is having an immediate and sustained effect on those people in most need of help with housing.

I rang both local authorities in my area—Carrick and Restormel—a few weeks ago, and the message from them was abundantly clear: "Allow us to spend our money to house our homeless." Not only are local authorities not given that freedom; they are now hampered by rising land prices, even in areas that are relatively poor, such as my own. If a district council like Restormel owns very little land, there is no way in which, with current restrictions, it can outbid private investors. In a recent sale of some land in Newquay, a private developer was able not simply to outbid the local authority by a small amount but actually to double what the council could afford to bid. That local authority has very little land of its own and is therefore hamstrung in attempting to meet the needs of its people.

Another message has started to come through from my county, and it is echoed in many other parts of the country, not only by councils but by people who come to my

surgery and, no doubt, people who consult other hon. Members. They are asking what the point is of a housing allocation list. I understand that councillors in Caradon have gone so far as to suggest that their housing allocations sub-committee should be wound up because there is no longer any such thing as an empty property. As soon as a property in council hands is vacated it goes straight to a homeless family because, as a result of the right to buy, the council no longer has properties for families at the top of the housing allocation list.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said—I think that I quote her exactly—"People do not want council housing." I think it is fair to say that people's ultimate ambition is probably to own their homes, but in the case of very many who come to see me, it is not a question of their "not" wanting council housing but of their desperate need for any kind of roof over their heads. When they are told that they will have to live for years in caravans that are damp, smelly, small, unclean and unhygienic, and where, when they are in the bathroom, they can see the land outside, between the floor and the walls, it is no surprise that they are unable to understand why the Government will not put money into providing houses for them.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): In my constituency there are 6,000 people on the housing waiting list. I am sure that those people, like the hon. Gentleman's constituents, will be highly insulted by some of the remarks that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) made about council housing and about their expectations.

**Mr. Taylor:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right. I allowed her to intervene, because she has not done so before, but I shall have to rein in other right hon. and hon. Members, because time is short.

The Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association says that the Government should relax current restrictions on the spending of local authority capital receipts. It comments:

"the fundamental requirement is to increase the supply of permanent housing."

Seen in that context, the fact that the Secretary of State presides over a housing budget that is the only departmental budget to contribute to the Treasury is one of bitter irony for the homeless. All that profit has been made possible by council house sales and at the expense of the homeless.

People are making their beds out on the streets tonight, as they did last night, and will do again tomorrow night, and the night after that. People are out on the streets because they have no housing. For the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South to say that people do not want council housing is painful for them, and shows no understanding of the conditions that people must endure. It speaks volumes about middle class, suburban ambitions, but nothing about the reality of the very many people who cannot hope to realise those ambitions.

The recent report of the Audit Commission, "Housing the homeless: The local authority role", made many recommendations, and one point that comes through loud and clear is the continuing need for local authorities to play a role. I hope that Ministers accept the report's argument that there is a strong case for taking greater account of homelessness in the allocation by the Government of resources to local authorities.

Many of the areas hardest hit by homelessness are not in inner cities but in rural areas. One reason for that is that wealthier, luckier people are fulfilling their ambition to own property and to retire to what, to them, is a lovely part of the country—but to others it is their home and was their parents' home, but can no longer offer them work and, as a result, they cannot afford to buy houses. I refer also to areas where people are buying second homes in beautiful and lovely countryside. It is a pity that people wishing to move to them do not see the poverty of the families living next door, because families who have lived in those villages for years cannot now afford homes there.

I give as evidence of that the almost ideal example of a young couple in Cornwall, wishing to make a start on the housing ladder. If they both work, both receive the county's average wage for their sex, and have no children —one can hardly imagine a better scenario for first-time buyers—they can, according to local building societies, afford just 2 per cent. of the housing stock that is for sale at any one time. Needless to say, that stock is not in the areas where they want to buy, even if they are lucky enough to track it down before it is sold. That 2 per cent. of the housing stock is to be found in the larger conurbations, in the more rundown areas of high unemployment. Young couples living in villages scattered throughout my constituency and others have no chance of buying a home in their birthplace or workplace.

A prime example of the Government's response has been the transfer of council stock. For us, one of the most glaring examples is Torbay. Giving council tenants a greater say in what happens has potential, but when the Government exploit that situation, and cloak it in a rigged electoral system of secrecy and misinformation, council tenants naturally grow suspicious and do not feel that they have been made a genuine offer. The only convincing argument for the negative voting system is that under it the constituency of the Secretary of State for the Environment —Cirencester and Tewkesbury—would have fallen to the Liberals at the last election. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not think that such a system would be appropriate if it were to have that result for him.

When that rigged electoral system for Torbay was overthrown by the Secretary of State under pressure from local Democrat councillors—who collected a petition showing that most people were against the transfer, despite the negative voting claim to the contrary—it was not just an attack on the Tory councillors who attempted to implement that system but, above all, a clear and visible attack on the negative voting system itself. Basically, the Secretary of State told the Tory councillors in Torbay that they had run the system as he had told them to do, but that the system was not right. It is only a shame that the right hon. Gentleman does not recognise the value of extending his decision more generally.

Council tenants throughout the country are concerned about who will manage their homes. There is great anxiety among tenants of the Commission for the New Towns about the future ownership and management of their homes. I cite Basildon as one example. Can the Minister give an assurance that there will be a ballot for CNT tenants on the future ownership and management of their homes before any changes occur? That is what tenants are pressing for.

**Mr. David Amess** (Basildon): I am staggered by the hon. Gentleman's reference to property transfers in Basildon, because the alliance of the Socialists that he

*[Mr. David Amess]*

represents and the Labour party has gone out of its way deliberately to frighten tenants. It is disgraceful that the hon. Gentleman makes a debating point of it.

**Mr. Taylor:** I reject absolutely the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Our councillors and supporters have tried only to inform, and to argue that tenants should have a genuine say in the transfer of their housing stock. I may add that they have not supported the Labour party in seeking ballot after ballot, because they would like to see matters properly and independently conducted.

Will the Minister consider giving CNT tenants wishing to buy their own homes the same level of grant and subsidy that he intends giving any housing associations that are interested in CNT stock? If so, that might provide a fair balance and proper choice.

The young are among those most affected by Tory housing policy. In April 1988, the Government introduced income support regulations that created different levels of income support for 16 and 17-year-olds, for 18 to 24-year-olds, and for 25-year-olds. Household levels of income support were abolished, with the consequence that benefit levels no longer reflect the additional costs involved when a young person has no choice but to live away from his or her parents' home.

Earlier, I spoke of middle-class suburban values. Another is the assumption that parents can always be relied upon to support their children. For too many young people, that is not the case. Due to the alignment of income support allowances and housing benefit allowances, young people not only receive less help in meeting their personal costs but, if they are on a YTS or are unemployed, receive less help than older people with paying their rent and rates. I have never heard a convincing argument for why that should be, other than that which the Government does not like to articulate, which is that parents are always there, ready and willing to pick up the tab. That is not the case.

Since April 1988, income support has been payable two weeks in arrears, and the Department of Social Security no-longer provides deposits to help people to secure accommodation. People needing money in an emergency must now apply for a discretionary loan, which young people in particular are not guaranteed to obtain. Linked with those changes was a Government promise of a YTS place for every young person who wanted one. The Government have been unable to keep that promise. On 9 November last year, the Government admitted that more than 13,000 young people looking for a YTS place had not been found one. As the Government should be aware, that means that those young people are ineligible for any form of benefit support. They increasingly face homelessness and the risk of destitution. They do not even appear in the figures of the homeless, but go unwanted and unrecognised.

Recently, I received a letter from a Methodist minister who picked up on those changes, and who wrote asking how such a thing could be. He wrote:

"Whilst my wife was in St. Austell this morning, she came across a young woman begging outside Tesco, displaying a sign reading, 'I have no work and no money—please can you spare 10p?' This young woman—she is around 18 to 20—had left a catering course after two years and had come to this area seeking work. She has accommodation in a 'bed-sit', but is caught in some sort of 'waiting period' until she becomes eligible to draw benefit. She is actively seeking work but, meantime, has no means of support—hence her begging. No doubt this will concern you as it does me, the more so with the temptations which may well come the way of a young woman in this situation. If the present Social Security regulations really are causing such a situation, then they urgently need amending."

They are causing such situations, especially for those who are not even offered a YTS place or who are without a family to turn to.

The smug, complacent attitude of the Minister and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South shocked me. It showed no recognition not only of the political propaganda that the Minister has to face in the House, but of the political reality of young people who have no hope of a house of their own or the Minister who wrote to me describing the young lady begging in the street in St. Austell. That attitude does not recognise the people who cannot afford to pay the mortgage on the houses for which they have scraped together the money to buy on the Government's recommendation. It does not recognise the people in pleasant towns and villages who see the devastating impact that neglect is having on those who have always lived there.

If the Minister had said that the Government were trying to do what they could, but that they recognised the failings and that more needed to be done, that would be one thing. But the Minister gives the impression that he honestly believes that there is nothing wrong, that no more needs doing, that everything about the Government's policy is right, that there is no omission and no improvement possible. That makes me angry because it shows a fundamental unwillingness to face up to the realities for people today. I hope that as the Minister reads the reports of this debate and the reports from many different organisations, he will reflect that he was wrong after all to take the attitude he has shown today.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. It may be for the convenience of the House if I say that the Front-Bench Members will seek to catch the eye of the Chair at 6.40 pm. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind, given that a large number wish to participate in the debate.

6.12 pm

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): I must say to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. M. Taylor) that my hon. Friends do not think that everything is right, but he is wrong when he says that everything is wrong. My hon. Friends are more realistic about their record of achievement. However, they have achieved a tremendous amount in comparatively few years. No doubt that achievement will continue.

I want to return to the subject of inner cities and the area that I represent in inner London, and to comment on some of the achievements and some of the problems waiting to be resolved. This Government of all Governments have accepted the major challenge to provide a better quality of life for people living in urban areas. The problems in accepting that challenge are considerable. Areas such as Wandsworth face the major problem of dealing with the designers and planners of the past and with vast numbers of high-rise dwellings. The high-rise dwellings of former Socialist administrations in

Wandsworth have resulted, 10 or 20 years later, in the crime, deprivation and isolation that we see today and there are mammoth problems to be overcome.

Such problems affect families and communities because we have areas in which people feel that they do not know each other and in which they feel that they can no longer send their children out to play with other families and know that they are safe. They have either to keep their children indoors or let them go out, where they pick up bad habits from their role models who are, of course, older children. Sadly, we cannot pull down those tower blocks because that would be too expensive a solution, but we can remedy the problem. If we had been able to pull down the tower blocks, we would have been able to house the same number of people on the same area of land in terraced houses with gardens and we should have kept the communities that we have lost.

That is a major problem, and in trying to solve it we have other problems. In my area, there is a paucity of land available for development. That is not true of all areas, but it is true of my part of inner London. In some areas the Land Registry can help in identifying and releasing land for development, but not in mine. We also have the continuing problem of social change. We have higher rates of divorce, young people leave home earlier, there are more single parents and more people coming out of institutions and looking for accommodation in society.

I salute the Government's achievements, which have been many. An enormous amount has been achieved through the Estate Action programme, for example. Hon. Members need not take my word for it. They can come to Wandsworth and see what a Conservative Government and a Conservative council have done together to rejuvenate an area of high-rise council estates.

**Mr. John Fraser** (Norwood): Why has Wandsworth borough council kept Park Court on the Doddington estate in Battersea, with 86 houses, empty for two years when there is a large queue of people for homes?

**Mr. Bowis:** Park Court is one of the blocks on the Doddington estate which is being completely refurbished so that it can be offered back to the tenants who resided there. It can also be offered to people on the waiting list. Some homes will be for rent and some for purchase. In refurbishing those homes, the council will bring new life into the estate. Alongside that redevelopment is low-rise development with landscaping and all the other amenities that enable one to achieve a more popular and habitable living area in a high-rise estate. I do not apologise for that.

There has been an enormous achievements, in crime prevention. Hon. Members need not take my word for it. They can come and see the partnership in Wandsworth between the Government, the Department of the Environment and the Home Office and the crime prevention measures that have led to new areas of lighting, locks, ground floor gardens and the moving of walkways. We know what needs to be done in Wandsworth, and we have a good example of partnership there. Tremendous strides have been made on sheltered accommodation and home improvements throughout the borough.

We have seen the enormous achievement of home ownership. Three million more families nationally own their homes than in 1979. Locally, 12,500 council dwellings have moved into private ownership, including 3,500 council flats. Half have gone to sitting tenants and half to people on the waiting list.

That is an enormous list of achievements, of which the Government can be proud, although I believe that there is a long way to go on home ownership. We still have more nationalised housing than anywhere else in Europe, but the Government are freeing people from being locked into dependency on tenancy, whereas Labour Governments have sought to perpetuate that.

We still have particular problems in inner London. We have the problem of empty properties, and other hon. Members have referred to the problem of empty council properties. I shall not dwell on that except to say that the Government are moving to rectify that. There are still problems in the private sector, and we should not under-estimate them. If private sector properties are empty for a period of years, perhaps we should consider trusts taking them over and letting them.

We should consider the question of squatting. Squatters jump the queue over more deserving people on the waiting list. The definition of homelessness needs to be considered. There are far too many cases in my constituency of people who suffer overcrowding, such as five people living in one-bedroomed accommodation, people in accommodation that needs repair, and disabled people who live upstairs and cannot get out. They are being jumped over by people who are defined as homeless and who, for one reason or another, seem to be able to reach the top of the list ahead of others. Sometimes that may be justified, but too often it is not.

The other day I received a letter from a constituent which asked the following question:

> "18 months ago, my sister got pregnant—she then moved (almost straightaway) into a three bedroomed council flat . . . Shall I get pregnant and do things the wrong way round? Will that help my chances?"

That is not the message that we should give young people in need of housing. Such an attitude is true of too many housing associations.

I received a letter from a couple in which the young man was training for the ministry. They have been told that they must wait until either they are married or living together. They said that they did not want to live together. The Peabody Trust said:

> "The criterion the Trust has recently adopted in this respect is that couples approaching us must either be married or must show a commitment to the relationship in the form of being already living together."

That is not the answer that we should be giving to young people who wish to "do it the right way".

There is one injustice that the Government have not yet put right. Housing associations are central to the Government's housing plans. When they are good, they are excellent but when they are poor they can be tyrannical. We must try not to set a new trap that will prevent people from owning their own homes. My mailbag is full of letters from constituents saying, "The Government have given the option of home ownership to council tenants. Why cannot I have it? I have lived in a housing association property for the past 20 years. My family have grown up in it and I have spent thousands on improving it, yet I am not allowed the right to buy it." Others write and say, "The council has just moved me into a housing association property for its own convenience, and nobody told me that I would lose the right to buy." That behaviour is unjustified. As we bring in more housing

*[Mr. Bowis]*

association properties to help solve problems of housing and homelessness, more and more people will fall into that trap unless we give them the right to buy their housing association property.

I hope that no hon. Member will try to tell me about tenants transfer discounts of Home Ownership for Tenants of Charitable Housing Associations. HOTCHA was not so hot, and TIS—the tenants' incentive scheme—is a 'tisn't in London, given that the average price of a council flat after discount is £15,000 while the average after a TIS is between £50,000 and £70,000. For Londoners TIS ain't on.

I beg my right hon. and hon. Friends to reconsider this matter. Increasingly, housing associations are funded by the taxpayer and the ratepayer, and we therefore have a right to tell them how that money should be spent. It should be spent on providing rented accommodation, from which people can eventually step on to the home ownership ladder by exercising the right to buy. We need also to consider the possibility of allocating a quarter or a third of housing association funds with specific strings attached, insisting that properties should be provided for equity sharing schemes so that the sons and daughters of those who exercise the right to buy can climb up a stage on the home ownership ladder. It is time to right an injustice that has stayed with thousands of London families, and families throughout the country, for far too long.

6.22 pm

**Mr. Eric S. Heffer** (Liverpool, Walton): One of the saddest things about this debate has been the repudiation, not only by the Minister but by Conservative Back Benchers, of the previous policies of the Conservative party. Public housing did not begin with a Labour Government—not even with John Wheatley, whose Housing Act 1924 led to the building of about 500,000 houses. Public housing began before that, and was determined by the needs of the people. Let us consider the history of Parliament from 1915 onwards. Perhaps the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) is related to Griffith-Boscawen who said, "If it is right to have public education and public roads, why should it be wrong to have housing built by the state and by local authorities on behalf of people in need?" He was absolutely right to argue that case.

Some hon. Members who have appeared on the Conservative Benches during the last couple of Parliaments do not seem to understand their own history. Some of them have never heard of Joseph Chamberlain or of others in their ranks who argued consistently over the years that local authorities and the state should play a positive role in meeting the needs of the people. They seem not to know that, and that is a great pity. Perhaps they should look into their own history.

I was born and bred in a very small town. I was not born in Liverpool; I went there later, during the war years, and settled there after the war. I was born in Hertford, which is 20 miles north of London and had a population of 12,000. Even in that small community, we had council houses and council estates. I can name some of them. There was Gallows Hill estate—admittedly not a very good name—and there was the Bengeo estate, through which I passed on my two-mile walk to the church school. My mother insisted that I went to the church school. There were other estates in that small town.

I sometimes compare the lot of those who lived in council houses with the circumstances in which we lived. Our accommodation was damp, and my brother got TB and died at the age of 21. Others like us lived in dreadful conditions with mould on the walls, and the private landlords did nothing for people. The council houses were wonderful in comparison.

I then went to the great city of Liverpool. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is not here. She knows what I mean when I call her "luv", because it is a Liverpool expression. In some parts of the country it would be "duck" and in Cornwall, for example, it would be "dear". My remark was not a sexist remark but a Liverpool remark, and I want to put that on record in case people write to me and say, "My God, what a sexist thing to say."

The hon. Lady and I both come from the city of Liverpool. I have lived there since the end of the war and my wife was born and bred there, on the Norris Green estate, a working-class housing estate. People used to pray that they would get to live in such a place. When my mother-in-law moved from rooms into a house—the house in which she still lives and in which she brought up her family—she took with her a handcart with the few odds and ends that she had; she did not have any furniture.

Conservative Members say that people do not want council housing. It is all right for the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South. She was born round the corner from where I now live. She would not know what living in council housing meant to people. I do, although I have never lived in one. As it happens, I have been an owner-occupier since the end of the war. First I lived in rooms and then I saved up to get a mortgage. I know that millions of people in this country have benefited from living in council housing and that they have been able to live a decent life because of it.

People are worried sick about the Government's new housing proposals. They do not know what will happen to them or whether their house will be handed over to some other landlord. I do not know what the leaflets say, but I know that my constituents write to me expressing concern, not because they have received leaflets but because all their lives they have lived happily in those houses.

Of course people want decent houses. They want their repairs done and they want their houses properly looked after and modernised—as many of them have been looked after and modernised by local authorities. I urge hon. Members to visit my mother-in-law's street. It is easy to tell the council houses from the ones that have been bought: the ones that have been bought are running down because people cannot afford to keep them in proper order. That is what is happening. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) may laugh, but I challenge him to come to Liverpool and look at all the houses that people have bought but are being repossessed because they cannot afford to meet the mortgage repayments. It may be different in other parts of the country.

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** It is.

**Mr. Heffer:** The hon. Member may say that, but he should remember——

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo** *rose*——

**Mr. Heffer:** I shall not give way. After all, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) spoke for 10 minutes. If we are to discuss these matters, we should be really concerned about them.

I shall conclude by quoting some figures. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South also used figures. According to the Department of Environment housing and construction statistics published in October 1988, a total of 81,099 local authority houses were started in 1977. In 1979 the figure was 47,465, but by 1988 the figure had fallen to 15,204. Those are not my figures; they are the Department's figures.

I can also quote other figures, such as those relating to the homeless. A recent written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) shows that, at the end of June 1979, only seven local authorities had over 20 and up to 50 homeless households requiring bed-and-breakfast accommodation. By the end of March 1988, a total of 26 towns and cities had more than 20 homeless households. The position is becoming worse.

I do not have time to quote all the facts and figures, but the housing crisis still exists. It is worse than it has ever been for ordinary working people, especially in London. Where do ordinary working people in London live? From where can they get housing? There are not even the rooms that used to exist. That is why there is such a rise in the number of homeless. We have to do something about it. The only solution is to get rid of the Government's policies. I hope that when a Labour Government are elected, we shall tackle the housing crisis for the first time. I believe passionately that no Government have really dealt with it properly. Like many workers among the Opposition, I know about living in lousy, rotten conditions and it is about time that it was stopped once and for all.

6.32 pm

**Sir George Young** (Ealing, Acton): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) for curtailing his remarks. I would not contradict what he said about his constituency, but in Ealing the position is reversed. The council houses that have been bought are well maintained, and the houses owned by the council are vandalised, squatted in and left empty for too long.

I shall address my brief remarks to the housing pressures in London and the south-east. Many of the symptoms have already been referred to—house prices increasing two and a half times in the past 10 years, rising faster than incomes; sadly more families accepted as homeless; young people sleeping on the streets; and problems in recruiting professionals such as teachers and nurses in London. There are also many concealed households, as young people stay with their parents because home ownership or renting is not available.

I very much welcome all that the Government have done to improve the position, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on what he is doing to reduce voids in local authority stock, to reclaim and use derelict land, to get the urban development corporations to provide affordable housing and to turn round difficult-to-let estates through Estate Action. More power to his elbow, but even if all that is done, there will still be a housing shortage in London and the south-east that can be met only by building more houses. Even SERPLAN, which is notoriously conservative, has now agreed that by 2001 100,000 to 120,000 dwellings will be needed in addition to those already planned.

I want to rebut the view that the answer to our problems in the south-east is to adhere to a strict planning regime and simply hope that development will take place elsewhere. I welcome the economic revival of the north, and the confident statements from the business community and its civic leaders are music to our ears—our strategy must be to build on that—but it is important not to dismantle or destabilise the economic base of the south-east and, crucially, not to enforce the relocation of residents from the overcrowded south to the north.

Some of my hon. Friends wish to hang up a "house full" sign on the door of the south-east, tightly to restrict further development and let the market do the rest. I find such a solution unacceptable. It is certainly unacceptable to the DTI. In its evidence to the public inquiry into proposals for a new country town at Foxley Wood, the DTI was provoked into saying:

> "Past policies of discouraging development in relatively prosperous locations, or even steering that development to other parts of the country, have not met with success. It would therefore be a mistake to interfere with market forces by putting protective barriers around the south-east and other desirable areas in the hope that this would open up opportunities elsewhere."

We are a party that responds to market forces. We believe in reading the signals given by the market, and the policy of freezing development in the south-east is the very negation of what we stand for. The transformation of the country's economy has been achieved through acting on the supply side, finding out where the bottlenecks are, and removing restrictive practices by trade unions, anti-competitive agreements and the rest. The housing market cannot be expected to work with one hand tied behind its back.

What happens to the nurses, the teachers and the postmen who live and work in the south-east? As we have heard, local authorities are increasingly committed to rehousing the homeless, and those people often cannot afford to buy at the moment, let alone if the restrictive policies advocated by some people are pursued. The communities that would result from such policies would be unbalanced, polarised and unstable. The social cement that binds us together would not exist. We would have only the prosperous and the poor, and the children of people in the south-east would have real problems in finding somewhere to live.

Our strategic objective should be to manage and exploit the economic strengths of the south-east for the benefit of its residents and the rest of the United Kingdom. We need more houses. The rapid rise in land prices in England and Wales has increased fivefold in the past 10 years. Much of the land that has become available has not gone to the groups that most need housing, so there has been a mismatch between the type and location of new housing and the reasonable expectations and aspirations of local people. That is an understandable reason why planning committees can turn down development applications because they do not consider them relevant to local needs.

No one can argue that the land does not exist. Between now and the end of the century, 20 per cent. of agricultural land will become redundant—much of it in the areas of housing shortage. Farmers have already applied for 150,000 acres to go into the set-aside scheme. My right

*[Sir George Young]*

hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has made it clear that change of use is needed. At the Conservative party conference in 1987, he said:

"We must accept that more land will have to come out of agricultural production. So we must facilitate this change, to the benefit of our rural areas, and not obstruct it."

I see no reason for us to turn our backs on the one form of development that is most urgently needed—homes.

At the moment, the planning system cannot cope. Farmers and landowners have to play rustic roulette. They either get planning permission and their land is worth £1 million an acre, or they do not and it is worth £1,000 an acre. If they get consent, the developer will maximise his profit by building high-value units often beyond the reach of local pockets. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) that we need a halfway stage—to give planning permission if the land is sold at a realistic price, which means that properties can be bought or rented by people on average incomes, and if the properties are offered in the first instance to local people doing key work or to the children of those already living in the community.

Many reasons for opposing development are based on sheer selfishness. The secretary of the village conservation society is often the chap who bought the last Wimpey house on the site of the old village school. He is often advocating restrictive development policies which, had they been adopted a few years back, would have meant that the house in which he now lives would never have been built. Other motives are more defensible, but one can overcome the understandable unhappiness of local people by insisting on a higher quality of design and on planning gain, so that there is real advantage to local communities if development goes ahead.

Many of the issues that I have raised fall outside my hon. Friend's brief, although they fall within his Department. I hope that, as a party, we can approach the subject in the spirit that I have outlined and come up with solutions in keeping with our party's broad sympathy to respond to and harness the forces of the market—solutions made more urgent by a humane desire to see our people adequately housed.

6.40 pm

**Mr. Paul Murphy** (Torfaen): The debate has been wide, but I shall confine my remarks to housing in Wales. When we look, as we must, at the result of the Government's housing policy in Wales, we see that there is no doubt that the problems that have been highlighted by my right hon. and hon. Friends are even worse in the Principality. Wales has the oldest housing stock in Britain. Of all its houses, 40 per cent. were built before the first world war. Despite the fact that the Government have done some work to improve the condition of those houses, their own house condition survey admitted that about £500 million is still necessary to put right the houses in the Principality.

Welsh district councils have said that they need more money for environmental schemes and more grants for low-paid owner-occupiers to carry out urgent repairs. Low-cost houses are important in the valleys and elsewhere in Wales. The staggering rise in private house prices during the past year is more obvious in Wales than elsewhere. There was a 52 per cent. rise in private house prices in Wales in the past year. That is more than in any other region. It is more than in London, where prices rose by about 15 per cent., and in the country as a whole, where prices have risen by about 31 per cent.

We have seen widespread gazumping in the Principality. The Prime Minister tells us that private industry and estate agents should work out their own solutions to gazumping. That is not the answer to a major problem in England and Wales. High interest rates and low salaries in Wales mean that young people cannot afford new houses. The only people in Wales who can afford new houses are those who come in from elsewhere and are second, third, or even fourth-time buyers. That fact must be contrasted with the lack of local authority housing.

One of the most staggering remarks in the debate came from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). She said that no one actually wants council houses any more. I wish that she would say that to the 70,000 people who are on waiting lists in Wales or to the other people throughout Britain who badly require housing.

In the years of this Government, 60,000 council houses in Wales have been sold, and 30,000 more are planned to be sold. The rate in Cardiff is 73 sales a week. The housing supply is effectively drying up. In 1975, a total of 8,000 houses were built in the Principality. Last year, 900 were built, and they were mainly specialist housing. In some district council areas in Wales it takes up to 10 years before people can get the council house which the hon. Lady said they do not actually want. In the past 10 years, there has been a 174 per cent. increase in rents in Wales.

The traditional supplier of houses in Wales is the local authority, but people cannot now look to their local authorities for housing. If the hon. Lady has her way, they will never be able to. It is wrong to talk of councils in Wales and the rest of Britain building only bad, decrepit housing. That is by no means the case. Local authorities stuck stringently to the Parker Morris standards. This Government relaxed those standards. Council houses were often better built than private houses.

Housing associations are now seen as the panacea for housing problems in Wales and Britain. The public expenditure White Paper states that they are the main providers of social housing. The organisation Housing in Wales has been created for that purpose. It is elected by nobody and is accountable to no one, save the Secretary of State himself. Its very creation is a slap in the face for local authorities in Wales, with all the experience that they have gained over the years in providing houses for our people. The £72 million that that body has been given should have been given to councils to put right their stock and to build houses, as they have been doing over the decades.

Housing associations will not provide the answer to social housing problems. Rents will rise through decontrol or the replacement of secure or assured tenancies, and the need for market rents. Those who are just above the housing benefit eligibility level will be caught in a poverty trap.

Housing associations in Wales provide houses for people. A recent survey undertaken by the associations showed that one in five families in housing associations earn less than £40 a week and that only a handful earn over £100 a week. How will the associations deal with the problem of single, young people in Wales and elsewhere who cannot afford mortgages?

There has been a rise in homelessness, the extent of which is more staggering than we have seen for many years. There has been a 100 per cent. rise in 10 years. Six thousand people in the Principality are now homeless, and that is not counting those who are regarded as homeless but are not in the official figures. Matters have been made worse by a rise in rent arrears and mortgage defaults. It is no wonder that the Audit Commission said that some councils will be unable to meet their legal requirements.

What of the future? The Secretary of State for Wales has provided an answer. He wants to give away council houses altogether. That is a dotty idea. It is as absurd as it is impractical. It has been universally condemned by every Welsh housing association and other housing bodies. The impartial *South Wales Argus* called it political engineering of the most sinister kind. Public housing stock in Wales and Britain as a whole would be destroyed at a stroke if the Goverment's proposals were put into operation. The Secretary of State's statement has more to do with internal Tory party politics than with the proper provision of housing in Britain.

There is no doubt that housing in Wales is at a crisis point. First-time buyers cannot afford to buy. There are fewer and fewer houses to rent. Housing association rents will rise dramatically. The financial future for housing is bleak, with housing revenue accounts not to be helped any more by rates. That will fall heavily on pensioner schemes. There has been an effective cut in housing figures over the past 10 years. Wales has lost £1·25 billion in housing money which should have come to it over the last decade.

Housing in Wales is a time bomb which the Government must defuse. Ministers should plan for a balanced provision between rented and private housing. Instead, all that we are offered is the jungle of the free market which will no more solve Wales's housing needs than Britain's housing needs.

6.50 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope):** I will not be able to reply to all the points made by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and I hope he will forgive me for not entering into the details of Welsh housing. There was a full debate on Welsh issues yesterday.

The hon. Gentleman did not make proper reference to the Welsh house condition survey. The latest survey shows that significantly fewer houses in Wales are now unfit. The proportion of houses without basic amenities has almost halved since 1981 and many fewer houses are now in a state of disrepair. These improvements have been particularly marked in areas such as Gwent, where unfitness has more than halved since 1981 and is now well below the Welsh average. I suspect—without having detailed knowledge of circumstances in Wales—that much of what the hon. Member for Torfaen said exaggerated the problems in Wales.

We have had a lively debate with some excellent contributions, especially from my hon. Friends. We particularly welcome the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). She commanded the attention of the House, she spoke with knowledge and experience as a former chairman of Birmingham city housing committee and she made some well-researched and telling points which caused confusion among the Opposition. I hope that she continues to speak out on the important subject of housing.

We also had important contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), and I hope that I shall have time to respond at least to some of the points that they made.

A common strand that has run through all speeches has been that more houses must be made available either through better management or through new building in the pressure spots, be they in London, the south-east or elsewhere. But before we can have more houses, we must have the land on which to put them, and that is where the planning system comes in.

That issue was addressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, West and for Ealing, Acton and, in an intervention, by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), who said that restricting housing land led to a consequential increase in the cost of that land and, therefore, house prices.

The latest household projection clearly shows that more housing will be needed in the next decade, not so much because of any population increase as because of the increased rate at which the existing population forms new households. The reasons for that are many. The fact that elderly people are living longer, the increasing divorce rate, the growth of one-parent families and the fact that young people are leaving home earlier are all contributory factors.

Some say that the new demand for housing should be accommodated within the existing urban areas, as a means of taking pressure off the countryside, especially green field sites, and to encourage urban regeneration. They are right. That should happen as far as possible, but it is impractical to expect all new demand to be absorbed by our older urban areas.

We are doing as much as we can to encourage the process. Urban development corporations, enterprise zones, simplified planning zones and the financial incentives offered by city grant and derelict land grant are already doing much to rehabilitate urban areas by encouraging new enterprises, new homes and new jobs.

But cities need their open spaces, too. It is not the business of the planning system to direct people where they should live—to cram them into towns when that is not where they want to live—which is not only immoral but self-defeating. We need more housing in areas outside the major conurbations. Too often, development plans propose new enterprises and new jobs because of the prosperity they bring, but shun the new homes that are vital to go with them, or hope that neighbouring areas will accommodate them.

That is often referred to as the "not in my back yard" philosophy. People who support that philosophy fail to realise that increasingly they will be unable to recruit the skilled labour that their businesses need because the price of housing will be beyond the reach of many of the candidates and because the available housing is likely to be snapped up by the more affluent, thereby excluding from the housing market the local people whose interests they are trying to protect.

We appreciate the feelings of those who see the character of their neighbourhoods changing and their communities being dominated by outsiders, be they commuters, second-home owners, retired people or people

*[Mr. Christopher Chope]*

who have come from other countries. The answer cannot be to pull up the drawbridge; on that, the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West were important because he drew attention to the possibility of more housing land being brought forward on a voluntary basis by people being prepared effectively to give it as a gift for use by housing associations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West referred to a potential fiscal problem in that connection, especially for capital gains tax. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Government are well aware of the anomaly and are looking closely to see whether there are any practical means of distinguishing these cases in a way that would enable us to deal with that problem.

Another initiative that we have taken in recent weeks has been to announce a new deal which will bring considerable comfort to those who live in rural areas, particularly in rural villages, and who resent the fact that their sons and daughters cannot afford accommodation in the place where they were brought up and wish to remain.

We have said that exceptionally—and only exceptionally—local authorities may, where there is a demonstrable local need, grant planning permission, on sites where it would not normally be granted, specially for low-cost housing for local needs. They should also make arrangements to ensure that housing remains within the low-cost, local needs sector. It is crucial that these sites should be additional to, and not instead of, the provision for general market housing as set out in the development plan. The scheme should be used not as a means of keeping out outsiders but for bringing more land into the market place and making it available for local people. I hope that some of these initiatives will be welcome in west Dorset.

I must emphasise that I am not advocating random development. Development must be properly planned, and it is important to remember, when considering household projections, that the need for development is absolute. So far as possible, we shall reduce existing under-used and derelict sites in the conurbations. We shall also maintain the green belt and other specially protected areas.

But we shall still need fresh land for housing, and I look forward to the unanimous support of the House in willing not only the end but the means to ensure that enough houses can be built in the years ahead. I hope that hon. Members listened with interest and respect to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton, who dealt with this issue with considerable knowledge.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) raised a number of points, but in the time available to me I shall deal only with his wrong assertion that the biggest cause of homelessness was mortgage repossessions. In the third quarter of 1988, a total of 7 per cent. of homelessness was attributable to mortgage repossessions. That was down from 10 per cent. in the previous year, so the trend is going in the opposite direction to that which the hon. Gentleman alleged.

That demonstrates the scaremongering attitude that Opposition Members often adopt. They pay lip service to the idea of a property-owning democracy, but seem to seize any and every opportunity to try to frighten people away from home ownership. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) did not miss that opportunity. He made assertions about the consequences for people who purchase houses in his area.

An independent report found that, on average, right-to-buy purchasers were less heavily committed than other first-time buyers. The report stated:

"Most buyers have found the problem of purchase and the experience of home ownership to be entirely unproblematical."

Some people have taken on larger mortgages than perhaps they would have done had they known the extent to which interest rates would go up. I was disappointed that no Opposition Member pointed out that there is often scope for people in that situation to let one or more rooms in their homes, so helping to deal with the problem of homelessness.

An initiative in that connection, on which the Opposition poured cold water, was brought in by the Housing Act 1988. It will make it easier for resident landlords to remove difficult tenants, an inhibition which has caused many people to be reluctant to let parts of their homes.

The Opposition have been in one of their doom and gloom moods. They speak of a housing crisis which is really a crisis of their own. They lack a housing policy. Government successes have that effect on the Opposition. The more successful the Government are, the more gloomy the Opposition are. The more successful our housing initiatives are, the more gloomy the Opposition are.

Socialists have good reason to be gloomy about housing. On national policies, they can hope that the public have short memories and have forgotten what Socialist policies were like in practice, but the Opposition are confronted daily by local examples of their policies in practice.

We have seen already this year harrowing pictures of estates in Lambeth where tenants live like prisoners behind barricades. One would think that that might have shaken the Opposition from their complacency. The hon. Member for Hammersmith suggested that it was because of a lack of Government funding, but in the past year Lambeth has refused to collect from its tenants rents amounting to £5 million. Those rents could have been spent on improving property. Those estates represent Socialist housing policy in practice. The political views of a housing officer are more important than his management responsibilities. Rents may be low, but the standards of maintenance and repair are even lower——

*It being Seven o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to Order [24 February].*

## Court of Auditors

7 pm

**The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke):** I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9908/88 on the Annual report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1987, 8502/88 on the management and control of public storage of agricultural products and 9945/88 on the accounting and financial management of the European Coal and Steel Community; and approves the Government's efforts to press for value for money in Community expenditure.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Brooke:** The debate is an important and timely opportunity to consider in some detail a range of questions relating to the control and management of the Community's finances. In its annual and special reports, the Court of Auditors has performed an indispensable service by analysing and publicising such questions. The House would not expect me to agree with everything that the Court of Auditors says, but I am in no doubt about the value of its work. The same goes for the work of the Select Committee on European Legislation: as always, when we debate the work of the court we have the benefit of a clear and thoughtful report by the Committee.

It might be helpful to begin by reminding the House of the role played by the court in the Community's decision-making process. Under the treaty of Rome, the court is required to examine

"whether all revenue has been received and all expenditure incurred in a lawful and regular manner and whether the financial management has been sound."

The Council and the European Parliament are required in turn to consider the court's annual report as part of the discharge procedure for the budget. The Council proposes to the Parliament a recommendation for the discharge and the Parliament decides whether and on what terms to grant the discharge. ECOFIN will discuss the court's report on 13 March. Tonight's debate will influence the Government's position for that Council, at which I shall represent the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): I am grateful to the Minister. There are not many hon. Members in the Chamber, and it is helpful if my right hon. Friend gives way from time to time. I wonder whether at this stage my right hon. Friend would let the House know whether he intends to accept what seems to be a fundamentally sensible amendment tabled by the Opposition.

**Mr. Brooke:** I proposed to deal with the amendment at the end of my speech, but if it would be helpful to my hon. Friend I am happy to comment on the Opposition amendment now.

I have great sympathy with the sentiments that lie behind the amendment, but I believe that in all the circumstances it would not be appropriate for the Government to withhold their approval of the recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge of the accounts for 1987.

The recommendation is subject to qualified majority voting. A vote against it by the United Kingdom would amount to little more than a gesture. The fight against fraud and mismanagement requires rather more than gestures. But in any case, on the substance of the issue, such a gesture would be misplaced, for two main reasons.

First, by formally withholding approval of the discharge, we would be admonishing the Commission, because the Commission alone is responsible for implementing the budget and drawing up the accounts. If our motive for withholding the approval was to make a broader point about fraud and mismanagement, the impression therefore would be that we were holding the Commission to be largely responsible for such problems. In fact, the responsibility goes much wider.

The second reason has to do with the nature of the discharge procedure. The discharge relates to a specific set of accounts for a single financial year. Strictly, discharge should be withheld only if these accounts are in some way improper. It has nowhere been alleged that that is the case in respect of the 1987 budget.

The Court of Auditors report draws attention to accounting procedures and devices that the Community was forced to resort to in 1987 and to which I would expect some of my hon. Friends might animadvert. Those procedures, notably the delayed payments for agricultural market support, were agreed by the Council. They were not unilateral actions by the Commission. It would therefore be inappropriate for the United Kingdom to censure the Commission in the way that the amendment suggests.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): My right hon. Friend knows that there was a period of two months within which the national authorities subsumed some responsibility for the discharge of certain moneys in the Community. If it was proved that there had been fraud—I believe that there is some evidence that that is capable of proof—would it not be right for, say, the Public Accounts Committee, or indeed the Government, to pursue the matter on their own account, let alone pursuing the Commission? The Commission has received a heavily qualified audit from the Court of Auditors.

**Mr. Brooke:** The point that I was making before my hon. Friend intervened was that the Council had supported and sustained the procedures that we adopted at the close of 1987.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): Will the Minister give way on the question of the amendment?

**Mr. Brooke:** There are few hon. Members present and the hon. Gentleman will have plenty of opportunity to make points hereafter. However, I will give way.

**Mr. Spearing:** I thank the Paymaster General for graciously giving way. It might be convenient to intervene now because the Minister animadverted, rightly or wrongly, to the amendment.

Surely the Minister is being slightly inaccurate. The amendment does not say that we should vote against any recommendation by the Council; it says that we should withhold approval, not on principle for ever, but only until we have received the report of the working party, which the Commission itself thought it advisable and necessary to establish. Surely that is rather different from what the Paymaster General said.

**Mr. Brooke:** I alluded to the amendment only because I was asked a question about it by my hon. Friend the

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Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). We can return to the substance of the Opposition's case and their amendment.

I propose to concentrate tonight on the key issues and themes arising from the three documents referred to in the motion. The most important of them relates to fraud and mismanagement involving Community resources. The focus here is on export refunds for beef, to which the court devotes a section of its annual report; and intervention storage, which is the subject of a special report. I am sure that hon. Members would expect me to devote a significant part of my speech to these matters.

But I also want to touch on the implementation of the 1987 budget and the question of getting better value for money from Community resources. I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if, as a result, I pass rather lightly over some other aspects of these very lengthy reports, but I shall do my best to deal with any specific points in my winding-up speech, if the House will allow me one.

Fraud is a crime against Community taxpayers which tarnishes the Community's policies and institutions. There can be no excuse for member states treating it any less seriously than fraud involving national finances. The Government have consistently made clear that we are ready to support any practical and cost-effective measures to combat it. Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me reiterate what has been said by three of my Ministerial colleagues from the Dispatch Box in the past week about a recent allegation made in another place that the United Kingdom vetoed a Commission proposal on fraud. That was simply not the case. All member states voted against the measure in question. The United Kingdom did so because we did not believe that the proposal as drafted would have improved the situation.

By its very nature, the scale of fraud is impossible to quantify.

**Mr. Marlow:** I think that I heard my right hon. Friend aright when he said that he would support any proposals against fraud. If there was a proposal that the Commission itself should have outposts in Community countries to supervise the expenditure of its money, would my right hon. Friend support that? It is manifestly obvious that until that happens there will be a great incentive in many European countries, perhaps in the United Kingdom, to maximise the amount of Community money that is being expended, perhaps without proper supervision.

**Mr. Brooke:** In preparing for the debate, I read earlier debates and I recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North raised the idea of a supranational authority. It was the more striking because those sentiments are not those I would have expected from my hon. Friend's lips. I shall be listening with great care to the debate in case there is a general view in the House that such a supranational authority should be encouraged.

The court's work on export refunds, which related to beef, scrutinised the effectiveness of controls in the four member states—including the United Kingdom—which account for over 80 per cent. of the expenditure in this sector. The court uncovered evidence of serious deficiencies concerning inspection, verification and other procedures. It concluded that the scope and quality of national controls did not give reasonable assurance that the expenditure concerned was legally and regularly incurred.

As regards intervention storage, the court's special report is hardly less disturbing, although strictly it has to do with mismanagement rather than fraud. The report is highly critical of Commission guidelines and their national implementation, citing in particular the lack of clear central rules, inadequate physical controls by member states and unsatisfactory accounting and audit procedures.

I shall come in a moment to the steps which are being taken in the light of these reports, but, first, it is worth noting—as does the court—that a number of the abuses which have been so tellingly catalogued spring from the very character of the Community's policies and regimes. That is why direct attempts to detect and deter fraud must go hand in hand with firm control of total spending, notably on the CAP. The court rightly points out that the differential between Community and world agricultural prices entails a significant risk of fraud. That problem is being tackled. The agricultural stabilisers agreed last year have already been triggered for a wide range of arable crops. For the key cereals crop, there will be a price cut of 3 per cent. from 1989 onwards.

The position on intervention stocks is also improving. The butter and milk powder mountains all but disappeared last year, and beef stocks fell by over a third.

**Mr. Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): Is it not outrageous for a Minister once again to say in the House that the food mountains have gone down because of reform? Does he not agree with the Agriculture Minister? If he looks up the figures, which have been published time and time again, he will see that they show that the reason for the butter mountain going down was that last year, at a massive cost, we sold 877,000 tonnes of butter, at prices as low as $2\frac{1}{4}$p per pound, instead of the usual 400,000 tonnes. Does not he accept that it is grotesque, when faced with massive fraud and abuse, for any Minister to try to pretend that the food mountains have gone down because of reform? Does he not accept that there is clear and precise evidence that we had a fire clearance sale, no more and no less?

**Mr. Brooke:** I would be the first to acknowledge some of the basic facts that my hon. Friend has stated. It is also the case that butter was not being taken into storage because the procedure triggered a moment when that process ceased. While I would be the first to acknowledge that some of the stocks were disposed of by the process that my hon. Friend mentioned, he would be uncharacteristically unfair if he did not acknowledge that the procedures of the Community also played some part.

**Mr. Taylor:** They played no part, and my right hon. Friend knows that.

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, having emptied the bath at some considerable cost, the most important thing is to ensure that the tap is shut and remains firmly shut?

**Mr. Brooke:** That is the policy that the Council has adopted in its report.

**Mr. Teddy Taylor** *rose*——

**Mr. Brooke:** If my hon. Friend will allow me, I will make a little more progress. From experience of past occasions, I know that he will not hesitate to intervene again.

None of this diminishes the need to tackle fraud and waste directly. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture emphasised the importance of firm action on export refunds and intervention storage at the Agriculture Council last month. I shall do all that I can to ensure that such action is taken at the meeting of ECOFIN on 13 March. In particular, I shall be pressing for new proposals from the Commission in two areas: first, the control and monitoring of export refunds, reflecting the recommendations in paragraph 4.56 of the court's report; secondly, the management of intervention stocks, on which an ad hoc group has already been set up to study the court's recommendations. I believe that deadlines should be set for the presentation of these proposals and for the adoption of the necessary measures.

Agricultural fraud gets the headlines, but the problem goes wider. The greatly expanded structural funds give rise to obvious difficulties of financial control and management. The new regulations governing the operation of the funds are commendably robust and straightforward. They show what can be done if the need to prevent fraud is explicitly considered when new legislation is being drafted. But much existing Community legislation is too complicated and open to fraud: "leaky and sprawling" was how a recent press story described it. Ways must be found of simplifying it wherever possible.

Simplification and fraud-proofing of regulations is one of the areas where I hope the Commission's recently established anti-fraud unit will get involved. I and my officials have had detailed discussions with the head of the unit about his objectives and priorities. I have encouraged him to focus, essentially, on practical measures. I emphasise the word "practical". Amidst the welter of recent publicity about fraud it is all too easy to be misled by righteous indignation into believing that there is some quick-fix solution. There is not. Nor can there be in a Community of 12 member states with a great variety of legal and administrative systems. It would be interesting to hear hon. Members' views on the desirability of harmonised systems, or, as I said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North, of some sort of supranational authority to combat fraud.

The fact of national diversity cannot, however, be allowed to become an excuse for inertia. I am therefore much encouraged that the Spanish presidency has organised a discussion of fraud at this month's ECOFIN, going beyond the specific issues arising from the court's reports. That discussion will be an opportunity to identify the areas in which action is needed, and to define the procedural steps which should be taken to create the necessary momentum for change. We can operate only by persuading the Commission and other member states that fraud must be taken seriously. That will be a protracted campaign; some member states have a much more relaxed attitude to fraud than we have in the United Kingdom.

The Government are carefully reviewing all aspects of the problem, but the objectives are reasonably clear. First, we need to strike a judicious balance between carrot and stick to ensure that member states take all necessary measures to prevent, detect and punish fraud against the Community budget. Secondly, we need more and better information on the nature and incidence of fraud in member states. Existing reporting arrangements are failing to provide the Commission with the facts that it needs in order to analyse the position and to design effective counter-measures.

**Mr. Marlow:** In view of the Government's quite proper desire to assist in overcoming fraud, and the possibility of loose and inadequate accounting within the United Kingdom itself, will my right hon. Friend make it clear that any agencies in this country will provide full and total assistance to anybody from the Commission or from the Audit Commission seeking advice and or information?

**Mr. Brooke:** Within the proper proprieties that the House would wish any agency in this country to observe, I give my hon. Friend that assurance.

**Mr. Cash:** If there was any real reason why the court needed to acquire information, sought it and could not acquire it as a result of an obdurate refusal by the agency to provide the information, does my right hon. Friend agree that that is the moment at which Her Majesty's Government should say, "This will not do; we must get to the bottom of this, because it is in our interests to do so"?

**Mr. Brooke:** I am not clear whether my hon. Friend is speaking to a hypothetical case or to a particular case. The tenor and spirit of my answer follow the answer I gave a moment ago.

Thirdly, we need to consider how far an enhanced role for the Commission in the detection or investigation of fraud could be expected to help reduce the scale of the problem. Fourthly, we need to be satisfied that enforcement standards in all member states reflect the seriousness of the problem. Finally, we need to establish procedures which will enable all new Community legislation to be fraud-proofed, and which will help to root out existing regulations and regimes which are, to coin a phrase, fraudster-friendly.

Let there be no mistaking the Government's determination to cut through the rhetoric about fraud and to pursue workable and effective measures to tackle it. Our determination has been underlined by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who has made clear that she will, if necessary, raise the issue of fraud at the Madrid European Council in June.

**Mr. Ian Taylor** (Esher): In that context, will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the civil service in the Brussels Commission, particularly taking note that its secretary-general is a former senior official of the Cabinet Office of this country? Therefore, its standards should be at the level that we would expect in this country and not of the kind that Sir John Hoskyns tried to imply earlier this week.

**Mr. Brooke** I am happy to endorse what my hon. Friend correctly said.

I turn now to the court's criticisms concerning the implementation of the 1987 budget. There are three main ones: that almost 20 per cent. of the final budget for 1987 was not charged to the 1987 accounts; that published figures for the growth of agricultural expenditure in 1987 —as in 1986 and 1985—significantly understated the actual rate of increase; and that the budget was balanced only by successively adjusting the duration of the agricultural year.

The court goes on to argue that these factors call into question the value of the political objectives set out at the

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1984 Fontainebleau European Council, and the budget discipline decisions of the 1988 Brussels European Council.

I would not quarrel with the court's criticisms, but I believe that its conclusion is rather wide of the mark. The accountancy practices to which the court draws attention were the products of a collision between the apparently inexorable increase in agricultural expenditure and the Community's own resources ceiling. It was precisely in order to avoid future collisions of this nature that the United Kingdom insisted during the negotiations on the Community's financing, which culminated last year, that we would not accept an increase in the own resources ceiling until agricultural expenditure had been brought under firm control—until, that is, the Community had adopted rules and procedures to ensure that it could live within its means without recourse to the practices that the court identifies.

The 1987 budget, to which the report relates, was the last to be drawn up and implemented entirely under the ancien regime for budget discipline. The new regime put in place after the February 1988 European Council is altogether more rigorous and watertight. I must therefore take issue with the court's dismissive reference to the

"superficially more binding objectives regarding budgetary discipline"

agreed at that Council. The future financing package does not consist of mere objectives. It consists of a panoply of firm controls which have given the Community a solid basis for financial stability.

In the case of agricultural expenditure—which is, rightly, the court's main preoccupation—there are three elements of the new system which go well beyond earlier arrangements. First, the agriculture guideline is legally binding; secondly, it constrains the growth of agricultural spending to a maximum of 74 per cent. of the rate of growth of Community GNP; thirdly, there is no open-ended let-out for exceptional circumstances of the sort that bedevilled the Community's finances in the past. In future, there will be a cash-limited monetary reserve, capable of being drawn upon only in tightly circumscribed situations. These controls are buttressed by the reforms to which I have already referred—systematic depreciation arrangements and automatic stabilisers for all the main agricultural commodities.

I said earlier that the 1987 budget was the final offspring of the old regime. I look forward to the court's report on the 1989 budget, which is the first complete product of the new one. The provision for agricultural spending in that budget is about £1·3 billion below the guideline, and the budget as a whole is over £2·5 billion within the own resources sub-ceiling for 1989.

The third document mentioned in the motion is the court's annual report on the accounting and financial management of the European Coal and Steel Community. The report is intended to give the European Parliament and the Council an insight into the Commission's management of ECSC resources, most of which come from a levy on coal and steel producers, from borrowing on the capital markets and from bank loans.

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** Will my right hon. Friend answer a question that I have asked several times and to which I should like an answer? In view of what he has said about his co-operation with the court so that the accounts are properly managed, why did the Council of Finance Ministers, at which he was present, refuse to discuss a report, submitted by the court, which said that the Council's decision to transfer the responsibility for butter dumping from the EEC to member states was unlawful? That refusal meant that nothing could happen.

**Mr. Brooke:** It is wrong to say that the Council refused to discuss it. It was as a result of the United Kingdom's interventions that the report is now discussed at ECOFIN. That was the basis which we are expanding further at the meeting on 13 March. However, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East that there was disagreement between the Council and the court over that particular measure.

I shall confine my remarks to an aspect of the report that touches on an issue currently before the Council. The court notes that the ECSC's reserves increased in 1987, and calculates that the ratio of total reserves to total assets is higher than recommended by independent consultants. This is relevant to decisions on the current and future funding of the ECSC's programme of social measures for redundant steel workers. The Government have consistently argued that those should be financed, at least in part, by drawing on the ECSC's reserves. The court's report confirms that the reserves are adequate for this purpose.

The Commission, however, considers that there are insufficient resources within the ECSC budget to finance a programme of social measures at the proposed level. It has sought to remedy the alleged shortfall by proposing a transfer to the ECSC budget from the general European Community budget. The Government have resisted this, while making it clear that we are not opposed to the social measures in principle. The matter is to be discussed at the Council of Industry Ministers next Monday.

In my speech on this same occasion last year, I mentioned that I had recently visited the Court of Auditors and had emphasised the contribution that it could make on the subject of value for money in the Community budget. The Community's traditional approach to auditing has tended to concentrate on the regularity and propriety of expenditure by reference to legislative instruments and procedures. That is a necessary function, of course, but I am encouraged by the indications in the latest annual report of the court, moving beyond the traditional approach and towards the concept of value-for-money auditing with which we in the United Kingdom are familiar, but which has yet to take a firm hold in the Community. This shift of emphasis is particularly noticeable in the court's remarks on research and development and the structural funds.

As regards R and D, the court offers a cautious welcome for the programme of evaluation adopted by the Commission in 1983 and extended in 1987, but it urges the Commission to pay more attention to improving its assessment of the implementation and current validity of the R and D framework programme for 1987-91. A mid-term review of this programme is due to take place later this year, and will no doubt lead to proposals by the Commission for new projects and activities in areas which the programme does not at present cover.

I would not wish to prejudge the outcome of the review —some difficult negotiations lie ahead—but it would make neither financial nor industrial sense simply to graft new

activities on to the existing programme. It would be a mistake to assume that newly identified research priorities must necessarily be pursued at Community level. Even where this is appropriate, new activities should take the place of existing ones which have outlived their usefulness, which are not producing the intended results or which have been overtaken by other developments. Rigorous evaluation is needed in order to identify candidates for weeding out, just as detailed industrial and scientific assessment is needed to identify potentially worthwhile new projects. The criteria and procedures suggested by the court will be an especially useful input to the negotiations on the review.

As regards the structural funds, the court has some interesting things to say about measuring the impact on regional development of infrastructure investments subsidised by the Community. The precise methodology adopted by the court would not necessarily commend itself to all experts in this sphere, but the expansion of the structural funds which was agreed last year will involve a significant transfer of resources from the richer areas of the Community to the poorer. The greater convergence of member states' economic performance that that transfer is intended to bring about will not happen unless the resources are carefully targeted and the projects to which they apply are scientifically evaluated.

**Sir Russell Johnston** (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Will the Minister take this opportunity to clarify whether he agrees with the remark recently made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that all regional policy in the Community was a waste of time?

**Mr. Brooke:** Since I share departmental responsibility with my right hon. Friend, I should verify precisely what he said. However, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to the remark.

I referred earlier to the new machinery for controlling Community expenditure. With that machinery firmly in place, the Government are now taking the debate one step further by focusing on the quality of Community expenditure, not just the quantity. To that end we have formally tabled a detailed series of amendments to the financial regulation, which governs the implementation of the budget. The amendments are designed to provide a legal framework for improving the value for money of Community expenditure, clarifying its objectives and developing measures to indicate how far those objectives are achieved in practice. Those concepts have become an established part of the landscape in our own public sector, but are not yet embedded in the Community's culture. We aim to try to change that.

I believe that many of the court's anxieties about the implementation of the Community budget have been addressed in the future financing package agreed last year. I hope that that will allow the court to develop its work on value for money, and cost-effectiveness. Finally, I encourage the court to continue in its role as the scourge of fraud, waste and mismanagement. In that it has the Government's full support.

I accordingly commend to the House the reports mentioned in the motion, and look forward to hearing the views of hon. Members.

7.30 pm

**Mr. Stuart Holland** (Vauxhall): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Question, at end to add:

"and to this end calls on Her Majesty's Government to withhold their approval of any recommendation by the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community to the European Parliament to discharge the annual accounts of the Community for the year 1987, in accordance with the procedures specified in Article 206B of the Treaty of Rome, until the Council has received and discussed the report of the working party established by the Commission of the European Communities to consider the recommendations of the Special Report No. 5/88 of the Court of Auditors (8502/88) dated 13 September 1988 on the management and control of public storage of agricultural products."

It seems to Opposition Members—and, I suspect, to Conservative Members—that the Minister's unconcern about some of the fundamental implications raised by the auditor's report is simply staggering. The position is highlighted by an excellent report in today's edition of *The Guardian*, which states:

"Massive fraud involving an estimated £17·25 billion over the past eight years is causing the EEC to fear that the entire Common Agricultural Policy is being discredited."

It is all very well for the Minister to say that that was the ancien regime and that things are changing. He does not face the implications of the report, which in our view falls into two categories, one long-term and one short-term. The short-term category may be the more dramatic, but the long-term one is also important.

One of the reasons why there is so much scope for fraud in the European Community is the price support system that it operates, rather than the deficiency payments system that it should be operating. The system should both enable the consumer to benefit and allow operations to be more transparent in supporting producers. That was the basis of the deficiency payments system. Commodities came in, by and large, at world prices—therefore low prices—and the subsidies went to the producers, that is, the farmers, in a manner that could be effectively scrutinised by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The argument at the time of the debate on the common agricultural policy throughout the early and mid-1960s was that the share of the working population in agriculture in the Community was too high for a deficiency payments system to operate. One out of four workers in the original six countries was employed in agriculture in 1957, but, as I have told the House before and as many hon. Members present tonight are well aware, the working population in agriculture—at least in the Community of 10, for which figures are readily available—is down to less than 7 per cent.

I will not elaborate on the point unduly, but none the less I think that it should be made. What this means in practice is that production quotas can be set within guidelines for specific farms, concerning head of cattle, grain production, or whatever. If world market prices are then prevailing on the import side, the whole range of fraudulent operations—for example on the export and re-import of beef products highlighted in the auditors' report simply would not be happening, as there would not be subsidies for the export and re-import of beef.

Those long-term structural factors must be addressed. If the Government are not addressing them, whatever they do at an ECOFIN meeting in a few weeks' time will not begin to resolve the fundamental problems.

**Mr. Cash:** The hon. Gentleman is trying to wrap up the argument in terms of deficiency payments. Wearing their other hat in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government are trying to deal specifically with how to mitigate surpluses. Those policies, which would be combined with such measures as reducing pollution and the quantity of nitrates—I shall not go into them in detail now—would in aggregate reduce the amount of money required. Clearly that would be the best course to take, and if other countries would adopt the policies that we have been pursuing a good deal of progress might be made.

**Mr. Holland:** That is probably so. Certainly it is important for us to see agricultural policy as related to other kinds of priority policy, such as the environment and regional development. One of the ways in which reduced expenditure on agriculture could well be reallocated is via the social and regional fund. In the environmental context, for example, the argument is well established that keeping some land under cultivation, which may not in itself be economically viable, is environmentally desirable. It also avoids the grotesque depopulation of the countryside and the "Deserted Village" syndrome that has afflicted various parts of Europe.

Let me return to the short-term implications of what the Government are doing, and the extent to which they are responsible for what has happened. The Minister flipped over that rather easily, saying that responsibility for the monitoring of intervention funds was shared between the Commission and member states. The guidelines are there for the Commission, and some of the auditing and supervision must be done by the Commission, but the responsibility is that of the individual member states. In this instance, it would be the responsibility of member states to establish whether suitable controls are in operation, whether they are accurate on a monthly or annual basis, controls on quantities and quality, the nature of declarations, the source data and accounting arrangements generally—the main items in the auditors' report.

In this context, a letter dated 13 September 1988 is important. It was written by Mr. Marcel Mart, the president of the Court of Auditors, to Karolos Papoulias, at the time president of the Council. It poses questions to be raised with Ministers about what the Government have been, and are doing, in this regard. For example, there is the notorious case, widely reported in the press and mentioned on page 21 of Mr. Mart's letter in its English translation, of the overcrowding of space in storage, preventing any reasonable access or checks. Is the Minister satisfied that that is not occurring in the United Kingdom? What proportion of storage facilities are investigated by the Government each year to ensure that it does not happen?

Page 22 of the letter states:

"There is only one country"—

that is, Denmark—

"in which volumetric assessment of the quantities of cereals kept in flat storage is feasible."

Why is it not feasible for the United Kingdom? Page 25 states that there is a great variety of surveillance and technical differences between various states. In monitoring humidity and knowing how to watch for the presence of insects or to prevent the access of other animals, only Denmark appears to have effective mechanisms for scrutiny. As that factor relates to health, the Government should be rather sensitive to the health quality of food products.

**Mr. Marlow:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that measuring the volume of a commodity such as grain does not define the value. The value of that volume of grain varies according to the amount of moisture and impurities in it, and the type of grain that is stored. It is essential that, if any heap of grain, for example, is being measured, the other qualities pertaining to it are examined, otherwise it is impossible to have any idea of the value. That is one reason why so much fraud is apparent at present. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. My point is that Mr. Mart's letter highlight that the Danish have a range of inspection procedures which are relevant, such as temperature probes, monitoring humidity, and under which conditions to ventilate. Of course, it is not simply quantity but quality. Notoriously in the beef case, it is alleged that there are so many different quality specifications that it is impossible to monitor effectively. It has been alleged that there are up to 1,000 different regulations for beef products in the Community. Is that so?

**Mr. Boswell:** Following the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and speaking as a practical farmer, I must say that one of our problems with volumetric measurement is that, unless one has a good standardised measurement of the actual density of the grain, it is difficult to know the tonnage involved. That may vary within the heap, even if one has a standardised volume.

The other point that has concerned me is that the hon. Gentleman has several times referred to the practice in Denmark. As I read the report, I believe that Denmark was not one of the countries considered in the detailed study. In fact, the "D" stands for Deutschland, namely the Federal Republic of Germany. I wonder whether I am right about that, and, if so, will the hon. Gentleman correct his assertion?

**Mr. Holland:** The hon. Gentleman may be correct and I am most grateful to him. It is certainly confusing if Denmark is expressed by an initial—(D)—which represents Deutschland.

The letter says on page 27 that there is

"only one case known (France, cereals) where examples are found of storekeepers being financially sanctioned for excessive quality differences."

What kind of sanctions are being employed by the United Kingdom Government? Are all our storekeepers angels? Can we assume that they are? How many prosecutions have the Government undertaken concerning any breach of the storage of food regulations?

On page 29, the letter says:

"since under current arrangements there exists no stable valuation basis for the recording of stock movements and their consequences for the Community budget in the financial accounts".

Why is there not such a stable valuation basis for the recording of stock movements in the United Kingdom? Will the Minister answer that question, because for that the Government and not the Commission are responsible?

Another consequence is reported on page 30:

"profits and losses cannot be attributed to individual transactions."

In effect, that amounts to transfer payments and prices being charged by firms in their operations. Why do we not have that transparency? What are the Government doing in that respect?

**Sir Russell Johnston:** I am not sure about the hon. Gentleman's page references. The page which the hon. Gentlman gave as page 30 is page 67 in my copy of the report.

**Mr. Holland:** I shall be glad to clarify that. I did say that what we are talking about is a letter from the president of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities, Mr.Marcel Mart, of 13 September 1988 to Karolos Papoulias, then President of the Council of Ministers. That document is available in the Vote Office, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman has it.

Page 31 of this letter—which after all was written by the president of the Court of Auditors to the then president of the Council of Ministers—concerns the timing of submissions on expenditure and expenditure claims. Mr. Mart said:

"the Member States have an interest in the earliest possible declarations of expenditure because the declaration has to have been submitted before funds can be withdrawn from the EAGGF Treasury account. It was established that the great majority of the intervention agencies draw up their second category declarations in the first week of the month following the month in which the physical operations took place . . . It will be clear that as such an early moment in time, it is hardly likely that the centrally recorded data in respect of intervention transactions can be complete."

What does the Minister say about that, because those who are making those claims should be responsible to him, as the Government are responsible for the operation of our intervention agency?

The cost figures involved in the misallocation relates partly to what have been called Mafiosi-type swindling, but also partly to the inefficiency with which the intervention process is being managed.

Page 43 of Mr. Mart's letter says:

"no audit is performed by any of the internal audit departments, of the monthly declarations nor of the annual accounts of public storage expenditure, submitted to EAGGF."

Why should they not be in the United Kingdom? In fact, what we have heard is that the Government are appalled by what is happening. They say that the problem will be reduced because we will have stabilisers. The fact that cereal prices may fall by 3 per cent. in 1990 is hardly encouraging for rapid progress in that respect. However, no doubt a fall will be more welcome than an increase. What is the Minister doing in the United Kingdom? When will he put his own house in order? When will he report to the House and respond specifically to the allegations that have been made?

**Mr. Marlow:** I put it to the hon. Gentleman that, as the system is at the moment, my hon. Friend is unlikely to do anything about it at all. The Community funds—especially in the common agricultural policy—are being ripped off right left and centre by every other country in the Community. If my hon. Friend were to do the decent thing —which I am sure he would like to do—it would mean that the United Kingdom would not get its fair share of funds. There is no incentive for my hon. Friend, on his own, to stand up and do the proper thing.

**Mr. Holland:** I think that the hon. Gentleman, allegedly the hon. Friend of the Minister, has put his finger on it. There is little incentive, as such, for the Government to seek to reduce the transfers which come to the United Kingdom under the guidance and guarantee fund.

However, another argument involves the accountability of Ministers to the House. For example, the Minister gave two main reasons for rejecting the terms of our amendment. First, he said that to accept the amendment would admonish the Commission. Secondly, he said that the discharge relates to specific accounts and whether or not they are improper. In this case, the admonition is not so much of the Commission as of the individual member states and their failure to pursue adequate audit and scrutiny procedures. It is in the sense that this is the appropriate Chamber in which the Minister should be held responsible for the range of issues that I have raised—where either the United Kingdom is not achieving the best practice available in other Community countries or it is failing to ensure that the quality of food or the manner in which claims are made are adequately transparent and supervised.

Moreover, the Minister's argument on the amendment is bizarre in view of a statement made in this House by the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He said:

"As I have said, the Commission draws attention in its proposals to the need to tackle the problem of CAP fraud . . . What we now need is action . . . The Scrutiny Committee draws the House's attention to the importance of the European Court of Auditors report on intervention. I welcome the Commission's initiative in setting up a working party to study the recommendations of this report."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. 29-30.]

If there is no sanction at any level, there is no guarantee that the auditors' recommendations will be implemented.

**Mr. Cash:** The hon. Gentleman is trying to pin blame on the Government. No doubt he regards that as his job. However, at the back of the Court of Auditors report in the Official Journal are the Commission's replies. This is an intricate matter but, when presented with the overwhelming evidence of its failures, the Commission's replies are, to say the least, inadequate.

**Mr. Holland:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Whether the Commission's replies start on page 257 or 265, which I read, they are anodyne in relation to the scale of the crisis that has emerged and the solutions that are needed.

One reason why the Opposition have tabled their amendment is to create a sense of urgency among those concerned in addressing the issues. If, at the 11th hour and 59th minute, one were to withdraw one's objections to the approval of the budget without a fuller implementation of the recommendations of the Court of Auditors, it might not be surprising. The Council is well known for stopping the clock on many matters.

What is surprising is not simply that the Minister is not prepared to fight, but that he is not even prepared to appear to fight. All we are likely to get is talk, talk and talk again rather than real progress.

We do not agree with Sir John Hoskyns's assertion that Brussels bureaucrats are not answerable to any Parliament. I have some sympathy with Lord Plumb when he says that he is outraged by Sir John's ignorance and asks:

"Has Sir John been asleep these last 10 years while the directly elected Parliament has been at work?"

*[Mr. Holland]*

What I am concerned about is whether the British Government have been asleep for the past 10 years since they have failed to fulfil their responsibility to adequately scrutinise those public funds which are being expended by Britain's intervention agency which is located in Reading. That scrutiny has been inadequate and the Government should show far more urgency in addressing the problems.

7.52 pm

**Mr. Michael Knowles** (Nottingham, East): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on not taking the cop-out route of blaming the Commission, which Ministers have taken on previous occasions. That is the easy way out for any Minister responding to his national Parliament. Everybody enjoys having a go at the Commission, especially as it is not represented in Parliaments.

However, there is a real problem about the Council. In the end, the Council is responsible. It has to act and approve in many cases. The Commission can make suggestions to it. It makes many, the majority of which are not approved. If the Council is a cabinet the doctrine of collegiate responsibility applies and my right hon. Friend is its representative here tonight. But if it is a legislative chamber, as it is in many respects, it is unacceptable that it should meet in secret. No one knows what happens.

The problem is that the Council is a hybrid, but I suspect that the balance is changing. We are getting to the stage when something must be done about the Council. Indeed, something must be done about an awful lot of the Community's structure. Everybody knows that it is nonsense to have such a large Commission, yet every nation state wants to be represented. Every language has to be translated and enormous bills result. A great deal of money goes on translating every document. As everyone in the Community knows, the two working languages are English and French and everybody uses them, but, as a matter of national pride, no one will give up their language. Therefore, there is a problem with the Council.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) made a point about deficiency payments. There is an argument for switching to deficiency payments once the agricultural population reaches a fairly low figure. That is not politically realistic; I cannot see other member states switching. Many good questions arose from the president's letter which he quoted, dealing with storage and technical differences between countries, with which I will deal later.

**Mr. Holland:** Why should deficiency payments be unfeasible as a longer-term objective? From another document before the House, on the European Coal and Steel Community, we see that

"urgent action should be taken to decide the future of the ECSC after July 2002."

If plans can be made for that far ahead for coal and steel can we not plan that far ahead to change the system for agriculture?

**Mr. Knowles:** One knows the speed at which change comes about within the Community. However sensible or rational, on matters such as this, which require a unanimous decision, someone somewhere will use the veto; in some cases just so that they can be brought off. That is not completely unknown within the Council.

The great difficulty with the system, as emerged from an earlier exchange, is that every member state has an interest in fraud. It is in their interests to grab as much as they can, for fear that other people will grab more. That is a recipe for financial disaster. To be fair, the Court of Auditors has said that time and again. It was reinforced when the European Parliament discharged its report. The Commission has produced plans which go to the Council and then we come to next year's auditors' report. The problem is that the Court of Auditors is a stand-alone institution and has no power in its own right. Nor has any other institution at a level where it could have an effect.

In places, the report makes nasty reading. Chapter 1 in particular is fairly horrible. The way in which the Commission presented the accounts is its responsibility, but, to put it mildly, the Council shares responsibility for that. Amounts of almost 7 billion ecu were not charged to the account. Two months were paid for by member states resources, not by the Community as they should have been, so that people could say that there was only a small increase—under 4 per cent.—in the budget that year. That is true if one runs a 10-month year—it is always easy to make the figures balance in that way—but taking the year as a whole, there was an increase of around 25 per cent. in agricultural spending. The figures were massaged and disguised, and we all know that that was for political reasons.

On butter, other sums were lost—about 1·5 billion ecu. That is being amortised over the next four years. Members were owed almost 700 million ecu and that was postponed until this financial year. Chapter 1 is a real horror story for anyone who believes in accounting. I suspect that if that happened in this country, Treasury Ministers would have a very hard time from the House and especially from the Public Accounts Committee. Indeed, if any director of a company or any council did that to their figures they would find themselves inside a court very rapidly. Yet nothing happens here. We have here the problem, to which the court has drawn attention time and again, of the Commission over-budgeting. It happens every time because people are padding the figures. It gives them maneouvrability during the year to switch them about—and they do.

**Mr. Cash:** Does my hon. Friend think, however—this is a thought that has been occurring to me since we were recently together in Luxembourg—that when one considers and compares the situation of countries that build up a national debt and then get into a bit of a jam,one sees a certain similarity of approach? The real problem that arises here is not necessarily that they have got into a bit of a jam and there is a budget deficit but that there is quite clearly severe fraud which is not being pursued as vigorously as we would like, and that it is the accounting procedures which must be put right.

**Mr. Knowles:** If my hon. Friend will bear with me, I will come to the fraud question. I have some sympathy with the point he makes.

We have set up a system in which every member state has a vested interest in fraud. That is a recipe for disaster, and it is the implication of the system of shared management over agricultural funds especially. There are no common Community controls. It is all in the hands of the member states. The Commission pays out the money on the members' declaration and later there will be an

examination and a justification. That is a nightmare. Again, as the court has pointed out, the Commission has not put enough resources into this area, and it should.

Agriculture affects the northern states more and co-financing affects the southern states more. There is just not sufficient audit of the regional and social funds. I think I am quoting accurately from the report when I say that they cannot trace the effect of Community expenditure. Admittedly, Commissioner Christophersen is getting more of a grip on the situation, but frankly he needs to get a stranglehold on it the way things are now.

Chapter 4 of the report, in particular, is a horror story. Paragraph 4.68 on page 76 reads:

"Two Member States (IRL, UK) refused to allow the Court access to scrutiny reports notwithstanding that these checks are required to be carried out under Community law."

Then there are paragraphs 4.73 and 4.74. And so it goes on.

On page 193, "Reports and opinions adopted by the Court of Auditors during the last five years", we get a constant repetition. Some of us have read those reports over the years and the same things keep coming up, because the system itself is deficient. We have built a nightmare. People are responding to the problems in a human way, so we have to change the system to work with the grain of human nature and not against it.

My right hon. Friend said that the problem was the regime—I think that was the expression he used. I do not believe that it is. I think that it is more a matter of constitutional balance. The Court of Auditors stands alone as an institution. The European Parliament then discharges with recommendations, and so on round the circle again. We have to look at changes across the range of the institutions of the Community, including the size of the Commission and the whole argument over languages. Indeed, a debate to this effect took place in the European Parliament recently, of which, of course, no notice whatsoever was taken.

**Mr. Marlow:** While my hon. Friend is considering institutional change, I wonder if he would like to address himself to the question put by our right hon. Friend? Does he believe that Community institutions ought to have more powers of intervention in how the system operates for the expenditure of Community funds and how it is audited and controlled within Community countries, because without this I do not think that we shall get anywhere?

**Mr. Knowles:** I think that my hon. Friend is right, but I am well aware of the implications of the question he is asking and of why my right hon. Friend did not answer it directly. Without that, I am at a loss to suggest another answer. The system does not work when Community funds are, in a sense, accessed through national Governments. That is the problem. Therefore, the only way is to have the Community's own institutions being able to oversee that function. If someone can suggest an alternative——

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** Would not the best alternative be for the Community not to have any funds at all and to concentrate on free trade? Would that not be the best answer for everyone and solve all the problems?

**Mr. Knowles:** The difficulty here—my hon. Friend knows the problem—is that the Community is much more than a free trade area. It was so designed in its very nature; it is written into the treaties. We tried a free trade area on precisely that basis and in the end we still had, or we decided—history can be written either way—to join the Community. That had massive political implications; one cannot gainsay that. The Commission has a curious hybrid function, part political, part civil service. In a sense, nothing like it has been seen before.

**Mr. Cash:** My hon. Friend is now getting very close, I suspect, to the centre of his argument. As a result of the previous intervention, he is conceding a point which I know he holds quite strongly, which is that some form of supranationality is required. But will he not accept that the treaty of Rome in no way, in 1957, in 1972 or indeed in 1986 with the Single European Act, prescribes, empowers or creates a political union? When we deal with the central question of finance and control over finance and concede that as a central point with reference to the control of public finance, we are effectively saying that we will have a political union.

**Mr. Knowles:** We have signed many documents saying that we are in favour of union, and it is not true. The preamble to the treaty referred to producing an ever closer union among peoples of Europe. The implications were clear, they were spelt out, and one has to follow through on the argument. We have a system designed to produce fraud on a massive scale. On the argument of sovereignty —here my hon. Friend and I disagree—we say that we will not accept those controls because that infringes sovereignty; therefore, we have to accept that we go along with the fraud. It is one or the other.

**Mr. Marlow:** If this is Community money, where is the infringement of sovereignty if Community officials are allowed to supervise it?

**Mr. Knowles:** I am with my hon. Friend; that is precisely my view, but it is not one that is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

**Mr. Cash:** Does my hon. Friend accept that one can have common standards by which the accounting procedures are administered through the national authorities, and have the bun and the ha'penny, too?

**Mr. Knowles:** I should live so long, is the answer to that. We have only to look at the report on common standards of looking after food or common standards across the professions—or even in the Court of Auditors itself, and there we are dealing with a professional body. To amalgamate the traditions of British public finance and the public finance of France, Germany and all the others has proved very difficult indeed, and there we have men working very closely in a similar field. They have found it difficult, so how one is going to do that across the 12 member states right through the professions I am not at all certain.

There was reference earlier to the Select Committee's recent visit to the institutions. It is interesting that in the run-up to 1992, the regulations covering public procurement will be enforced by the Commission. There will not this time be dependence on national good will and the hope that people will do it right, because they have learned the lesson; they know what has happened before when they have depended on member states to carry out a

*[Mr. Knowles]*

common policy. The truth is that the states do not do it, so the Commission has to do it for the Community as a whole.

The same argument applies to paying out Commisssion money. The same argument applies also to the Community's own resources; they are dependent on the member states. For instance, customs duties now all go to the Community, not to the nation states—they merely get a 10 per cent. collection fee. So what has happened? Are the nation states who control the customs officers rigorously collecting customs duties as they used to do when the money went into national treasuries? I suspect not. Customs officers have been diverted to other duties. They are looking more for drugs—we have heard the statements in the House. It applies across the board in the other countries. So the Community as a whole loses both ways. The member states will not collect the money for it properly yet the member states will spend that money like water. And we are surprised when we end up in financial difficulties. One could not have devised a system more likely to produce that result.

The answer is to look at all the institutions, their powers and their relationships to each other. We must think again. We must start talking both to the other member states and to the institutions. There is no point in throwing up our hands and merely saying that we are against fraud as we are against sin, but not following the implications of that argument right the way through. I suspect that the implications are much greater than merely making a saving of some millions or billions of ecu.

8.11 pm

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): I should like to begin on neutral ground by thanking the Paymaster General for his remarks about the reports of the Select Committee on European Legislation. We have three before the House tonight, one on the Court of Auditors' report which is to the fore, that is, HC 15-viii, one on the special storage report, 8502/88, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) referred, that of Mr. Mart and his colleagues, HC 15-ii, and the report on steel matters, HC 15-xi

We would all agree, although it was not mentioned by the Paymaster General, that we would like to see proper recruitment, adequate qualifications and good collection of the common Community tariff, also emphasised in the report by the Court of Auditors. One cannot expect a Court of Auditors, with which we all agree and which we praise, to work without proper recruitment of people with proper qualifications. If they are to be a "scourge"—I disagree with that word, for reasons that I shall give in a moment—they must have the tools of their trade, and it is the quality of the human tool that we all agree must be present in this case.

I speak now not as Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation, which produced the reports, which are there for the guidance of the House and the public, but in an individual capacity, although I do not do so in a controversial way. It is clear to us all that there are no inbuilt national incentives to detect fraud in the structure of these finances, particularly in respect of food. As the Paymaster General himself has admitted, there is an inbuilt incentive to defraud, both individually and on a national scale. He actually coined the phrase "fraudster-friendly".

Are we becoming a community fit for Arthur Daley to operate in, with its "little earners"? They are not little earners; they are big ones. I understand that some transactions in intervention stores go up to 5 billion a throw. That is not small money. Even a 5 per cent. fraud on such a sum involves a lot of money. So the Paymaster General has more or less given the game away—and he is an accountant. I was very surprised——

**Mr. Brooke:** I have been called many things in my time, but I have never been called an accountant, and I am not one.

**Mr. Spearing:** I must apologise to the Paymaster General. Perhaps I was misled by his official title. At least he is an experienced man of business. That would perhaps be a more adequate and accurate title.

The right hon. Gentleman is glad to hear, he says, of the introduction of value for money. Not many of us would disagree with that, but how can we have proper value for money before we have honesty and probity? Surely the best guarantee of value for money is to ensure that we have probity and honesty to start with. That is the normal auditing procedure for firms and organisations in Britain. If one gets a qualified report from an auditor, things begin to happen—unless, of course, it is the Court of Auditors of the European Economic Community.

This is where I disagree with the Paymaster General when he talks about the court being a scourge. He says that we should let the court remain the scourge of the fraudster. What has happened is that the Court of Auditors has blown the whistle, not just once but every year for the past 14 years, and play goes on. It is not the role of the Court of Auditors to chase fraud; it is there to show where fraud exists. Is that not the function of an auditor? So the promotion of a fraud squad inside the Commission, while it may, on the face of it, seem praiseworthy, will work only if that fraud squad, and the auditors, have sufficient evidence on which to work.

I suggest that the court reports show not just that things have gone wrong and that there is fraud but that there is no structure for the prevention and detection of fraud. That must be our major criticism of the food intervention and export structure of the common agricultural policy.

On the European investment bank, paragraph 1.46 of the court's report says:

> "With regard to operations financed from Community resources in which the EIB is involved to varying extents, the Court is justified in fearing that, due to a lack of watchful action on the part of the Commission, its task as a higher external audit authority will gradually become meaningless, if not impossible."

The Paymaster General said a little while ago that he would not blame the Commission. That is what he said when I intervened at the beginning of the debate. If for nothing else, surely the Commission could be held responsible for that. It is an extraordinary statement. It is obviously true. The Council must do something about it, and so must the Commission.

Turning to the question of food, which is exercising the mind of the public and the media at the moment, nearly everyone agrees that the CAP needs reform in principle, and all pay lip service to the elimination of fraud, but nothing seems to happen. Why? The answer lies in two distinct but overlapping dimensions: the system, or lack of

it, of book-keeping, and its management and supervision by both national and Community authorities. If fraud is to be discouraged, let alone eliminated, there must be both an adequate built-in system, matched to the nature of the transactions and the markets, and effective audit, together with an overlap or junction between the national and Community auditing authorities.

The evidence, however, suggests that neither of those conditions exists. No doubt the Commission would say that it is the fault of the Council and the Council that it is the fault of the Commission. The concept of a joint committee and national management lies at the heart of the issue. It has been referred to by Government Members. If, like me, one is keen on the retention of national competence, how far can one go in ceding authority to the Court of Auditors of the EEC in respect of these matters? Quite rightly, the Paymaster General himself has put that question.

Even if one agrees, as I do, that the nature of joint management must gain the assent of national Governments, surely that right cannot go as far as denying the installation of joint effective management procedures that would provide and control audit quality no less than that expected by any nation in respect of its national institutions or companies. Surely that is self-evident, yet I am afraid that such procedures are what we have not got. Surely, provided that satisfactory controls and systems are in place within a nation, its central Government need not know everything about what is going on and all the individual transactions. But where those controls and systems are not in place, can such information be denied to appropriate bodies? I will come back to that point at a later stage.

Why is fraud rampant in food storage and in the export activities of the EEC? It is because, within the complex transactions, there are no inbuilt dials and gauges to tell us what is going on. Unlike our own firms and organisations, the EEC did not have them built in from the start. When one looks at company accounts, or makes checks in any organisation with which one is familiar—even a tennis club—one finds them. But an audit is only as good as the evidence available to the auditor. If the evidence is inadequate, the opinion is also inadequate. Time and again the Court of Auditors tells us that it does not have enough evidence, so it has no opinion. The accounts are not just qualified; they are found to be unacceptable—except, of course, to the Council of Ministers and the Commission, which merrily discharge them year by year.

This would be totally unacceptable in the case of any social club, shop, works or store in this country, where committees and managers know all about the inbuilt principles of auditing and checking. There is the visible reconciliation of evidence of purchase and the cost of storage in appropriate conditions, including temperature and protection against misuse, moisture and insects. Then there are such factors as access, visibility for checking, elimination of the risk of adulteration—for example watering beer; sale in checkable quantities—for example pints by the glass; and assured quality, as in the case of proof spirits. This has to be backed by matching book-keeping, complemented by schedules of quantities and locations—all subject to regular and, on occasions, irregular audit. Every working men's club in the country, and, no doubt, Tory clubs and golf clubs, too, will know what I am talking about, as does every restaurant and cafe. It is something that most people understand.

**Mr. Christopher Gill** (Ludlow): Of course, we are not talking about working men's clubs or Tory clubs, or clubs of any other sort. Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me that, because of the very nature of the commodity, it is probably a practical impossibility, even with hundreds or thousands of inspectors, or auditors, or whatever other form of system of control might be installed, to control it? Its control has defied very many people over very many years. I submit that, where there is no personal interest in controlling such commodities, the sort of fraud that is being experienced now will always be with us. The fault lies in the system, not in its control.

**Mr. Spearing:** I think that the hon. Gentleman is partly right, but food is particularly difficult to store and to sell because it varies in quality and in quantity—for all the reasons about which he and I would agree. I go with him to that extent, but I disagree with him in that safeguards were not built into the system at the start. The Mart report refers to this. That is where it has gone wrong. Unless and until such safeguards are inserted, fraud will not be detected and there will be every incentive to commit it. That is the essential fact that this House, and, moreover, the Council of Ministers and the Commission must grasp. At the moment they have shown no sign of doing so. Of course, no system is perfect, and there are difficulties in respect of food. But there is an obligation on public bodies to use public money in a responsible way, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees. That is not being done.

It is clear from the evidence that safeguards such as I describe, visible in tens of thousands of enterprises—I will not say clubs—in this country, do not exist within this system. It is even more complicated than the transactions in a restuarant. Instead of the customer paying for his food or drink and consuming it on or off the premises, he makes a bid for surpluses advertised for tender. The person submitting the lowest tender takes away the food, claims to have exported it, in certain quantities and of certain quality, to particular destinations, and, having done so, goes back to the shop with bits of paper and gets up to five times what he paid for the goods.

That, I believe, is a crude, but not an unfair, description of the principles of export restitution as operated in the EEC. Each nation has its own food shop, checked by its own Government. The net expenditure for purchase, storage and export subsidy comes on repayment from the EEC, but not necessarily in the exact amount. However, the Court of Auditors, in its annual and special reports, tells us that the system is wide open to abuse. More regulations on top of the system that we have will be about as effective as corking a leaking boat with paper, since we are told that sufficient evidence is not available. We have to refashion that craft before we can stop the leaks.

Hon. Members may think that I am exaggerating, so I shall turn to the words of evidence from the reports themselves. Special report 8502/88, which for the purposes of the debate I shall call the Mart report, referring to food storage, says:

> "The conclusion that inevitably results from these findings is that it is technically impossible to arrive at any audit opinion whatever, on the view presented by the EAGGF budget accounts, of public storage expenditure."

One cannot get anything more blunt than that. The report, in paragraphs 6.13 and 6.14, goes on to show why the system is basically defective. I will save the time of the House by saying simply that the report points out that the system was introduced in 1960 as a temporary measure

*[Mr. Spearing]*

and that it was unsatisfactory but that nobody wanted to change it and that it is now ingrained. That is clear from the reports of the Court of Auditors.

Paragraph 7 on page 64 of the report says:

"The charge borne by Member States in respect of technical and financial costs of public storage for the financial year 1986 can be conservatively estimated at about 450 Mio ECU. The result in terms of published financial information is that the official Community accounts do not reflect any more the full costs of the Community's intervention storage policy."

That can only mean that nobody knows how much officially, it is costing. Although we may know how much is charged to EEC institutions, we do not know how much each national Government is having to tip in as well. What a situation we are in.

Let me go on to the court's report itself and out of intervention into export restitution. Some of the problems have already been mentioned. Paragraph 4.21 says that the nomenclature for export refunds contains more than

"1,200 separate classifications for agricultural produce, including almost 400 for milk products and about 80 for beef."

We have to repay, for that little chit that I talked about, no fewer than 80 varieties of beef. It is open to enormous fraud. It is exported to 11 zones throughout the world, so for beef alone there are probably about 800 schedules. The Paymaster General will tell me if I am wrong, but that is what the paragraph says. No wonder, if there are 800 scales of repayment, that there are incentives for fraud. The Paymaster General has the cheek to say that future regulations must be simplified. That is no use, for we must first deal with the existing regulations that provide such a structure.

Paragraph 4.33(b) complains about the lack of spot checking, stating:

"even where arbitrary national scales of examination have been set, they are not always adhered to by the customs services. Some customs stations had recorded examination rates as low as 1% without an apparent justification".

The Commission, to its credit, had a go at persuading countries to adopt a minimum 5 per cent. check rate, which is still not very high. We read on page 258, presenting the Commission's replies—and I have some sympathy for it, and do not wish to be unfair——

"At the beginning of 1987 it sent the Council a proposal for a regulation on the monitoring of the payment of amounts granted on export of agricultural products (COM(87)9 final)."

I looked up that document, and it says, "Let's have 5 per cent. checks," but the nations will not agree.

**Mr. Marlow:** On another and related point, can the hon. Gentleman tell the House—I think he knows more about Community affairs than anyone else—what action is taken to mark and identify a consignment that leaves the Community so that it cannot come back into the Community in the dead of night and be re-exported again?

**Mr. Spearing:** My knowledge does not extend that far, but the hon. Gentleman puts his finger on a flaw in the structure. I read somewhere that several thousand lorries are running all over the place—and we all know what happens to containers.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): My hon. Friend is well versed in matters concerning the Common Market, which has been an unmitigated disaster for the British working people from start to finish. As to lorries crossing borders, it is true that they go back and forth, and that, each time they do so, the amount of money that can be made through fraud is increased. In Ireland that fraud is perpetrated on a slightly different scale. Not only do lorries cross the border, but cattle are being driven back and forth. Every time that the cattle cross the border, their owners get extra money. They are doing it that often that the cattle are finding the way by themselves.

**Mr. Spearing:** My hon. Friend is right, and I recall that practice being mentioned in a previous report of the Court of Auditors.

**Mr. Skinner:** Yes, the court admitted it.

**Mr. Spearing:** The Paymaster General should consider also the situation in this country. If we are to make any fuss in the Council, as we ought to do, we must first ensure that we are behaving properly. I am not sure that we are. Intervention buying in the United Kingdom is not the biggest in the Community. HC 137 of 1988-89—"Intervention Buying: Accounts"—shows that in 1987 we had £376 million of butter in stock, and £122 million of beef. I do not know whether those quantities were physically checked on 31 December 1987, and later I shall ask the Paymaster General a question about physical checks.

However, intervention board report CM404 for 1987 reports:

"The Board's external trade verification and scrutiny team visited 208 traders during the year to check declarations against company records. As a result financial adjustments were recommended in 74 cases, involving recovery for the Board of £434,713."

The report refers to "company records", but not to any check against actual stores. I am not sure that such checks are made. When the Paymaster General replies, I hope that he will say whether continual physical checks are made by the intervention board, or whether it relies on its contractors to do so.

**Mr. Cash** *rose*——

**Mr. Spearing:** I am sorry, but I must move on, because I wish to present several more items of evidence. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak later.

I turn to the 30th report of the Public Accounts Committee for 1987-88, where reference is made to Customs and Excise. If the system is to operate properly, there must be proper inspection at ports. However, paragraph 2(iv) states:

"We consider that the absence of inspection facilities at some ports is unacceptable."

How can one run such a system without any certification at ports? Paragraph 2(vi) of the Committee's report adds:

"We are surprised that, in the absence of satisfactory C&E records for CAP examination, IBAP"—

the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce——

"can be satisfied with the evidence about the level of examination."

In other words, the Committee spotlights a weakness in Customs and Excise.

I have some surprising statistics for the House. The United Kingdom comes fourth of the Community countries that benefit from export refunds. At the top of the list is France, with refunds totalling 3,074 mecu. The Netherlands come next, with 1,777 mecu, and Germany third with 1,445 mecu. The United Kingdom ranks fourth,

with refunds of 880 mecu. When one considers that the French market is worth £2,000 million per year, those amounts fall into perspective.

It is also significant that the three countries that top the list have a total of 25 votes in the Council. As right hon. and hon. Members well acquainted with the EEC will know but others outside the House may not, 23 votes can produce a blocking third. Any amendments to the rules of the kind that we want to see will have to achieve a two-thirds majority, which could be blocked by the top three countries if they so wish: I am not claiming that they do, but they have that capability.

I have three questions for the Minister. First, does he think that physical checks take place at stores, and that there is a sufficient number of them and that there are physical checks at ports? The evidence of both the Court of Auditors' annual report and the special report suggests that the Paymaster General cannot answer yes to those questions. Secondly, while I understand the right hon. Gentleman's reticence in respect of an earlier request for information, if the Community's audit authority wants information from a national authority, is there not, by contract as it were, an obligation to assure the court that there is an adequate domestic audit procedure or, in the absence of such a procedure, an obligation to provide any necessary facts? It is clear that, alas, we do not have a satisfactory domestic audit procedure.

Thirdly, does the Paymaster General accept the amendment that is on the Order Paper? He cannot say that it is a criticism of the Commission. It is not. It could be interpreted as backing it up. Whatever may be the failures of the Commission—and some of its replies are pretty pathetic—at least it has set up a working party to consult national Governments. Would it not be wise to await the results of that working party, and to discuss those findings —I am not saying that we should accept them—before recommending a discharge of the accounts to the European Parliament, as the treaty provides? That would not only be sensible and wise but would be an action of probity and honesty, and would at least satisfy the people of this country, who are growing increasingly worried at the situation.

The power of this House was founded on, and can only be sustained by, the power to vote money and to scrutinise expenditure. The Paymaster General and the Government should do nothing less at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers on this subject.

8.39 pm

**Sir Richard Body** (Holland with Boston): I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) realises that the House is much in his debt for all he is doing as Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation and for his diligence on this and other EC matters.

Having struggled through most of the 300 pages of the auditors' report, I was left with the desire that Sir John Hoskyns, a fair-minded man, might be persuaded to give enough time to read this report and especially to read that horror story, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) described it, in which 18 per cent. of the Commission's expenditure in 1987, the year with which we are concerned, was unaccounted for. I should like to think that, if Sir John read the report, the next time he had any comments about the Commission, they would be less charitable and generous than they were when he spoke at the Albert hall the other day.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has invited the House to give its opinion on whether there should be a supranational authority to police the expenditure under the common agricultural policy. It seems that logic is driving us in that direction. I have never been a friend of the common agricultural policy. To me, it seems that it was devised by the devil when he was inebriated, but I am in favour—as I hope all of us are—of international co-operation on a number of agricultural issues.

I wish that my right hon. Friend would realise the tremendous potential we have towards that end in Europe through the Economic Commission for Europe. I find it sad that the Foreign Office had turned its back on that institution, which, after all, has the support of almost every country in Europe and certainly every country that is a member of the United Nations. It is uniquely qualified to do some of the tasks that all hon. Members would wish to see done in international co-operation on certain agricultural issues.

The common agricultural policy is, of course, supranational. That is why it is inherently wrong and why it has a number of built-in mechanisms that are unmanageable. I cannot see how we shall ever manage it. If we wish to have a common agricultural policy and if the House is willing to surrender its powers over agricultural policy, we must recognise the inevitable consequence that there will be endless fraud because billions of pounds are sloshing around in the funds. As all the mechanisms are so complex, it is extremely difficult for anyone to understand.

For some time I have, for a particular reason, been studying some of the agricultural reports. I have been a farmer, and have had the advantage of practising at the criminal Bar for 20 years and taking on many fraud cases. But even with those qualifications, I found it difficult to comprehend the frauds. We cannot expect our own police force, overworked as it is, especially the fraud squad, to embark on that work and it would not have the will to do it. Our own Government, recognising that we are one of the main beneficiaries of the refund system, would have to be willing to give the police the necessary resources.

Given the great complexity of the frauds, I am driven to the view that if we want to do something—which will only scratch the surface—it will be necessary to have a team of supranational officials based in Brussels. I hope that it would work under the auspices of the Court of Auditors, the one institution over there in which one can have faith. The force would have to be drawn from all the countries and would have to have the right to come here and look at the books, to pursue matters and to act as a supranational police force.

**Mr. Cash:** Does my hon. Friend agree that what he is describing is similar to the operations of Interpol? However, the co-ordination required in following fraud, especially in an area such as the Community, presents certain complications. Under the present system, the ultimate prosecution is left to the national authorities.

**Sir Richard Body:** I agree. I am wholly in favour of Interpol. As an international framework, it is wholly desirable, but it is made up of individual police forces co-operating with each other when their interests

*[Sir Richard Body]*

converge. That is admirable, but it is not the same as the issue here, when we are dealing with a supranational policy, where supranational funds are involved, where far too much money is available for the purposes and where, inevitably, sticky fingers are trying to get hold of it.

That is why I said that if we want to deal with the problem—and we shall never truly deal with it, because it is too vast—and if we want to try to do something, I am driven to the view that we must have a team based on Brussels under the control, I would hope, of the Court of Auditors, recruiting detectives and accountants internationally and with the power to go throughout the Community. It would need to have powers to match those of our own police force and it might be necessary to go further and to have supranational courts. That seems to be the logic if we decide to go along the supranational road.

**Mr. Alan Meale** (Mansfield): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there are also plans to lessen the customs procedures across the boundaries of member states? Does he not think that it is madness to proceed with such a stupid measure at a time when such vast amounts of fraud are being perpetrated on the Governments of member states?

**Sir Richard Body:** Indeed, I am at one with the hon. Gentleman on that. The House and our Government must make up their minds about which way they want to go. They have the power, as I have said on numerous occasions, to disengage from the common agricultural policy.

Were they to take that step, they would undoubtedly succeed in causing reforms for other countries, which would be to the advantage of the whole Community. This country, more than any, has it in its power to do something about the common agricultural policy. It is uniquely able to do that. Sad to say, the Government do not have that will at present. I wish that they had the resolution to disentangle this country from the common agricultural policy. As long as we go along with the common agricultural policy, which is essentially supranational, and if we want to work supranationally, we must have a supranational police force to check the frauds to some extent. However, given the complexities, I do not believe that we shall ever see the end of the great frauds that have been committed over the past few years. They will continue despite the assurances that my right hon. Friend sought to give us.

8.48 pm

**Sir Russell Johnston** (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): In one respect, this debate represents an improvement on our last debate on the Court of Auditors' report, which also took place on 2 March. The Minister may recall rising to his feet at 1 o'clock in the morning on that occasion, and the degree of liveliness that hon. Members exhibited was perhaps slightly affected by the lateness of the hour. This time, we are conducting our debate at a more civilised time.

Nineteen eighty-seven was an exceptional year in terms of the Community's finances. I hope that it will have been the last year in which the Council was late in agreeing the budget, with the result that the previous year's budget had to be extended temporarily, a month at a time. We very much hope that that measure will not need to be used again. The second half of 1987 also saw the implementation of the Single European Act which, among other things, greatly improved the decision-making procedures.

As hon. Members have already said, it is right that we should congratulate the Court of Auditors on an extremely detailed, thorough and forthright report. Some hon. Members remain highly suspicious of all things European, but it is clear that the Court of Auditors is a very effective institution. The Community does not consist of a closed conspiracy of empire-building Eurocrats. It has open institutions that are capable of self-criticism which, on occasions, they conduct extremely well.

I, too, propose to criticise the Commission during my short speech, but I hope that my criticism will be constructive. With respect to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), I thought that Sir John Hoskyns made an extraordinarily loose speech, designed simply to bring the Community into some disrepute—for what reason, I am not very clear. He also took a long time to make such a statement—but I shall not be diverted into talking about him.

It is unsatisfactory that we should be debating the report so long after the year with which it deals, but the debate will at least concentrate our minds on the need to respond—and to respond more effectively than the Government have so far seemed to be responding.

In our debate on the European Community last Thursday, I said that I felt that only the European Parliament could undertake such activities, and I continue to hold that view. The concentration on fraud in the Community is largely due to the constructive, diligent, patient and repetitive work of the European Parliament.

The myth persists that the British taxpayer single-handedly supports the European Community. Page 219 of the auditors' report carries a colourful table from which one can establish that, in fact, we were the second biggest recipient of funds from the structural fund in 1987—receiving 1·2 billion ecu. The United Kingdom's total receipts from the Community were 3,121 mecu. Our contribution—even before taking into account the abatement—was 5,305 mecu—only 55 per cent. of the contribution made by the Federal Republic of Germany. I do not think that we shall hear the Germans complaining in quite the same way about what they pay into the Community, because they feel more than compensated for their contribution by the huge benefits to their industry.

**Mr. Cash:** The hon. Gentleman may or may not have taken part in the debate on the structural fund directive the other day. It is clear that of the 14 billion ecu to be made available by 1992, 9·2 billion will go to Greece, Portugal, Italy, Nothern Ireland and Ireland, as well as the French overseas departments. The proportion that will go elsewhere—to countries other than the United Kingdom—is therefore somewhat different from the proportion in the picture that he painted.

**Sir Russell Johnston:** I can only say that I have been citing figures in the report, which referred to 1987. Perhaps we are talking about two different periods, although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that in the most recent round the majority of money went to the Mediterranean countries, particularly Greece and Portugal.

While on the subject of the structural fund, let me point out that the Minister did not respond when I referred to the Chancellor's Chatham house speech. I do not have the cutting on me, but I remember accurately a report of that speech and the questions that the Chancellor answered after it in *The Guardian*. He was asked about regional policy and the diverting of resources to less favoured areas and replied that he thought it was "positively damaging". It is evident that the Chancellor does not believe in regional policy, although that is not a new thing for him. In 1962 or 1963, before I was elected to the House, I read an article in *The Financial Times* by the right hon. Gentleman—then a journalist—in which he referred to the "liberal illusion of regionalism". I remember that clearly. At least the Chancellor has been consistent, although he has not been consistent with the Brussels agreement, which increased structural funds and which the Government supported.

Before dealing with fraud itself, I must express my view that for us not to apply the additionality rule to the regional structural funds is a form of fraud. The whole idea of having regional funds at all is to give extra money to deprived areas, but all we have done is to use them as a method of substituting expenditure rather than adding to it.

As we work out the cost of Europe—and I am not talking about fraud here—we should remember that there is also a cost of non-Europe, to be found, for example, in the waste that has resulted from not having a single European market. That cost is difficult to estimate, but some have suggested that it might be nearly five times the Community's present budget—perhaps £126 billion.

The question of fraud has rightly dominated the debate. Many hon. Members already said that the report contains some terrifying passages. Paragraph 4.15 on page 67 of the report, which deals with member states' declarations of expenditure, says that they

"bear only a tenuous relationship to the actual level of the underlying expenditure. Its analyses, showed, for example, that the average error rate of quantities declared as having left public storage, which determine the losses on sales from intervention to be made good by the Community, was as high as 45 per cent."

Paragraph 4.17 concluded:

"In the absence, taken overall, of adequate independent physical stocktaking and quality control arrangements in the Member States, in the Court's opinion no reliance can be placed on published figures for the quantities and values of products held in intervention storage at the end of the financial year nor on the related expenditure in the year."

It could not be much more devastating than that. Inevitably much of our discussion has related to whether we can do anything about it, and if we can do anything about it, what is the best mechanism. The hon. Member for Holland with Boston reluctantly said that we may well have to have a supranational body to deal with the matter as effectively as possible. I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said, and although I know that it is not his natural position, it seems inevitable.

Despite what the Minister said, I am puzzled about what Lord Cockfield said in another place. The Minister made a short statement on the matter, but I was not much clearer about it when he had finished his statement than before he started it. As I understand it, he said that Britain did not veto the anti-fraud proposals from the Commission, but everyone voted against it, suary Lord Cockfield was wrong. On 14 February, Lord Cockfield said exactly that: that not only Britain but all the member countries have voted against it.

I am not clear why that was done. Lord Cockfield obviously considered that it was a good proposition that would enable the Commission to conduct investigations in a way that is not available to it at present. I should like to know why it was opposed. The Minister said that it was an inappropriate measure—a dreadful Civil Service expression that one hears from time to time. When they do not want to tell you why something was done, they tell you that it was inappropriate and that does not mean anything.

Since that was done in 1986, about two and a half years ago, why has there been no follow-up? Why did the Commission just give up? I do not understand that, nor do I understand what the Commission wants in addition to the existing fraud squad established in 1987, the strength of which was doubled as recently as January this year. What did the Commission want to do which the member states unanimously prevented? That is extremely relevant, particularly since fraud on such a scale has been uncovered and, as has been said, the Court of Auditors has pointed out evidence of fraud for many years but no action was taken.

The popular press has given the impression that the United Kingdom is on the march. *The Times* said:

"The Prime Minister is spearheading a drive against fraud".

It seems to me that the Prime Minister has not been spearheading any drive against fraud and that the United Kingdom, along with the other member countries has not been doing anything about it.

To return to the European Parliament, one of the British members of the Court of Auditors explained the action of the Commission as follows:

"The Commission was feeling harassed by the European Parliament on the subject of fraud, and were looking for a buffer to protect themselves from the sniping."

That reading of the situation was supported by Robert Cotterill in *The Independent* on 9 February, when he wrote:

"The emergence of fraud as a significant issue at ministerial level of the European Community brings to a climax a year of patient groundwork by the budget control committee of the European Parliament."

In other words, the drive seems to come from the European Parliament rather than from within the Council.

It may be, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) pointed out, that the top three recipients of intervention were not liable to take the lead in controlling this matter. We were fourth in the league, so perhaps we were under similar pressures.

**Mr. Skinner:** We just got pushed out of a medal place.

**Sir Russell Johnston:** I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's remark was too subtle for me.

**Mr. Skinner:** The hon. Gentleman is a bit before or lately. He does not know whether he is coming or going.

**Sir Russell Johnston:** At the moment, I am standing still.

In one of the many sections of the report, paragraph 10.102, there is criticism by the Court of Auditors of the Commission's involvement in subsidising a television channel. It was an extraordinary exercise on the part of the Commission. In October 1986, it agreed to grant a subsidy of £1 million ecu to a television channel. It failed, and the Commission is still trying to get back the money. The

*[Sir Russell Johnston]*

auditors say that the Commission did not verify as it should that the recipient's financial basis was sound. In many respects it appeared to behave like a babe in the wood. I question the basis on which the Commission subsidised a television channel. There are many points that one could make. It appears that the Commission took the wrong course. It would be interesting to know what the position is now and whether it has been successful in recovering our money.

The report is chastening. There has been widespread fraud and incompetence. The Court of Auditors deserves to be congratulated on the way that it has focused our attention on the problem. The Government are beholden to work vigorously with other member states to do their best to prevent further serious abuses.

9.6 pm

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a brief contribution from a long-standing pro-European viewpoint. As hon. Members have said, the European Community of 12 is an imperfect vessel. Any body with such a large membership must have some diffusion of decision-making and accountability, but, at the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R Johnston) said, there are compensating benefits. I often regard myself as being in the position of Galileo who, after sore torment, reflected on his views on the earth rotating around the sun, is reputed to have muttered, "But yet it does so." It still works in that sense.

In much the same vein, even though it does not do a perfect job, the Court of Auditors' report adequately delves into some of the murkier parts of the Community budget, and the common agricultural policy in particular. We must still get total European expenditure into some context. It represents only a tiny fraction of the total public spending of member states. Even if the whole lot were to be defrauded or wasted, it would still represent only about one year's increment in national Government expenditure. At the same time, all hon. Members must admit that we still do not know how big is the incidence of fraud, yet we can say the same about domestic crime. We would be able also to say that, just as an increase in reported crime may reflect an increase in reporting, an increase in fraud may reflect improvements in auditing systems. It is difficult to tell which is which.

I counsel the House against one possible blind alley. From my experience of the workings of the CAP, I know that there must be a strong temptation for auditors to opt for soft targets. Paradoxically, by that I mean those member states which tend to have the best developed administrative systems and the highest traditional levels of compliance. The House will realise that I am hinting at the countries of the northern tier in the Community, including ourselves. Of course, things can and do go wrong with public money in Britain, Germany and France, but but there is some hope for putting them right.

The position is no longer hopeless south of the Alps. It is possible, for example, to use satellite imaging to count the number of olive trees which evidently grow in such remarkable and heavily subsidised profusion in countries such as Greece and Italy. Hon. Members will appreciate from the experience of milk quotas in the latter—which, after five years, are still not in full operation—that some Community members are more equal than others.

To put it bluntly, if the European auditors were to nose about in the accounts of cereal intervention stores in the United Kingdom, the worst that they might encounter—and I do not think they would encounter obstruction—would be MAFF, but if they did it in Italy they would be running up against the Mafia.

There are three levels at which our common objective of achieving a cut in fraud under the common agricultural policy could be achieved. The first is simply to cut off some of the excess public funds going into the agricultural sector and the CAP. That would be a matter of policy changes, and some hon. Members who have spoken have not given sufficient weight to what has happened so far.

There is a considerable way further to go yet, and I readily admit that in the current year the savings, of about 2 billion ecu, have had a great deal more to do with the American drought than with the measures that have been taken. Those measures have been worth while, but they have not solved the problem.

It is remarkable this year that, because of the drought, we have got back to the budget as well as to the guidelines. It would be wrong not to acknowledge the efforts that have been made to empty the intervention stores, even if we had to knock out the excess stocks to do it. They are now empty, or much more empty than they were, and it is in the interests of everyone to keep them that way. Intervention must revert to the original concept of a case of last resort and not the regular way of doing business.

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** My hon. Friend does not believe that, does he?

**Mr. Boswell:** Yes, I do.

That is the first line of defence: the auditors' and the Select Committee's strictures. Next, fraud can be diminished if the distinctions between the agricultural regimes applying between member states can be reduced. The point of much that was said about the beef regime in the auditors' report is that people profited from the wide disparities between the internal price of beef and the export price, and therefore the refunds.

In the same way, traders profit from the large distinctions that exist between the effective prices in member states. Naturally, this is largely connected with the issue of monetary compensatory amounts and border taxes arising from the different rates of the green currencies.

To some extent the same has applied to special arrangements such as the beef variable premium in the United Kingdom, with the consequential clawback on exports. It has also applied to certain animal health matters. Although there will have to be exceptions in, for example, animal health, I welcome 1992 as a move towards removing further internal occasions for fraud, because it will reduce the differences between member states and the prices farmers in them receive.

At the same time, a quid pro quo is to have an effective Community action squad in place, and the debate has been interesting in taking that concept further than simply the Commission's internal procedures. It may have to be a police force. I was interested in the exchanges about customs forces because, if 1992 is to mean a withdrawal of

Community frontier controls, the logic must be Community spot checks at any point within the area of its responsibilities.

I commend the efforts of Her Majesty's Government to put some of those controls in place, although I acknowledge the view held by many people—I have some sympathy with it—that they do not go far enough. I am always concerned, when we are considering regulations, that there should be adequate resources for policing. I would add to that adequate resources within the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce, to account and monitor and to check its own activities. There have been some signs that it has been inadequately staffed.

The fraud that has been clearly set out in the reports is an extra tax paid by legitimate Community taxpayers such as ourselves to persons unknown. None of us should want to rest in our efforts to remove the occasion for fraud and to provide adequate resources that would make it no longer worth while.

9.15 pm

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) who I believe could be described as a pro-marketeer, even after all these disastrous years since we had that fateful vote in this place on 28 October 1971. Then we heard the cries of the people like Roy Jenkins, now in the other place, who talked about what would happen when we got into this wonderful market, how we would get economies of scale, how unemployment would fall and everything in the garden would be rosy. He was followed by people like Shirley Poppins and Dr. Death. They were all in the same bed then. They marched into the Lobbies behind the last Tory Prime Minister, taking us into the great nirvana. Everything would be all right for everybody.

Every so often we have a debate in the House which tells us the bald unvarnished truth. There are a few hon. Members on both sides of the House who refuse to give in on the Common Market. When we read the Court of Auditors report, we see the Common Market with all the veneer stripped off. What do we see? We see fraud on a scale that would not be countenanced in this country. If anything of the kind perpetrated in the Common Market was done here, people would be in gaol.

From what I have heard today from hon. Members who reckon to be in the know, including the hon. Member for Daventry who is a fanatical pro-marketeer, this thing started when Roy Jenkins was the head of the show. He came back with a big fat pension. What did he do about fraud? All we can gather is that it has grown almost every year, imperceptibly, until, according to the Prime Minister the other day, about £2 billion is being paid by the British taxpayer, to fill the claret glasses of those in the Common Market.

It is not to feed the Third world, as they said it would be when we went in to the Common Market. It was a grand great strategy to fill the bellies of the spindle-legged kids in Ethiopia, who we saw on our television screens. They do not have two halfpennies to rub together. These great strategists who are now members of the SDP and the SLD and the Liberals and all those in the party that dare not speak its name, told us that the Common Market would solve all those problems. That is why it is in my guts.

The Common Market has been one of the biggest confidence tricks ever perpetrated in this country in my lifetime. I hear about the £6 billion of fraud. In one newspaper it says £17 billion. They cannot even calculate it. It is like having a train robbery every week. But nobody is getting 30 years inside. Nobody is told, "Hey, just a minute. You cannot run away with money on a scale like that." Just imagine.

Then we pick up the paper and read about some old-age pensioner in Britain who does not know which way to turn and is caught in Marks and Spencer pinching a tin of pilchards and put inside. A disabled woman in my constituency was chucked in gaol because she could not pay her television licence. Then we hear hon. Members saying that the Common Market is grand and lovely, but turning a blind eye to the fraud on a massive scale.

Then a Tory has the gall to say, "Oh yes, I have discovered it as well." Sir Henry Plumb rips up his director's card, and God knows what else, because somebody in the higher echelons of the Tory ranks is prepared to open his gills about it. Some of us have been prepared to do that for a long time. The television companies should do something about it. Let us have one television documentary a week on fraud in the Common Market. Why are the television companies not delving into things to find out who the guilty people are?

I have been told by someone who has been on the continent about £2·5 million-worth of goods being on a ship and, when a crate of beef was opened, chicken offal was found underneath. That is one of the tricks. Some people are making money hand over fist. The Mafia are moving in on a big scale. I am told that there are olive trees that exist only on paper. The authorities have been searching for 3,000 olive trees in Italy for the past three years. We are paying money out on those olive trees day after day. What a scandal. Then the Government have the cheek to talk about surcharging Labour councils, not for fraud but because they are providing goods and services for the elderly and disabled. In their efforts to provide services, councils are going to great lengths, but not fraud, so that the people can have a decent existence.

The whole thing is ready made for Del Boy and George Cole. All the ingredients for fraud are there. It seems that people who go across to the Common Market cannot fail to make money on the side. So we have not got the jobs or the money for the regions. The other day my hon. Friends told the Prime Minister about the massive pit closures in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Wales. The Common Market was supposed to resolve all that, but we cannot even get money for the regional policy. Why? If there is £17,000 million of fraud, we are not likely to get money for Wales, for shipbuilding in the north-east or to keep pits open. It is a sad commentary on what has taken place in the 18 years since the vote in 1971.

Other hon. Members want to speak. We shall come back to this. In the meantime some of us have a job to do —to make it clear to the nation that there will be a body of people here, representing large sections of the population, who believe that it is our duty to expose the fraud, always in the knowledge that the Common Market has been an unmitigated disaster for Britain. Some of us will work night and day until we get out of the mess. We will never surrender the belief that the Common Market has been a complete and utter waste of time and money. On we go, with councils here being attacked because they are providing services. Lambeth, Liverpool and other local

*[Mr. Dennis Skinner]*

authorities are being surcharged, yet the posh bureaucrats can get away with fraud in countries throughout the Common Market.

I do not know what the chairman of the Tory party will say in reply to the debate. Will he answer one question? Can he give me a guarantee that some of that £17,000 million of fraud has not gone into the Tory party coffers?

9.23 pm

**Mr. Christopher Gill** (Ludlow): While I shall speak less volubly than the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) I do not want the Paymaster General to think that I speak any less passionately about the matters that we are considering.

My right hon. Friend was nothing if not realistic. He said that the scale of fraud was impossible to quantify. I understood him to mean that not just in respect of beef export refunds or intervention storage costs, but equally in respect of the structural funds.

The House should not be surprised because, when that amount of money is sloshing around, there will be sharks in its wake who will find some way of getting their teeth into it. The fault must be with the system—and perhaps with us in that we allow it to continue. While I do not have any blind trust in auditors generally, equally I do not share the confidence of Opposition Members who place so much trust in the ability of inspectors to prevent some of the fraud and abuse so apparent in matters such as the food mountains.

**Mr Meale:** If, as the hon. Gentleman says, he does not have much trust in inspectors, will he explain how the many cases that have been discovered—such as the tens of thousands of lorries that have crossed boundaries and never even been weighed and the tens of thousands of boxes of so-called beef that when opened were found to contain chicken offal—could have been discovered other than by inspectors' examinations?

**Mr. Gill:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asked that question. Before I answer it, I should like to say how heartened I was to hear the Paymaster General say that we must put greater emphasis on practical matters. The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) has raised a practical point, and I hope that when he listens to my reply he will realise that it comes from a practical person.

I have spent a lifetime in a very practical industry—the meat industry—which is at the heart of the problems on which the hon. Gentleman questions me. As a result of my experience after a lifetime in the meat industry, I believe that no number of inspectors will ever obviate the fraud and abuse that we are criticising. I wish it were so, but to believe that that would ever be the case would be a triumph of hope over experience.

**Mr. Meale:** Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the lesson to be learned from the auditors' report is not to concentrate on the quantity of fraud—which is hard to determine—but to reduce the incidence of it in the future?

**Mr. Gill:** I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said about this matter. At one point he invited the House to comment on whether it thought he was exaggerating. In reply to the intervention of the hon. Member for Mansfield I can say that I did not consider that the hon. Member for Newham, South was exaggerating.

I was convinced that if the hon. Gentleman had his way and we were able to employ more and better auditors, we would discover more fraud. What we are considering is purely and simply the tip of the iceberg, which is why, inevitably, I have come to the conclusion that it is the system that is at fault—and we are at fault for allowing it to continue.

I hope that my right hon. Friend is listening and will tell other Ministers that they must concentrate harder to reform or abandon this system which appears to be beyond all reasonable control.

Why do we have structural funds? I believe that we can create a Europe that will achieve the objectives that we Conservatives believe to be important without the structural funds. I was interested to hear the comments of the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), who suggested that we could perhaps do better by repatriating agricultural support to the individual nation. Certainly if we did that, agricultural support would be more intelligible, which would benefit those employed in the industry. As hon. Members will have heard me say in the House before, one of the faults of the present system is that it is completely unintelligible to those who earn their living in the industries that are affected. I also believe that, if it were repatriated, agricultural support would be more closely targeted towards the people whom it is intended to help and who, indeed, need that help. Last but not least —I hope that this is of interest to the hon. Member for Newham, South—it would be easier to account for the funds.

I fear greatly that the common agricultural policy could be the rock on which the European Community founders. I do not want to see that: I have a vision of a Europe in which we have removed the fiscal, technical and political barriers and have created a bigger, freer market from which we will all derive greater prosperity. I see the structural funds as an entirely unnecessary extravagance, and I urge my right hon. Friend to serve notice that the House cannot and will not tolerate the position described in the report.

9.35 pm

**Mr. Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): I hope that everyone who has read the report feels physically sick. We see here not only shameful abuse of public funds but grotesque mismanagement and blind inefficiency. Anyone who feels complacent about the report should be shot. It is disgraceful, when we think of the use that could be made of money that is being frauded away.

What worries me are the attitudes that have been conveyed. My right hon. Friend the Minister said that the reason for the overspend of some 20 per cent. was the "ancien regime", the old system of cash. That system was not exactly ancient; it started in 1984 at Fontainebleau. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister returned from Fontainebleau she said, "Do not worry about the extra cash: we have spending controls which are binding on the Council."

Does my right hon. Friend the Minister remember that? I sat here—we all sat here—and heard: "Forget about the overspending. It is sorted out now because we have binding controls." Sadly, we can forget about that,

because the controls have proved utterly hopeless, fraudulent and wrong. The Government simply stood back and watched the Commission using the accountancy device of a 10-month year.

The Minister, too, has a case to answer, and I hope that some day he will do so. He knows that another device used by the Council and the Commission to get over spending controls was to do something illegal. We transferred spending for butter dumping from the Commission to member states, and the Court of Auditors put in a report saying that that was illegal. The Council did not even discuss that, which was shameful.

We are kidding ourselves if we try to pretend that the CAP is being reformed. Every time we debate these reports we hear that reform is current. We hear about a fall in the value and size of the mountains. We have simply had a fire clearance sale. It is ludicrous to say that the Commission can do things. The report is full of specific criticisms of the Commission and of what can be done.

What on earth can we do? When we receive these reports year after year—when the fraud continues and increases, as does the mismanagement—we must admit that nothing can be done within the existing rules. Euro-police are a joke. We know what is going on: it is identified. I have asked the Government time and again about the specific case of the Mafia obtaining funds for the delivery of non-existent fruit juice to NATO headquarters in Palermo. Everyone knows about it, but what is being done? The answer is nothing, apart—we are told—from inquiries.

There is only one thing that we can do, and that is to decide that our next chance to act is when the Common Market is next bust. It was bust in February 1988, and the Prime Minister gave it another pile of cash. That is when we have a veto—and here again we are told that we have legally binding controls. There were binding controls last time. They did not work then and they will not work now. We must say that the common agricultural policy, by its nature, creates all that nonsense. It is evil spending, because the people who really suffer are the people of the Third world, whom few people care about. If we look at the food aid reports, we can see that they are suffering. It is shameful. Money is allegedly being spent on food to feed the poor, but instead it is going on fraud and mismanagement. We know, too, that we are killing those countries by dumping food at knockdown prices.

The Government should say that the only answer is to repatriate agriculture to member states. The only way we can do that is by saying no when the EEC is next bust and looking for more resources. The same happened when King Charles had no money. He came to Parliament and asked for cash. We said that he could only have it on certain conditions. If we do not receive that message from the report, but instead we have more inquiries, more meetings and more councils, we all know that it will lead to nothing. We will be kidding ourselves. It is a dreadful report. We should admit the simple fact that the position is a disaster, it is shameful and it is horrible. Our only answer is to commit ourselves to asking for repatriation and the end of the CAP the next time the EEC is bankrupt.

9.35 pm

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): We have heard a catalogue of cases which are quite appalling in their extent and degree. I would like to read out one such example, because there has not been a specific example given which I regard as being quite as bad as this one. At page 74 the report says:

"the Court notes with concern that one trader, already under investigation for export refund fraud in 1985 in one Member State, was paid some 12 mio ecu in 1986 in another Member State, without any special attention being paid to individual claims, without an investigation of his export refund activities and without a Directive . . . control. The question thus arises of establishing whether the Commission has at present any system providing it with information on cases of this kind and allowing it to monitor the Member States' mutual information-supplying activities and react promptly where necessary."

That is only one example of the kind of thing that is happening.

The fact is that there have not been sufficient prosecutions. We have actual knowledge in this report of cases of forgery and the like, and—just as, for example, in the area of financial services and the recent attacks on city frauds—there is no way of dealing with the problem.

I do not believe, however, that we need to do this by a supranational authority. The Paymaster General asked us whether we thought this should be done by supranationality or otherwise. It is my belief—which I believe may also be the view of the Court of Auditors—that what are required are common standards applied throughout the Member States, but with each of the national authorities preserving to themselves the right of prosecution. The question is not whether we have evidence of fraud—I believe that evidence has already been made available—but I am concerned about the prosecutions which need to be made in order to give effect to the requirement which happens to be associated with proper accounting procedures.

In a sense, nothing more than that needs to be said on that subject. However, there have been criticisms of the Community about the manner in which the agricultural system operates. I would like to put one other thought to the House. On a recent visit to Brussels, we heard much about the social dimension. I understand that there must be something in the form of a dimension of that kind. However, when in practice the whole of the agricultural policy, or much of it, in relation to certain member states is effectively run as a vehicle for social engineering and is, in fact, a social policy by any other means, then I ask a question of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Does he agree that it is not right that people—for example, in his mining constituency or in mine—should have difficulties under the existing social fund arrangements on a domestic level, because of the way in which the Community functions?

Inefficiency, incompetence and an inability to see the wood for the trees lie at the heart of the auditors' report. As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, people in the Third world are suffering grievously as a result of the problems that drought and the like have visited on them. We have evidence to enable us to remedy most of those problems. I believe that the Government have every intention of doing everything that they can to sort the matter out, and I look to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to work as hard as possible to make sure that the matter is remedied forthwith.

9.40 pm

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): There are many horror stories in the auditors' report, but today we have been concentrating on £6 billion of public money which is being expended casually, carelessly and without proper control on the storage of agricultural products and on export refunds for agricultural products. That, as a proportion of the EC budget, is a greater slice than the United Kingdom social security budget. It is without control and out of control. It is maladministered.

As hon. Members have said, there is no proper measurement of the quantities or qualities of commodities in store. There is no proper means by which to access the volume or nature of goods being transported out of the Community. Somebody may look over the back of a lorry or open the occasional box, but less than 1 per cent. of cargoes is inspected and probably less than one tenth of cargoes are analysed in any proper way.

It is open season for fraud. No wonder the EC is ripped off by the Mafia and the IRA. No wonder it is ripped off with three different operatives in Italy to register the number of olive trees. Those trees are registered three times over because the co-operatives want to retain their custom. As my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said, this is a fraudster-friendly rip-off. It is a £6,000 million slush fund which is completely maladministered.

Why should Britain do something about the problem? In a world of car thieves, the man who does not steal one himself must walk. If everyone else is doing it, we must do it, or we shall be left outside. No individual country will take action.

If we are to take this matter to the EC and the Council of Ministers, we must realise that some countries are doing well out of such frauds. The chap who drives round in a Rolls-Royce, like my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), will not, if it is stolen—I am not saying that my hon. Friend's is stolen—want to increase the number of CID members looking for those driving round in stolen cars. Human nature being what it is, there is no incentive for any nation state to do anything about the problem.

If we look at the matter properly and open up what has been happening in the past it will turn out to be a Pandora's box. Governments throughout the EC will be falling like ninepins as all the fraud comes to light and all the horror stories see the light of day.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has asked for suggestions and solutions. I am sure that he would suggest that we should tighten up procedures and have new guidelines. There is common procedure throughout the EC but it is still operated by the individual countries. The slacker they operate the procedures the more benefits they obtain for their country and we shall not get anywhere.

We have to render unto Brussels that which belongs to Brussels. I would not want a great deal to belong to Brussels, but it is Community money, these are Community systems and we must allow Community institutions to supervise them. If we leave it to member countries, we shall get nowhere.

I have one other plea to put to my right hon. Friend. The Audit Commission is universally supported in the House. It is the one non-controversial institution within the European Common Market. It does a good job and we all support it. Let us give it more support, give it the resources, give it the finance, give it the power, so that it can do its job. The House traditionally is concerned with money and with voting supply. Let us see that that money is properly co-ordinated and controlled and let us give the Audit Commission all the support it needs.

9.46 pm

**Mr. Holland:** It is clearly appreciated by hon. Members on both sides of the House that seldom in the history of public expenditure can so much have been taken from so many by so few so fraudulently.

It is the transparent fraud which scandalises the House. The abuse, however—and many hon. Members seemed to have missed this—has to be dealt with by the intervention agencies of national member states. It is fine for Commission-shooting season to be open—the Commission is to blame for this and for that—but it is the Governments who are responsible for the national intervention agencies. We should not be saying that there is nothing we can do about it. We have a Minister here who is responsible for that national intervention agency. It is there that we need the action; it is from this Minister that we need the action, to get transparency of accounts.

When will a report on these accounts and what the Government are doing be made to the House? I put several specific questions to the Minister earlier about what the Government are or are not doing to follow up the recommendations in the report. I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House have a right to an answer from the Minister now.

9.47 pm

**Mr. Brooke:** I elicit a degree of hollow laughter on the occasion of these debates, which I have been attending for some years, when I say that we have had an excellent debate, but I repeat those words again tonight. It has been an excellent debate with a series of admirable and valuable contributions.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) raised a number of matters in his earlier speech and he has come back in his final remarks and quite properly said that it is not simply a matter for the Commission; it is a matter for member states as well. I hope that I showed that I was in accord with that in my earlier remarks and I certainly say that I am now.

There was an agreeable paradox in the utterances with which the hon. Gentleman opened his speech at about 7.30. He indicated—as the Opposition have done on more than one occasion—the urgency of the need for corrective action against fraud in the Community. He then proposed what was essentially a long-term solution relating to a change in the basis of agricultural policy. He cited the year 2002 in the context of the Coal and Steel Community and said that if we were ready to think about that year in the context of coal and steel we should be thinking about agriculture too. I am perfectly prepared to think into the next century on the subject of agriculture, but it does not seem to me to march entirely with the degree of urgency which the hon. Member expressed.

**Mr. Holland:** The Minister is surely aware that I am talking about long-term structural change in the common agricultural policy back to a deficiency payments system which allows food to come in at world prices. If that happens, we do not have this cross-border nonsense that

we have seen under the beef regime. The short-term issue is what action the Government will take to investigate this fraud in this country through its own agencies.

**Mr. Brooke:** I freely acknowledge that I was to a degree pulling the hon. Member's leg, but there is a difference between the two time frames. However, I take the point that he was making.

The hon. Member asked me a series of questions about the intervention agency. He would be the first to acknowledge that those questions were dense and detailed. If he will excuse me, I will deal with them in correspondence with him after the event. They were reasonable questions to ask. I made the point earlier—there is reference to it in the amendment, and both the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Newham, South, (Mr. Spearing) referred to it—about the working party that is engaged on these matters. It has already met on a number of occasions and, I understand, is due to complete its work in April. We are concerned to put on pressure for a deadline for the conclusion of that work when we come to the ECOFIN meeting on 13 March.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) mentioned resources and, in particular, resources of people. The Government have always made it clear that they would be prepared to see greater resources of people put to work by the Commission and would not stand in its way, although the Commission has a habit of asking for large groups of people without specifying what it wants them for.

As to the court, I should be delighted if proposals were put to us—and I totally share with a number of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members their admiration for the Court of Auditors. If proposals were put before the Government they would be looked at reasonably and rationally. In fact, we recently agreed to the appointment of what is known in the Community as an A1, essentially a second permanent secretary on the administrative side, for the Court of Auditors.

I detected in what my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East said a feeling that original sin had something to do with the problems with which we are faced—that is something in which all on the Conservative side would have no difficulty in joining him. He referred to the criticism by the court of the United Kingdom and Ireland for not making scrutiny reports available to the Court of Auditors. In this area we certainly welcome the court's findings.

On the specific criticisms of the United Kingdom, I note that we have met the requirements of the directive and that our instructions for carrying out scrutinies are praised in paragraph 4.67 of the report. We maintain records of scrutinies and are disappointed that the court should draw conclusions on our coverage of scrutinies, based on a small sample. We are considering positively the court's suggestions for improving the quality of scrutinies.

The hon. Member for Newham, South also mentioned the quality of personnel. I am delighted to say, at least with regard to customs and excise, that nearly half the people in customs and excise engaged on this work in the United Kingdom have received or are receiving in the current year special training in what to look for in this area.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of safeguards—I had earlier spoken of simplification. There is not much between us there. He also asked about the built-in controls over intervention storage. He was perhaps blurring the line between fraud and mismanagement, but I would not dispute his point about inadequacy of those controls. It is possibly in recognition of this point, that, as I saidearlier, a working group is now urgently considering the position.

Examination rates for export refunds are as low as 1 per cent. in some cases, and we fully support the Commission's 1987 proposal which would provide for a 5 per cent. physical inspection target. The United Kingdom's current target is 7 per cent., and at ECOFIN I shall press the Commission to adopt the 1987 proposal in the light of the court's recommendations.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the subject of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and physical checks. The IBAP has recently introduced a rolling programme of stocktaking for beef and butter in intervention stocks. Cereal stocks are inspected annually, or more frequently if trouble is suspected, for both quantity and quality. There is also an independent programme of physical checks carried out by the National Audit Office. In addition, the IBAP's contractual arrangements with cold store operators have recently been revised to ensure that the operators shoulder a greater share of the responsibility for loss or deterioration. It is worth noting that the IBAP's arrangements for controlling cereals intervention were complimented by the Commission in its report last year.

If the hon. Member for Newham, South has in mind a particular case of denial of information to the Court of Auditors and would care to write to me about it, I should, of course, investigate and reply as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) referred to the Serious Fraud Office and to Interpol. I am delighted to report that the director of the Serious Fraud Office, Mr. John Wood, was very well received when he spoke at the European Parliament's budgetary control committee hearings in Brussels in January. There was also an intervention from Interpol.

As to the intervention in that speech by the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on the subject of frontiers and the Single European Act, it is the very possibilities of fraud within the clearing-house mechanism that make the Government so determined that that mechanism should not be brought in.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) vividly remembers the debate in the middle of the night last year, as I do because the second of the two days—the day into which we moved—was my birthday. The hon. Gentleman referred to what he described as so-called additionality. It is an extraordinary claim that the way in which the United Kingdom treats structural fund receipts is a form of fraud. That is what I understood the hon. Gentleman to be saying. I am afraid that it is a terminological inexactitude of the highest order, and it needs correction. There is no question of the United Kingdom structural fund receipts being used for anything other than their intended purpose. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Chancellor. I think I detected some exegesis of what the Chancellor had said. However, we shall have a word about it afterwards because I think that there may have been a misunderstanding.

As for why the United Kingdom did not vote for the proposal put forward by my noble Friend Lord Cockfield, the United Kingdom and all other member states took the view that it would not be help, in the pursuit of fraud, to permit Commission officials to conduct investigations, in their own right, in member states. The practical difficulties

*[Mr. Brooke]*

would be considerable, and it would be necessary for the officials involved to understand, and to comply with, national criminal law. In addition, there is the possibility that member states' own investigations could be jeopardised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made a balanced speech and brought in, for the first time, the subject of olive oil, which then returned to the debate. I am glad to say that the account on olive oil —paragraphs 4.107 to 4.114—is a great deal more favourable than those in previous reports were, and I have some sense of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) recycling his material. He did, however, do the House a service in injecting some passion into the debate, from which it gained, even if some of his material had been recycled.

The hon. Gentleman raised the subject of the £17 billion that had been mentioned in *The Guardian*. As the hon. Member for Vauxhall rightly pointed out, that sum was over eight years. It is an interesting question where the figure comes from. My own calculation is that it is probably 20 per cent. of the FEOGA expenditure over the last eight years. Then one asks where the 20 per cent. comes from. I think it comes from an analysis by Professor Tiedemenn, of Freiburg university, for the European Parliament budget committee in 1987, based on Swedish-Finnish frontier fraud and a previous study. It is a demonstration that in this unquantified area the figures are uncertain.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) asked for reform of the system. I refer again to what I said about simplification. What he said about the CAP marches entirely with the Government's views in terms of what they were seeking to do about the future financing proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred to 1984. I did not arrive in my present position until November 1985, but I would be the first to admit that my hon. Friend drew my attention to some of the failings of the Fontainebleau arrangements as soon as I arrived. It is not simply that we had a fire clearance sale. I hope that he will be fair enough to acknowledge that the reduction in intervention stocks is due not just to sales of existing stocks but is the result of policies that have reduced surpluses and, therefore, the quantities that are brought into intervention.

My hon. Friend came back to the 10-month issue—one of which we have had exchanges before. The issue of NATO commodities in Palermo, which has not actually been the subject of a Court of Auditors report—it goes back to a press report in February 1987—has been somewhat difficult to pursue, but I hope to write to my hon. Friend very shortly giving the outcome of my researches.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) asked that there should be prosecutions. The whole House will join him in wishing to see that happen and that example served. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) praised the Court of Auditors. I look forward to sending the report of this debate to Mr. Mart, president of the court.

We have debated for three hours before 10 o'clock rather than having three hours of debate after 10 o'clock. A number of people have asked why we should do something about these matters. The answer is, because of the corrosive effect that fraud has on all our institutions. The whole House has demonstrated that it is against fraud, and I shall carry that message to ECOFIN.

*Question put,* That the amendment be made:

*The House divided:* Ayes 18, Noes 97.

**Division No. 115]** **[10 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bell, Stuart | Meale, Alan |
| Buckley, George J. | Mowlam, Marjorie |
| Cunliffe, Lawrence | Nellist, Dave |
| Dixon, Don | Pike, Peter L. |
| Foster, Derek | Skinner, Dennis |
| Haynes, Frank | Spearing, Nigel |
| Hinchliffe, David | Wray, Jimmy |
| Holland, Stuart | |
| Lofthouse, Geoffrey | Tellers for the Ayes: |
| McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)* | Mr. Ray Powell and |
| Mahon, Mrs Alice | Mr. Harry Barnes. |

**NOES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Alexander, Richard | Knapman, Roger |
| Amess, David | Knowles, Michael |
| Amos, Alan | Lang, Ian |
| Arbuthnot, James | Latham, Michael |
| Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)* | Lawrence, Ivan |
| Ashby, David | Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark |
| Atkinson, David | Lightbown, David |
| Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)* | Lyell, Sir Nicholas |
| Boswell, Tim | MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)* |
| Bottomley, Peter | Mans, Keith |
| Bowis, John | Mawhinney, Dr Brian |
| Brazier, Julian | Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin |
| Brooke, Rt Hon Peter | Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick |
| Browne, John *(Winchester)* | Miller, Sir Hal |
| Burt, Alistair | Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)* |
| Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)* | Mitchell, Sir David |
| Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)* | Moynihan, Hon Colin |
| Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)* | Neubert, Michael |
| Cash, William | Nicholson, David *(Taunton)* |
| Chapman, Sydney | Norris, Steve |
| Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)* | Patnick, Irvine |
| Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)* | Portillo, Michael |
| Currie, Mrs Edwina | Rhodes James, Robert |
| Durant, Tony | Rowe, Andrew |
| Fallon, Michael | Sackville, Hon Tom |
| Fishburn, John Dudley | Shaw, David *(Dover)* |
| Fookes, Dame Janet | Sims, Roger |
| Forman, Nigel | Steel, Rt Hon David |
| Forth, Eric | Stern, Michael |
| Franks, Cecil | Stevens, Lewis |
| Freeman, Roger | Stradling Thomas, Sir John |
| French, Douglas | Summerson, Hugo |
| Garel-Jones, Tristan | Taylor, Ian *(Esher)* |
| Gill, Christopher | Taylor, John M *(Solihull)* |
| Glyn, Dr Alan | Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret |
| Gorst, John | Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)* |
| Ground, Patrick | Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)* |
| Harris, David | Thurnham, Peter |
| Heathcoat-Amory, David | Waddington, Rt Hon David |
| Heddle, John | Wallace, James |
| Hind, Kenneth | Waller, Gary |
| Holt, Richard | Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)* |
| Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey | Wheeler, John |
| Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)* | Widdecombe, Ann |
| Hunt, David *(Wirral W)* | Wilkinson, John |
| Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)* | Wilshire, David |
| Irvine, Michael | |
| Jack, Michael | Tellers for the Noes: |
| Janman, Tim | Mr. Alan Howarth and |
| Johnston, Sir Russell | Mr. David Maclean. |
| Jopling, Rt Hon Michael | |

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Main Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9908/88 on the Annual report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1987, 8502/88 on the management and control of public storage of agricultural products and 9945/88 on the accounting and financial management of the European Coal and Steel Community; and approves the Government's efforts to press for value for money in Community expenditure.

## CIVIL AVIATION (AIR NAVIGATION CHARGES) BILL *[Lords]*

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees),* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committtal of Bills).*

## NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM BILL *[Lords]*

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees),* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).*

## PESTICIDES (FEES AND ENFORCEMENT) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees),* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).*

## WAYS AND MEANS

### PESTICIDES (FEES AND ENFORCEMENT) BILL

*Resolved,*

That in the Pesticides (Fees and Enforcement) Bill it is expedient to include provision—

(1) authorising either of the Ministers to require payments by such persons has he considers appropriate in respect—

*(a)* of the balance not covered by fees of the cost of handling and evaluating applications for approval of pesticides under Part III of the 1985 Act;

*(b)* of the collection of information under section 16(11) of that Act and the processing of information supplied under subsection; and

*(c)* of monitoring the effect of the use of pesticides in the United Kingdom; and

(2) authorising the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the provision of the Bill substituting a new section for section 18 of the 1985 Act in the sums falling to be paid into that Fund under section 23(3) of that Act; and in this Resolution—

"the 1985 Act" means the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985;

"fees" means fees paid by applicants for the approval of pesticides under Part III of the 1985 Act on making their applications, as a contribution to the cost of handling and evaluating them; and

"the Ministers" and "pesticides" have the same meanings as in the 1985 Act.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered.*

That, at the next sitting of the House at which a day may be allotted pursuant to Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates), paragraphs (1) and (3) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.) shall apply to the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Younger relating to Estimates, 1988-89 (Army), Vote A as if the words 'for the coming financial year' in lines 5 and 21 were omitted.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

## PROCEDURE

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Harry Ewing be discharged from the Select Committee on Procedure and Mr. David Winnick be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

## PETITION

# Sewage Disposal (Ulverston)

10.12 pm

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I have the proud honour to present a petition to the House, which has been signed by no fewer than 3,930 residents of the Cartmel peninsula living in the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency. I should like to tell the House what it says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of residents of Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency, sheweth that the undersigned are concerned that the following schemes proposed by the North West Authority . . . to discharge raw sewage from Blackpool and surrounding areas to a new long sea outfall to the Lune Deep at the entrance of Morecambe Bay, and . . . to reroute Ulverston's sewage to a new sea outfall, will adversely affect the health and recreational enjoyment of both residents and tourist, the region's ecology and the livelihood of the Bay's fishermen.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do safeguard the above areas of concern by causing a public inquiry to be held, at which the matter would be fully investigated and all options, including full inland treatment, considered.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition runs in conjunction with the petition currently in the hands of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) signed by no fewer than 3,370 residents of Ulverston and the surrounding area in the constituency of Barrow and Furness.

As an amendment to the petition, may I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in respect of the Ulverston outlet my hon. Friend and I—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker** (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman cannot say that on this occasion, although he can present his own petition.

**Mr. Jopling:** I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that my remarks are unnecessary because most of our constituents know that we strongly support a public inquiry in respect of the Ulverston outlets.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## National Health Service (Consultants)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.14 pm

**Mr. Stuart Bell** (Middlesbrough): This is the first occasion that the Cleveland child abuse crisis has been brought to the Floor of the House other than through parliamentary statements and questions. I have taken the opportunity of raising the matter on an Adjournment debate because of the deep concern that my constituents feel at the turn of events following the publication of the consultants' statement in *The Guardian*. It is a matter of regret to me and to my constituents that once again the consultants should feel that they ought to prove their innocence on matters which have been through the courts. The motion arises out of the action of 11 paediatricians, who submitted a statement to *The Guardian* newspaper, among others, in which they stated:

"In our opinion, the majority (quite possibly 90 per cent.) of the children were abused, and the paediatricians' diagnoses were accurate to a far higher degree than the public realise."

The sequence of events that led to the submission of that statement will not be time-consuming in relation to the role of the consultants within the NHS. Towards the end of last year, at a specialists' sub-committee of the Northern regional health authority, the future of Dr. Marietta Higgs was discussed. It was decided that a recommendation should be made to the regional health authority that Dr. Higgs be reinstated in Cleveland. Some of the consultant paediatricians at that meeting had come from as far away as Carlisle, let alone Cleveland. Some of the Tyneside consultants also formed part of a support group organised in the new year under the guidance of Dr. David Scott and his wife Anne. It transpired later that Dr. David Scott had worked with Dr. Higgs on a study of cot deaths, and that his wife Anne had been a former secretary to Dr. Higgs in that study.

That support group met early in February and a draft letter of support for Dr. Higgs was prepared and submitted by Dr. Nigel Speight, a consultant paediatrician at Dryburn hospital in Durham. Dr. Speight has long been an avowed supporter of Dr. Higgs. He telephoned me in her support when the crisis began, and invited himself to a television broadcast on the extent of the crisis. However, he did not give evidence to the Butler-Sloss inquiry.

In Cleveland in January, the Communist party got into the support act when it called a meeting in Middlesbrough to discuss the Cleveland child abuse crisis, although the crisis was now fading from public memory. After that meeting, addressed by another ardent supporter of Dr. Higgs, Ms. Bea Campbell, who subscribes to the view that one in four of the population are abused as children, it was decided to set up a support group similar to the one in Newcastle, again with the avowed purpose of reinstating Dr. Higgs in her old neonatological job at Middlesbrough general hospital.

The draft letter of Dr. Speight found its way to Middlesbrough and was discussed at a meeting of consultant paediatricians on 15 February. Dr. Geoffrey Wyatt, who was banned from child sexual abuse cases by the regional health authority following his involvement in the Cleveland child abuse crisis, and who accepted that ban as well as a reprimand and warning as to his future conduct, presented on an overhead projector facts and figures which seemed to justify the diagnoses that he and Dr. Higgs had made at Middlesbrough general hospital. Apparently, Dr. Wyatt proposes to publish those facts and figures in an article in *The Lancet*. The meeting discussed the statement of Dr. Speight, made some deletions, principally in reference to police surgeons, and agreed its onward submission to the press. The purpose of the letter was contained in its last paragraph:

"Following the crisis in Cleveland, Doctor Higgs has been seconded to look after babies at the Princess Mary hospital, a university teaching hospital in Newcastle. We strongly support and would welcome the return of Doctor Higgs to her former post in Cleveland where she was employed with special skills for the care of sick newborn babies."

Pressure on the Northern region health authority, as the employer of Dr. Higgs, has become urgent, in view of the allegation that her secondment to the Princess Mary hospital in Newcastle was about to end, and the fact that a paediatric post was about to be advertised for Cleveland by way of an advance appointment to cover the future retirement of Dr. Hilary Grant, the senior consultant paediatrician.

In any event, Dr. Higgs is still on the books as a consultant paediatrician at Middlesbrough, and her work has been carried on by locums. There were also court proceedings which I do not intend to cover tonight.

The statement was supposed to be a letter signed by all 11 consultants from Tyneside and Cleveland, but such was the haste to get it out that signatures could not be gathered. The author of the statement had already left for Khartoum. The statement was sent out by Val Hall, who turned out to be Mrs. Dr. Geoffrey Wyatt, although Dr. Hall has since said that she was merely the secretary. In fact, her role has been greater than that. Dr. Hall is also a member of the Cleveland support group, and she has been in touch with several members of Parliament, seeking their support for Dr. Higgs.

There is nothing reprehensible in any of those activities, except the deceit and dissimulation that has accompanied them in the failure to declare an interest. There was, of course, an anguished reaction by parents and children who were innocently caught up in the crisis.

It might be convenient to state the number of children who were involved. About 121 children were diagnosed as allegedly having been sexually abused. Of those 121 children, 98 were returned home by the courts. There were eight arrests but only four successful prosecutions. Two men hanged themselves in Durham gaol, and in two other cases in which the only evidence was the diagnostic technique of reflex anal dilatation, the charges were dropped. It is against that tide of the court decision that the paediatricians, in their statement to *The Guardian* and elsewhere, seek to swim.

Hardly surprisingly, parents and children alike, settling down about 18 months after the crisis, were traumatised by the sudden appearance of the consultants' statement which was promptly picked up and relayed throughout the media. Some children immediately asked their parents whether it meant that they had to go back to Cleveland hospitals. Mothers and children, too, had nightmares. Children were afraid to return to school on the Monday morning after the mid-term holiday, because they feared that someone would take them away. There was dread and horror that the cycle of repeated physical examinations and disclosure work was back again.

There is no new evidence available to the consultant paediatricians that was not in the hands of the Butler Sloss

inquiry, to the medical assessor appointed to that inquiry, or to the courts that dealt with the cases. When I called him on this specific point, the author of the letter, Dr. Nigel Speight, accepted that he had seen no medical records. The evidence that was available to the courts in relation to the 98 children was weighed carefully by High Court judges, magistrates and registrars alike, who preferred the alternative available medical evidence which concluded that the children had not been abused.

The consultant paediatricians were not entitled to bring new grief and anguish to the innocent families of Cleveland. The question for the Minister to weigh is this: how can they justify their conduct, ethically and professionally? Several of the Cleveland consultants who agreed the statements under their name are still in charge of children who were caught up in the crisis. After publication of the statement in *The Guardian*, many parents were encouraged to go to those consultants, and everyone who did so was assured that they were not included in the 90 per cent.

The most appropriate statement of the so-called evidence was given by Dr. Douglas Hague, the regional general manager of the health authority. On local television, he said:

"The precise figure will never be known partly because of the weakness of the medically recorded evidence."

That weakness was revealed even by the signatories to the statement that appeared in *The Guardian*. Thus, Dr. Peter Morrell and Dr. Marietta Higgs examined a seven-year-old girl at Middlesbrough general hospital on 5 May 1987. They diagnosed vaginal and anal abuse, but the minutes of a case review meeting held on Friday 5 June 1987 show that Dr. Peter Morrell pointed out that there was no conclusive medical evidence of sexual abuse. It is to the credit of Dr. Peter Morrell that he changed his mind.

Dr. Nyint Oo, another signatory to the statement, along with his co-signatory, Dr. Diaz, examined three children aged five, seven and 10 who had been diagnosed by Dr. Higgs as having been sexually abused. This examination took place at 10 o'clock on the evening of Wednesday 24 June. According to the parents of the children, they were roused from their hospital beds for examination. Both Dr. Oo and Dr. Diaz disagreed with the diagnosis of Dr. Higgs, and all three children were allowed home.

Another signatory, Dr. Caroline McCowen, could not agree with Dr. Higgs' diagnoses after an examination which she made on 10 July 1987 on three children, all girls, aged 10, eight and two, and those three children were subsequently reunited by the courts with their parents.

Are these now the children whom the consultants say were being abused all along? To their credit, those consultants, along with three others in Cleveland, have since offered their apologies to the families for the distress that they had caused. It is a pity that they did not go further and retract their 90 per cent. statement, leaving that task to the regional general manager of the northern regional health authority and the Minister of State, Department of Health.

The families, however, cannot leave matters as they stand. They cannot leave their future in the hands of irresponsible statements. They have waited to hear what the Paediatric Association might have said about the letter. There has been a deafening silence. Sadly, the paediatricians—the consultants in this matter of the letter—exercised power without responsibility. Fortunately, I have 21 letters in support of the parents and the children from other doctors and consultants throughout the country which rectify the balance, but the parents have seen the destruction of childhood innocence in their children by repeated medical examinations and disclosure sessions. Now they are seeing the steady destruction of what is left of their children's childhood.

Inquiries are now being made about what legal action can be taken against the consultants. I have therefore spoken on behalf of the families with a firm of solicitors, and submissions will now be prepared by the families with a view to bringing that legal action.

Thirteen families with 25 children have also begun, or are about to begin, legal proceedings for negligence and assault against those whom they hold responsible for depriving them of their children and their children of their innocence. The consultant paediatricians may feel that they can express their opinions through the press. The families will express theirs through the courts.

I have a series of questions for the Minister. As he may know, appointments to the rank of consultant are made pursuant to Statutory Instrument 1982 No. 276. Is he satisfied that the procedures for these appointments remain adequate? Equally, under present service contracts, once a consultant has a job description, it may change radically without the knowledge of the health authority as employer. Is that sensible?

A procedure has been adopted by the northern region by which all new consultants are told six months after commencing duty to ask whether their provisional timetable has changed in practice. Should that procedure be adopted throughout the country? Consultants may also, in accordance with a Government circular, be considered in a disciplinary framework by their employing authority where there is concern about them in any of four main areas—professional competence, professional conduct, personal conduct and contractual commitments. Were the consultants, in signing their statement to *The Guardian*, in breach of discipline in relation to their contract of service?

The Government circular to which I refer is HM(61)(112), which sets out the formal disciplinary action open to an employing authority when allegations have been made which involve professional incompetence or professional misconduct. Has the chairman of the Northern regional health authority looked at the statement in the press as a breach of discipline?

The evidence of Mr. Liam Donaldson, the regional medical officer to the Northern region at the Butler-Sloss inquiry was:

"There is currently considerable dissatisfaction on the part of the many employing authorities that this is the only formal mechanism in existence for serious disciplinary action against consultant medical staff in respect of professional incompetence or misconduct. It is lengthy, extremely expensive, highly legalistic, the burden of proof required is much higher than with disciplinary procedures involving other grades of staff and as a result it is seldom used."

Can the Minister state whether he believes that this is satisfactory for a disciplinary procedure within the Health Service dealing with consultants?

Mr. Donaldson also said that the lack of a formal procedure for matters which, although serious, are not serious enough to result in dismissal, has led to national discussions between the profession, the DSS and the NHS to try to resolve this matter. Where are these discussions? What stage have they reached? What progress has been

*[Mr. Stuart Bell]*

made in making consultants more accountable to their employers? Do they have an automatic right of appeal to the Secretary of State upon dismissal? If so, is it right?

Am I to understand that a warning that was given to the consultants who signed the statement by Sir Bernard Tomlinson, the chairman of the regional health authority, falls within the disciplinary framework?

**Mr. Richard Holt** (Langbaurgh): My constituents, who live in the south of Middlesbrough, wish to be entirely associated with the remarks of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). When investigating the conditions of consultants, I was amazed to find that they have an automatic right of appeal, and that thereafter no action is taken against any consultant until he reaches retirement age. I was given to understand that the longest period that anyone has been in that position is 17 years.

**Mr. Bell:** I am grateful for the hon. Member's intervention. He and I have our political differences, but both of us have accepted that it was not a political problem that divided us. This has united our constituents. Throughout the crisis in Cleveland the hon. Gentleman has been a steadfast supporter. It should be placed on record that he has steadfastly looked after those constituents who came to him with their problems.

My other question for the Minister concerns the Northern regional health authority, among others, being the employer of the consultants. What was clear in the Cleveland child abuse crisis was the distance between the consultants who were employed by the region and the district authority. It appears that the district authority had no control over the consultants, other than to provide hospital accommodation and facilities, and patients through the local health service. It seemed to me, and to others, that a great gulf was created because of that lack of accountability and remoteness from the health authority where they worked. It seemed appropriate to me that it might be better if they were employed in future within the local service and be responsive to the health district.

It has struck all concerned in the matter that we render homage, in a sense, to consultants within the Health Service for their work, and we respect the norms within which they work, and their efforts, but there must be accountability, as there is for the rest of us. The statement to *The Guardian* went far beyond what consultants ought to have said. At least five of those consultants had no knowledge of events in Cleveland. One of them who signed the statement had come to the area only a year before, and had no personal knowledge of the situation. The other six had personal knowledge from their files, and were going far beyond their duty as consultants in revealing what was in those files.

I shall be most grateful to the Minister for any response that he can give me.

10.34 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on being successful in the selection for the Adjournment debate and on the clarity and forcefulness with which he has presented his case to the House. I will try to answer all his questions in the time available. If I do not cover them all, I assure him that I and officials in the Department of Health will study the record of the debate and, if necessary, I will write to him.

I also welcome the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). I know of his deep concern on behalf of his constituents in the case being debated. I also welcome my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I know of her lasting and great concern about the events that happened in Cleveland. Her presence is clear evidence of her continuing interest.

I agree with the hon. Member for Middlesbrough that the whole business is a sorry, depressing and tragic tale, not least for the children. In a sense it is a tragedy that there should still be uncertainty and concern in the north-east about the events that occurred some time ago.

Since the subject of our debate is the role of consultants in the National Health Service, it may be helpful if I say a little about their rights and their responsibilities; rights and responsibilities are, of course, closely linked.

Consultants are the main senior medical staff of the hospital service, and they have individually a very considerable degree of clinical autonomy. Each consultant who sees patients is responsible for the clinical care of those people, adults or children. Consultants alone are responsible for their clinical decisions. But as members of the medical profession they are guided by the standards set by their profession. They do, of course, work within a contract with their employing authority, which may include a job description.

Consultants are responsible for the resources they use, and the Government are taking steps, such as the resources management initiative, to ensure they have the information they need. One such experiment is taking place at the Freeman hospital in Newcastle. The medical profession has taken its own initiatives in developing medical audit, that is the systematic, critical analysis of the quality of medical care. In the recent White Paper on the National Health Service we have welcomed these initiatives and set out our proposal to extend medical audit throughout the Health Service.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, let me say that consultants are entitled, under the nationally agreed terms and conditions of hospital medical staff, to publish books and articles and write letters to the press and to deliver lectures and speeches without the prior consent of their employing authority. As always, however, the right to speak out must be balanced by responsibility for the consequences of what is said.

I hope that the 11 consultant paediatricians in Cleveland gave adequate consideration to that responsibility before deciding to write to *The Guardian* as they did. The events of the crisis in Cleveland, so well documented by Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, seriously damaged public confidence in the paediatric and child protection services in Cleveland. Much good work has been done since to re-establish faith in the quality and sensitivity of those services, and I can only regret anything which might serve to undermine that.

There are, of course, limits to the freedom of action of consultants. Naturally, I cannot make specific comment on the particular consultants mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. He will realise and understand that the whole question of disciplinary action in individual cases is a matter for the employing authority. The Department of Health does not employ consultants it is regional health

authorities, designated teaching district health authorities and special health authorities who are the employers. It is for them to determine what course of action to follow, taking account of published depart-mental guidance and the prescribed terms and conditions of service of senior hospital medical and dental staff.

In broad terms, disciplinary proceedings may be initiated for reasons of personal misconduct, professional misconduct or professional incompetence. Under the terms and conditions of service of senior hospital medical and dental staff, there is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh indicated, a right of appeal to the Secretary of State against a decision of the employing authority to dismiss.

Any proceedings relating to the subject of this debate are the responsibility of the Northern regional health authority. However, I can tell the House that the chairman of the NRHA deplored the intervention by the 11 consultants when he issued a statement on 23 February. Further, I understand that the regional general manager and regional medical officer have between them spoken to most of the consultants individually and reminded them of their wider responsibilities not to undermine public confidence in paediatric services.

In 1987, a working party was set up with representatives of the Health Departments, the NHS and the professions to recommend possible improvements in disciplinary procedures. The White Paper "Working for Patients" and the subsequent working paper on consultants indicated our intention to open negotiations with the profession on the basis of proposals contained in the report of the joint working party. The changes should result in improved procedures which will, for example, enable cases to be dealt with more quickly, benefiting both the health authority and the doctor concerned.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough raised questions about how contracts were held and about the relative roles of districts and regions. As he knows, the contracts for most of the consultants who signed the letter to *The Guardian* are, I understand, held by the regions—as are most consultants' contracts, even though the consultants are employed by, and work in, individual health districts.

As is evident from the White Paper, we do not propose that contracts should be held other than by the regions. However, we propose two important reforms. First, the district health authority will play a far greater role in deciding who is appointed and which job is to be filled. Secondly, we intend that the consultants' job description should be prepared with the full cc-operation and involvement of the district health authority and should be regularly reviewed.

Therefore, the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends will appreciate that we propose a fundamental change in the way that consultants work in the Health Service. Although their contracts will still be legally held in the region, they will be managed by the district health authorities.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the claim by some consultant paediatricians in the north-east that "in their opinion" a majority, possibly over 90 per cent., of the children were abused. I re-read parts of her report this afternoon, and Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, after a thorough and detailed inquiry, did not reach conclusions on this matter, I think for good reasons.

Child sexual abuse presents great difficulties in identification and diagnosis. Particularly when it takes place within families—and unpalatable though it is, we have to recognise that it does happen within families—it is surrounded by secrecy and deception. Often the physical signs are ambiguous or non-existent. Cases where the investigating agencies are confident abuse has occurred may not be taken to court, because the perpetrator cannot be identified, or because the uncorroborated evidence of child witnesses is unlikely to secure a conviction in criminal proceedings.

It was always unlikely that a definitive verdict on each of the Cleveland cases could ever be reached, and it is clearly impossible now. Continual debate over numbers is likely to prove fruitless. May I further comment on the consultants' statement that they believed, to quote from *The Guardian*

"that some genuinely abused children have been wrongly returned home by the Courts".

I regret this criticism of matters appropriately dealt with by the courts.

I share with Lord Justice Butler-Sloss the hope that the troubles of 1987 will recede for all those concerned with the protection of children in Cleveland, and that they will work together to tackle the exacting task of helping children who are subject to sexual abuse to the lasting benefit of the children, the families and their community.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 3 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## King's Cross Railways Bill

9.34 am

**Mr. Chris Smith** (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise an important and intricate point of order of which I have given you notice. It relates to the decision of the Standing Orders Committee in respect of the King's Cross Railways Bill. Its decision is reported in item 16 of the Votes and Proceedings as a resolution agreed by the House. That book entry was made without discussion in the House.

Private business Standing Order No. 163(2) on the provision of private Bills clearly states:

"Where, in respect of a petition for a private bill, the Examiner has reported that the standing orders have not been complied with, and the House, on consideration of a report from the Standing Orders Committee that the standing orders ought to be dispensed with, gives leave to the parties to proceed with the bill, the bill shall be presented to the House not later than the following day".

The Standing Order clearly shows that three stages of that process should occur: first, the examiner reports; secondly, the Standing Orders Committee decides whether the Standing Orders should be dispensed with; and, thirdly —this is the crucial point—the House gives the parties leave to proceed. Standing Orders clearly show that the House should have an opportunity to consider the matter, reach a decision and give an hon. Member such as myself who is intimately concerned with the Bill an opportunity to raise objections. Page 928 of "Erskine May" outlines current practice and says:

"Such motions are now purely formal."

There is a clash between the clear meaning of Standing Order and their interpretation in "Erskine May". My understanding is that Standing Orders must take precedence. "Erskine May" is an interpretative guide, not an absolute one. The clear meaning of Standing Orders is that the House should have an opportunity to consider the motion from the Standing Orders Committee before the Bill proceeds further.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order, which is genuine. It has given me an opportunity carefully to look into it. The hon. Gentleman is correct in pointing out that where the Standing Orders Committee has resolved that the parties ought to be permitted to proceed with their private Bill, it is the practice for the agreement of the House to be given formally. This is consistently the case, and it has happened 12 times in the past five years. In respect of the King's Cross Railways Bill, the formal agreement of the House is recorded in yesterday's Votes and Proceedings, and that is fully in accordance with our procedures.

If the hon. Gentleman feels that there should be an opportunity to debate favourable reports from the Standing Orders Committee, that would first require a decision of the House to change its practice. We have been informed that there is to be a debate on private Bill procedure after Easter, and the hon. Gentleman may wish to seek an opportunity to pursue the matter on that occasion.

**Mr. Chris Smith:** I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. If the House were minded when we debate the private Bill procedure to include within our normal arrangements a provision for Members to object to the Standing Orders Committee report, could the decision be applied to the King's Cross Railways Bill? As you know, that is a highly controversial measure.

**Mr. Speaker:** At the moment, that is hypothetical. It would depend on the stage that the Bill had reached when we debated the matter.

# Orders of the Day

## Citizens' Compensation Bill

*Order for Second Reading read.*

9.40 am

**Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe** (Leigh): I beg to move, that the Bill be now read a Second time.

I should like to place on record my appreciation and gratitude to all those who assisted in drafting the Bill, especially Mr. Henry Witcomb, who helped me in a first-class manner and who represents the noble cause promoted by Citcom. I should like to thank also the Bill's sponsors, many of whom are well known for fighting for civil justice. Special mention must be made of my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), who has made a long and sincere contribution to this work.

When the Citcom initiative, which was promoted by Lord Scarman, came into being, the Prime Minister said that the campaign's contribution to reform would be highly valued. I hope that the Bill, which at this stage is non-controversial and which has the Prime Minister's benediction, will be debated fully. Its purpose is to deal with what some of us have felt for many years is a neglected aspect of personal injury and compensation awards.

The Bill deals with the enormous difficulties that injured people face, through no fault of their own, in seeking compensation. It is increasingly necessary that people who suffer injury because of our high-risk society should be able to achieve fair and prompt compensation at a reasonable cost. Far too often constituents have to come to our advice centres and surgeries because they believe that they have a genuine case for compensation but are deterred by legal costs and the time needed to institute litigation. This confuses ordinary people. Indeed, many are extremely distressed because the way is not clear to seek genuine awards for their personal injuries. Injured people have to overcome a bewildering range of problems. It has rightly been termed an obstacle course. They face difficulties in financing their cases and finding the right legal advice and, finally, in obtaining proper compensation.

I should like to highlight two cases that deal with the desperate need for competent and specialised advice. Only a few legal firms and representatives are available to deal specifically and exclusively with such personal injury matters as assessing pay, suffering and loss of quality of life.

**Mr. Andrew Rowe** (Mid-Kent): Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to the examples to bolster his case, will he say whether he agrees that the present system builds in a considerable incentive to those who do not wish to pay compensation to drag out every aspect in which they are engaged in order to prolong the obstacle race that these poor people must run?

**Mr. Cunliffe:** That is an important point. As I progress through my case, we shall see that the hon. Gentleman's comments are extremely relevant.

My first case is that of Keith Blackburn, who suffered brain damage as a result of a medical accident. His case was finally resolved in August last year after a 12-year fight against the health authority responsible. His parents, who sued on his behalf, used three solicitors before finding a fourth firm capable of taking on the case. Another case was decided less than two weeks ago, when the judge described it as a "scandal" that a woman had had to wait nine years before receiving a reward for damages. He has asked the solicitors involved to return to the court to explain the delays.

There are cases that make obvious the acute need for specialisation in medical negligence and personal injury matters. I welcome the Lord Chancellor's recognition of the need to tackle the problem. Much more needs to be done to avoid delays.

Another problem that recently came to my attention is the huge delay caused by slow administration of the legal aid scheme. Last November a High Court judge criticised that "deplorable state of affairs". He said that the legal aid headquarters kept its doors locked to prevent any callers making inquiries because it was so badly underfunded. That is an outstanding disgrace and an indictment of our system and society. Delays can mean that an injured person must wait more than three months without knowing even whether he or she will have the means to start the tortuous process of suing. In addition, there are all the other delays that plague the system. It can take between three and six years for the average case to be completed.

I am pleased to be a supporter of the Citizen Action Compensation Campaign. As Lord Scarman said, it seeks to put the strength of popular demand behind learned and reasoned argument for law reform. We need to speed up the processes in a matter which has been neglected and in which expertise has been lamentably short. It is imperative that we concentrate on improving matters.

We remember Mr. Justice Hirst and the tragic cases involving the drug Opren. The figures are printed on my heart because some of my constituents, mainly elderly people, were involved. There were 1,354 proven claimants who received, on average, the paltry and insulting sum of £1,800 each and who had a hundred legal representatives involved in fighting the claims. Our American counterparts, who submitted 104 claims, received £25 million in total. There is no financial justice in that. It is ridiculous and a personal insult, especially in a country which talks of building from Parliament into our judicial system a form of compassion based on Christian ethics.

Mr. Justice Hirst said:

"As I have said more than once during the course of the Opren case, both the assessors and the courts have been obliged to base their awards on levels of damages established by precedent, which is binding in law. There is nothing wrong with critics questioning or condemning these levels, so long as they recognise that only Parliament can change them."

That is the initiative that we are trying to take today. Mr. Justice Hirst continued:

"So long as the present levels remain in force, the Courts have no alternative but to apply them."

There is a challenge to the House contained in those words. It is a challenge that I urge the House to take up by allowing the Bill a Second Reading.

I want to comment on some of the rather horrifying and emotional cases. Hon. Members may have read recently of the case of a young woman in the Greater Manchester area, in which my constituency is located. She underwent a horrific ordeal in an operation to deliver her second child by caesarian section. She woke up 10 minutes into the

operation and, although she was unable to move a single muscle, she was fully conscious throughout the next 40 minutes of an excruciatingly painful operation.

For the past nine years she has suffered deep psychological problems, ranging from insomnia and agoraphobia to a deep-seated fear of ever becoming pregnant again. She has also had to relive the experience time and time again in interviews with doctors and psychiatrists in pursuing her claim against the health authority. She says that she does not go one day without remembering the experience. Last year she received an out-of-court settlement of £7,500 for her pain, suffering and loss of quality of life. Her solicitor, who is handling 60 similar cases, said that settlements have been based on the first case, for which a woman was awarded £12,000 by a judge.

Few solicitors are likely to deal with more than one such case, so they have little information on which to base an assessment of compensation. That is unbefitting for a system that is intended to achieve justice for ordinary people.

There are problems in different parts of the country and in Scottish law. A woman from Stirlingshire, who had an operation to sever the nerves close to her kidneys, underwent a similar experience. The health authority offered her £2,400. Her solicitor told her that he had no experience of such injury cases and that she would have to make up her own mind about whether she accepted the offer. Fortunately, she fought on and finally settled for just over £5,000. I and many others are concerned that such levels are not realistic.

As an aside, I must tell the House that I read with alarm clause 18 of the Social Security Bill, which is currently in Committee. In effect, clause 18 will claw back some of the awards given in cases of pain, suffering and loss of quality of life. Under the clause, any form of benefit payments will be offset against awards and will be clawed back and put in the Government's coffers. Such a provision would apply to sickness benefit, invalidity and any other benefits paid as a result of injuries from an accident or incident.

There are few specialised legal firms with expertise in such compensation, but there are some that are quite expert. The firm of Robert Thomson in Glasgow has just handled the case of a man who lost 50 per cent. of the use of his right hand through an accident at work. He was offered £13,000 which he was recommended to accept. Meanwhile, he had received Department of Social Security benefits totalling £18,000. Under the proposed system, he would receive nothing because any compensation would be swallowed up by payments back to the Department of Social Security.

**Mr. Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley): I have a case on my desk upstairs in which a constituent was given £2,600 for an injury she had received while working for the National Health Service. The Department of Social Security is currently claiming back £1,500 to cover a period back to June 1985 because she was on supplementary benefit and income support during that time. I am fighting that matter with the Department.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** It is detestable for the system to operate in that way. The logic of contributing national insurance payments is that they are an investment for times when things go wrong or for specific benefits such as pensions. We cannot allow such a provision. To say that in supporting my Bill one would be allowing the payment of double compensation is nonsense. If one has contributed into a fund, one has the right, when the time arrives, to receive payments from the fund. Such benefits and compensation awards are wholly separate.

**Mr. Stanley Orme** (Salford, East): It is a question of natural justice. A person receives benefit from the state while pursuing the case, and if the courts decide that compensation should be given to the person, that has nothing to do with state benefit.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** My right hon. Friend is right. We are dealing with a non-political issue. All hon. Members today want to give their maximum attention to the debate and did not envisage that such an anomaly might be created by the Government in the Social Security Bill. The Bill will have a direct and adverse effect on the matters that we are discussing today and on the benefit system.

Judgments seem to be made on the basis of size and importance in many respects. Let us consider the disasters recently experienced on land, at sea and in the air. The details are too numerous to describe and I regret that I have to quote these cases, but we should consider the spectacular cases, which are highlighted in terms of the numbers involved and their significance to the people of this country. Such incidents receive greater attention and the victims receive far better financial treatment from the courts. Following the Piper Alpha and, to some extent, the King's Cross and Clapham disasters, large settlements were reached under the full glare of publicity. The fact remains, however, that in everyday cases compensation is still based on Kemp and Kemp, and Kemp and Kemp is about precedent and the sums awarded have been all too low.

Mr. Justice Hirst claimed that the problem was one of precedent awards dictating the level of compensation for the cases that followed. I hope that the Lord Chancellor and the Solicitor-General will take note: the only answer is to break the vicious circle, and my Bill would do much to achieve that.

There seems to be some confusion surrounding the establishment of the Compensation Advisory Board. The board will recommend levels of compensation to be awarded to injured persons for pain, suffering and loss of quality of life. It will be an advisory body. The judiciary is crying out for a lead in this matter, because it realises that sums paid in bereavement damages and in compensation for pain and suffering are derisory. But the judges' hands are tied because they work within the guidelines laid down by the House. The Compensation Advisory Board will draw up more highly sensitive and up-to-date guidelines, which will offer judges flexibility and the option of making awards of the kind that they would like to make now.

The board will consist of no fewer than eight and no more than 11 members appointed by the Lord Chancellor after consultation with relevant organisations. For obvious reasons, it will include one medically qualified person specialising in the rehabilitation of injured persons. It will include one clinical psychologist specialising in the counselling of injured persons. It will include two persons with experience of personal injury litigation—a practising solicitor and a practising barrister or advocate. Finally, it will include four persons appointed after consultation with

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voluntary organisations that provide advice or services to injured or disabled persons. There will be three spare places on the board.

Let me stress the importance of voluntary organisations being represented on the board. Our whole legal system benefits from public input in the form of the jury system. The Bill seeks to strike a balance on the board between experts and the public. Perhaps there is no such thing as a perfect balance, but we have tried to attain the happy medium in determining the composition of the board to advise the Lord Chancellor. We shall be quite happy to consider any improvements in that composition which may be suggested in Committee, but the principles must first be established that the board must consist of individuals who are aware of the effects of disability and that it must include strong lay and public representation.

We could perhaps have speeded the process, but as the Bill stands, the board will be expected to recommend compensation levels appropriate to injuries in a number of classes listed in schedule 2 within a year. Its recommendations will be published by the Lord Chancellor. Those recommendations will come into force and be used by the courts one year after publication. We have allowed for a one-year gap for a reason. Some have criticised the Bill on behalf of the insurance companies, but the one-year gap has been included to allow the insurance business time to adjust its premiums accordingly.

**Mr. Orme:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the brief that the insurance companies have distributed to hon. Members is outrageous? After all the money that people have paid into insurance companies, those companies are not prepared even to consider my hon. Friend's suggestion, even though he is going out of his way to allow them to adjust over the first 12 months. I am sure that all hon. Members will find the insurance companies' brief unacceptable.

**Mr. Cunliffe** My right hon. Friend has made a valid point. I was astonished by some of the things that the insurance companies said in their brief. I do not know why they are so afraid of the Bill. Anyone would think that the directors of the insurance companies would be paying the money out of their own pockets. I am sure that there will be no deduction from their salaries if they accept the reasonable compromise that is proposed. I do not seek deliberately to hack up insurance companies or to threaten their viability. As I have said from the beginning, the Bill is non-political in character. We want financial justice for injured persons, and we want them to have easy access to financial justice. The insurance companies' fears that pay-outs will go through the roof are unfounded.

**Ms. Jo Richardson** (Barking): I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend's train of thought, but I am not clear whether the Bill would apply to people who have worked in firms using asbestos, some of whom die from asbestosis. I see that hon. Members are nodding; I am very relieved to hear that the Bill will apply in such cases. An asbestos firm in my constituency has left a trail of death behind it. There has been some limited compensation in the form of benefits from the Department of Social Security, but I am interested to know whether the Bill will also help those affected.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** My Bill would certainly help them, although we must see what happens to clause 18 of the Social Security Bill. The asbestos industry has been suspect for many years and the trade unions have fought hard to gain recognition of the problem by the industry and to obtain for their members benefits and awards for industrial disablement. Some awards have been made, and I intend to ensure that the Bill protects and shelters those described by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson).

We intend that the review of recommendations should be made as quickly as possible. The Lord Chancellor will be placed under a duty to increase levels of compensation in line with increases in the retail prices index. That is important. Damages are awarded on the basis of the assessment of a working life span, and the courts have always expected the recipients of fairly substantial awards prudently to invest the money to guard against the effects of inflation. I do not want to comment on inflation today; that would be too political. The Bill will, however, contain a built-in protection against it which is reasonable and fair. I am sure that the House will be happy to accept such protection.

I do not pretend that the Bill will solve all the problems of those who seek compensation, but it is a reasonable step in the right direction. The board will represent a balance of interests. Its members will have a deep knowledge of what disability means and it will be able to provide an input from the public in the process of deciding what compensation people should receive. People find it disconcerting and confusing that juries should award compensation in defamation cases but not in the far more important matter of personal injury. Recently, we have all had classic illustrations of that. We have seen awards of between £300,000 and £1 million basically for injured reputations. Compared with those awards there have been mean, niggardly and miserly amounts awarded for injuries and bereavements. That is illogical. We need compassion in our system of awarding money for personal injuries.

Just a few weeks ago, Mr. Justice Otton, a well respected High Court judge, spoke to an international conference of lawyers. He said that he would like to import from the American system the power occasionally to order a civil case to be heard by a jury in order to see what damages it would award. I would not go too far about imports from America, but that one seems useful. Judge Otton said that this

"would probably mean an uplift of all our damages which many people feel are far too low."

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware—it is not commonly known in England—that in Scotland a person seeking damages for personal injuries is entitled to a civil jury trial?

**Mr. Cunliffe:** I am aware of that, and later in my speech I shall deal briefly with the Scottish law because its damages awards are far better than ours. I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for drawing that to the attention of the House.

My belief that juries would award higher levels of compensation is borne out by awards made by juries in Northern Ireland. Before their abolition in August 1987, in the Welsh *v.* Union Installation case, an asbestosis case, the defendant's and the claimant's lawyers fixed a

settlement of approximately £50,000 based on their calculation of previous judge-based decisions. The case went before a jury and the claimant was awarded £76,000.

The trend of high jury awards is not only to be found in Northern Ireland because recently a Scottish jury awarded an injured woman £15,000 even though the appeal court ruled that a judge would have awarded only £10,000. There is some merit in the public input being part of a jury system. Both of the cases that I have quoted showed an increase of 50 per cent. on what a judge would have awarded. It should be remembered that a jury knows that if it awards too much its decision can be overturned by an appeal court. The more public input into the process the better, and my proposed board will provide that without running the risk of greater uncertainty in the system that would occur if civil juries were reintroduced.

**Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse** (Pontefract and Castleford): My hon. Friend has spoken about insurance. The insurance companies say:

"The higher level of welfare provision in the United Kingdom also needs to be borne in mind"

and supplementary benefits should be taken into account. Does that mean that supplementary benefits equate to pain and suffering?

**Mr. Cunliffe:** That is the yardstick that they seem to be using and obviously they have no scruples because some of the letters that I have received from insurance companies are precisely in line with what my hon. Friend has just said.

As I have said, in both the cases that I quoted there was a 50 per cent. increase in the awards. I have no desire to see in Britain the high awards that are often made in the United States. The responsibility for compensation guidelines would be in the hands of the well balanced and independent board that the Bill seeks to set up. The board would decide on compensation.

Unlike the United States, we do not have a system of contingency fees or punitive damages, both of which can result in a jury making huge awards to victims. Any fears that the introduction of the board would lead to grossly inflated awards will prove to be unfounded. I say to our friends in the insurance industry that that appears to be the case. The board's recommendations would provide courts and solicitors with a sensitive, up-to-date and comprehensive guide to compensation levels.

I emphasise that the board's recommendations would be advisory and that the final award would still be left for the judges to decide in the light of the facts of each case. The board would lead to a better match of injury to compensation, greater consistency in awards and speedier settlements, which is what we all need. At present, people have to endure four, seven or 11 years of going through the system, and that is atrocious. We need speedier settlements and lower costs. Some hon. Members, and possibly the Government, are worried about costs, and we can have a look at that issue.

The Bill will also tackle another problem that has troubled many people for years. It is the calculation of an injured person's compensation for loss of earnings and the cost of any medical care that may be required. In order to make such a calculation, the courts need to know about such matters as the average life expectation of a person having the same characteristics as the claimant and how long he might have been likely to remain in work had he not been injured. They also need to assess the prospects of a claimant remaining in good health. Many people think that the present system is about the best that we can get.

The first and most important matter to be decided is average life expectancy, and that judgment is made by the experts in the actuaries' profession. Once that has been calculated, the basis for the compensation to an injured person is established. Other factors, such as the possibility of ill health, can be dealt with as secondary issues, but the basis must be right. The courts have insisted on applying an alternative method of assessment which involves a judge making an informed guess about the likely working life of a claimant and then deducting an amount for the possibility of ill health or unemployment. A judge has the right to reduce the award on the basis of high unemployment in a claimant's area. A 20 per cent. level of unemployment can lead to the risk of a deduction in the award and the judge can consider that.

The estimation of a person's life expectancy is carried out by actuaries. The existing method of assessing damages simply does that which actuarial methods do but does it less scientifically and accurately.

**Mr. John Garrett** (Norwich, South): Is my hon. Friend aware of the humiliation that victims suffer in court when they hear barristers debating their life expectancy?

**Mr. Cunliffe:** That is obviously an emotional issue, and people who have to endure that sort of searching out and assessment suffer psychologically. In some cases, a claimant's health has deteriorated simply because of that type of assessment. My hon. Friend makes a valid point.

We all agree that the actuarial method is not foolproof. However, it is more likely to be accurate than the method that has been evolved by the courts. Under the actuarial method, claimants would be less likely to be under-compensated and therefore find themselves running out of money with several years left to live. Such things happen. If the life expectancy has been wrongly assessed, the victim can be left to struggle for perhaps the last 10 years of his life.

I emphasise that the present system has been criticised by the Law Commission and the Pearson Royal Commission, which reported that in the majority of cases no method of lump sum calculation could achieve mathematical perfection. Of course, we accept that, but use should be made of the practical assistance that mathematics can provide. The Law Commission recommended that the courts should have regard to actuarial evidence and drafted a clause for inclusion in a Bill. The provisions of my Bill are based on that clause. There is no division on this point.

Even more importantly, a set of actuarial tables was produced in 1984 by a working party of lawyers and actuaries, chaired by Sir Michael Ogden QC. The working party was composed of representatives of the Law Society, the Law Society of Scotland, the Bar Council, the Faculty of Advocates, the Institute of Actuaries and the Faculty of Actuaries in Scotland. It unanimously recommended that the tables should be used in personal injury cases. However, almost immediately a judge held that the tables could not be used.

I accept that actuarial evidence will not ensure complete financial security for an injured person, but it is more likely to do so than the present system. Furthermore, it would not greatly increase the cost of litigation. In more complex

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cases it may be necessary to call an actuary in person, but in the majority of cases the actuarial tables will be all that is necessary. If a more sophisticated and accurate method is available for judges to use in such cases, I believe that it should be used. My supporters and I claim that my Bill could be the basis for achieving that.

The Bill would also reform the present law on bereavement damages which cries out for a more realistic assessment. In my view, the present system of awarding damages is wholly unrealistic. Bereavement damages in England and Wales are governed by the Fatal Accidents Act 1976. The maximum limit on the amount of damages recoverable is £3,500 per death. Can anyone say in all fairness that such a niggardly figure should apply today to compensate for the pain, suffering and the quality of life of a bereaved person?

Some people argue that, because the loss that a bereaved person suffers is beyond all assessment, there should be no award or compensation for bereavement. I cannot see the logic of that. No one wants to gain from bereavement. It is not calculated by people. The bereaved are not motivated to try to gain the maximum amount of money. However, society must recognise that the victims must not be denied recognition in our judicial system. We must say, "Society has inflicted this on you and you have the right to claim compensation."

It is true that damages can never adequately compensate for the loss of a member of one's family, but just because it is difficult to compensate does not mean that we should not try. That is the point that my Bill recognises. If the bereaved believe that financial compensation will help them to recover from a tragedy, they should be allowed that compensation as a right. They should not have to choose whether to claim that compensation; their choice should be simply how to apply the compensation that they receive.

Although I can understand the argument that, because it is difficult to compensate for such a loss, the award should be nominal, many ordinary people find it incomprehensible that at present the sums awarded for fatal injuries are substantially less than awards for less serious injuries.

I have recently learned of the case of a father who lost his 11-year-old daughter as a result of the negligence of their local general practitioner. After a five-year fight, the father received £3,500 in compensation, plus £252 in interest and £616 for funeral expenses in an out-of-court settlement. He said that he fully appreciated that it would be difficult to put a price on his daughter's life, but that he felt that the statutory amount was insulting and derisory. I am sure that the House recognises that there is a valid case for increasing bereavement damages.

What can we say to the woman who lost several members of her family in the Bradford fire tragedy? She is bitter and angry that the law is so ludicrously inadequate. What can we say to the man who stands to receive only £1,500 for the loss of his wife who was one of the 153 people who received overdoses of radiation in the radiotherapy dept of the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital in 1987?

Evidence shows that the public feel that the current levels of compensation are unacceptably low. That was borne out in the recent out-of-court settlements for the Zeebrugge, King's Cross and Clapham disasters, when the defendants felt that it would be unconscionable to pay the statutory maximum and paid instead almost three times that amount to the bereaved. As I said earlier, the amounts awarded seem to depend on the size of the tragedy, the number of people involved and the sensational reports given in the press and media. The awards seem to be based on subjective views rather than logic.

The sums awarded should not be unreasonable and they should certainly not be derisory. The Bill therefore seeks to increase the minimum figure to £10,000 for each claimant with a ceiling of £50,000 for each death. I know that there is an argument that damages for bereavement should be unlimited, but that would make the size of an award dependent on the bereaved person having to prove the extent of his or her grief, or the closeness of the relationship with the deceased. As I said earlier, such investigations would increase people's grief and run counter to the aim of the award.

The Bill will also place a minimum award on "loss" damages, which are known as the "loss to society" damages in Scotland. In addition to increasing the amount of damages that could be awarded, the Bill will extend the categories of people who could claim such damages from the narrow categories of spouses and the parents of children who are unmarried and under 18 to spouses, parents and children and to any other person whose relationship with the deceased was substantially the same as that of a spouse, parent or child.

Again, it is a matter of judgment, and not necessarily of logic. However, many people are distressed when they realise that children are prevented from claiming for the bereavement of a parent under existing law. Why should not a claim be made for a child's bereavement? Does a child not feel bereavement? A child can feel as much loss as anyone else and the parents are the whole world to the child.

Only this morning I received a letter from a mother who said:

"Its 1.30 in the morning; the price we pay for the loss of a child is loss of normal responses to life; sleep being one of them. Since my 23-year-old son was killed in a road accident 2 years 7 months ago my life has changed completely."

She goes on to describe the emotional feelings and response to grief which bite into the family's way of life. It is a long letter in which she also says:

"The loss to me and my husband of this only son is not calculable in monetary terms but to get nothing, not one penny, not even funeral expenses, because he was over 18 is an intolerable insult."

It is absurd that Scottish law provides a wider scope for claiming such damages. Under the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976, spouses, parents, children, a person accepted by the deceased as a child and any person who was immediately before the deceased's death living with the deceased as husband or wife can claim damages. It is unacceptable that if an English or Welsh family travels over the border to Scotland and has a fatal accident claims can be made by people who would be prevented from doing so in England and Wales. I commend the Scottish system. I would not want to devalue it in any way. It is a far better and more justifiable law than we have in England and Wales.

I accept that these proposals will require detailed examination in Committee. Today I wish to establish the principle that there must be uniformity between English and Scottish law. My Bill will provide the impetus in an

area where there has been a woeful lack of action. I do not pretend that it is anything but a start in improving the quality of justice for those seeking personal injury compensation. It addresses several of those problems. I feel sure that it will start much wider reforms in this area. I understand that a civil justice review is taking place under the auspices of the Lord Chancellor. I am sure that when he replies the Solicitor-General will enlighten the House on that and say that it will embrace some of the elements that I seek to introduce by the Bill.

My Bill and today's debate pursue a clear negotiable course towards bringing a far better system of justice in terms of compensation and access to justice. One must concede that individual access to our system of justice is prohibitively expensive. It is difficult to obtain justice, and the result hardly warrants the risk and worry because of the derisory sums involved. In that respect we have a rich man's law. We cannot allow that to continue. There are better ways which must be our ways. The House must find a better way of solving this burning, emotional and passionate problem.

10.34 am

**Mr. Roger Gale** (Thanet, North): It gives me great pleasure to support the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) in what he rightly describes as a wholly non-party political measure. I congratulate him on using his luck in the ballot to introduce a Bill is long overdue. It has the support of more than 200 hon. Members who have backed Citizen Action and come from all political parties. I should like to thank my noble and learned constituent, Lord Scarman, who is the president of Citizen Action, for his advice and for the benefit of his considerable wisdom in helping me to form my views on these reforms.

The Bill is only the beginning, certainly not the end, of a package of reforms. It will pave the way for the nationally underwritten, no-fault compensation scheme which many hon. Members wish to see. The establishment of a Compensation Advisory Board and a nationally recognised scale of compensation are prerequisites for a no-fault scheme. Only that will finally remove the sort of injustices to which the hon. Member referred in cases such as the tragedy of Keith Blackburn.

The hon. Member for Leigh referred to some major disasters and tragedies that we have witnessed recently and to the scale of compensation that is often paid in the glare of publicity. He highlighted individual and personal tragedies in other cases. As a journalist, I once wrote a headline describing an accident as the world's worst air disaster. An editor who was much more experienced and much wiser than I said, "You cannot say that because the world's worst air disaster is the one in which somebody you know dies. The world's worst car crash is the one in which your wife, child, brother, sister, mother or someone dear dies. All car crashes are dreadful and all such deaths are dreadful. In the scale of human suffering, it is the one which affects you as an individual that matters." It is the individual who needs compensation. The fact that one's grief happens to be shared by 100 or 200 other people and that a spotlight of publicity is put on that grief should be no cause for a different level of settlement.

I have a declared interest in the pharmaceutical industry. Many of my constituents are employed by Pfizers, the pharmaceutical company, at Sandwich. Their views have been borne in on me. Anyone connected with the pharmaceutical industry is aware of the cost of introducing new drugs, the painstaking research, the care taken—not just occasionally, but in every case—the examination of evidence and effect and the licensing processes that are gone through before any new drug hits the United Kingdom market. We also know that drugs may have a side effect that affects one, two or 10 people only. For those people, that is just as dreadful as if the drug affected 10,000.

I am certain that it is in the interests of the industry and of those who find it necessary to claim that when such cases occur—as they inevitably will if we are to make progress in research—that they are compensated swiftly and without recourse to long and agonising court cases. In that context, the thalidomide case is often mentioned. Prior to the thalidomide case, it was not the general practice of pharmaceutical companies to test drugs for their effects on pregnancy. It was largely because of that omission that the tragedy occurred. Since then the practice has been changed, but we know with dreadful reality that there will be others. Those cases must be settled quickly, fairly and, I would suggest, on a no-fault basis.

It was, in fact, a more prosaic case that finally drew my attention to the Bill and attracted my fervent support for this and further measures. It was the case of an elderly lady constituent who had gone out shopping, tripped on a broken paving stone, damaged herself physically and broken a fairly expensive pair of glasses. She reported the incident to her local authority, who quite correctly passed her claim to its insurers, Royal Insurance (UK) Limited.

My constituent engaged a solicitor to write the letter which she felt unqualified to write herself. In due course the Royal Insurance considered her claim and decided that, because the local authority had apparently inspected that piece of pavement within recent months, it had not been negligent and, therefore, there was no liability. The concluding paragraph of its letter to my constituent said:

"Unfortunately, therefore, whilst we have every sympathy with the injuries that you sustained"—

we can almost hear the crocodile tears hitting the ground—

"as a result of your fall, as the legal Liability Insurers of the Kent County Council, we are unable to assist you further."

My constituent went back to her solicitor, who very properly advised her that she most certainly could pursue her claim if she chose—it was her decision—and he would represent her, but the costs of that would be considerable and the likely result would be extremely uncertain. It will not surprise any hon. Member to learn that she did what any one of us would have done—she decided to cut her losses and not pursue her claim.

There are probably tens of thousands of such simple cases every year that require natural justice to be applied. It has been said that a no-fault compensation scheme would be expensive; certainly it would cost money. We may have to move towards a mandatory third party insurance for personal risk. Such insurance already exists. Every person who drives a car must take out third party cover and, perhaps, that will have to be extended. Such schemes work in other countries, and I believe that they can work here. I offer my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh my wholehearted support.

10.43 am

**Mr. John Evans** (St. Helens, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on his good fortune in winning a place in the ballot. In my 15 years in the House, despite entering every ballot for private Members' Bills at the beginning of every Session, I have never featured in the first 20.

More importantly and more significantly, I congratulate my hon. Friend on his Bill. I am certain that almost every hon. Member—especially, I hope, the Minister—will welcome my hon. Friend's initiative and his Bill. I am certain, too, that almost every hon. Member will recognise that, if my hon. Friend is successful in placing his Bill on the statute book, he will alleviate much of the misery that has occurred for many years.

I agreed with my hon. Friend when he said in his significant speech that most people are outraged by the spectacle of wealthy celebrities being awarded up to £1 million, because it was alleged that their feelings or their reputation had been damaged. I do not suggest that they should not be entitled to such damages, but, on the other hand, we read of people who have lost limbs, their eyesight or in some cases their lives, being awarded sums which can often be described as derisory.

I shall concentrate on a relatively small number of women who have suffered injury, pain and in some instances considerable heartache as a result of being fitted with a faulty intra-uterine contraceptive device, and who will benefit greatly if the Bill is passed.

My personal involvement in the issue started in October last year when a constituent brought the problem to my attention. The device I am referring to is called the Dalkon Shield. Members of Parliament are often not especially aware of issues until they are advised by a constituent through one of our advice bureaux. The Dalkon Shield is a contraceptive device manufactured by an American company called Robbins. When I investigated its background, I discovered that it had been in use from 1970, but was withdrawn from the market in 1974 because of the problems that it was beginning to cause women who were fitted with it. However, because of an appalling set of circumstances in which the problem was not brought properly to the attention of women everywhere, it is believed that some women continued using the device until well into the 1980s.

The device was found to cause injuries in women, such as inflammation, toxic shock, infertility, septic abortions and miscarriages. The device was not only injurious to women, but was a faulty contraceptive—it could not even do the job that it had allegedly been designed to do. It was recognised in the United States that it had caused the deaths of a number of women.

It is estimated that some 3·8 million of these devices were fitted in 80 countries around the world. Obviously, there is a great need for such a device. Women thought that it was the solution to an age-old problem, but, in fact, it caused them even worse problems. It is estimated that in Great Britain some 10,000 women have been fitted with the shield and many of them are now suffering. Indeed, worldwide it is estimated that more than 200,000 women were affected by the use of the Dalkon Shield.

When the matter was brought to my attention in October, the point was made that the manufacturers in the United States had admitted liability, but had placed a deadline by which claims could be lodged with them. That deadline of 31 December 1988 was rapidly drawing nearer, and thousands of potential victims in Britain had failed to register their claims. The problem was that not enough women had been made aware that possible compensation existed. In many cases, in fact, women were not aware that the intra-uterine device was the cause of their problems and of their injuries. It was still being left to chance that women would become fully aware of the position. After all, many women did not even know that they had been fitted with a Dalkon Shield. They knew that they had had fitted an intra-uterine device, but they were not aware that it was the Dalkon Shield. In many cases, of course, it was not possible to find out because the medical records had been destroyed.

It was obvious to me that women had to be alerted to the existence of the compensation fund set up in the United States by the shield's manufacturers. It was simply not good enough that such an important matter affecting the health of several thousand women should be left to the chance that the initiatives of individual Members of Parliament would ensure that they received justice. Through parliamentary questions I pressed the Department of Health to alert women to their compensation rights. On 31 October I tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Health:

"if his Department will initiate a public information campaign to inform women of any rights they may have in regard to any injuries caused by the Dalkon Shield contraceptive device."

The then junior Minister, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) replied:

"No. The Dalkon Shield contraceptive device, which was manufactured in the United States, is currently the subject of compensation litigation in the United States courts. I understand that those courts directed the manufacturer to pub'icise the procedures and the court subsequently expressed satisfaction with the way the company complied."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. *489-90*.]

The fact that the matter had been publicised in the United States and met with the satisfaction of the American courts does not necessarily mean that it would be satisfactory to the British courts or that the matter has been sufficiently publicised in Great Britain.

I urged the Department to reconsider its decision not to launch a public information campaign, but the Department refused to do so. I then asked the Department to instruct regional health authorities to launch publicity campaigns in their local media, but again the Government refused to issue any such instructions.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): To add to the list of things that I know my hon. Friend tried to do to help those women who have suffered as a result of the Dalkon Shield episode, may I say that many of us, including myself, asked our local health authorities to issue information, but the answer was just as negative. Presumably they were acting on instructions from the Government.

**Mr. Evans:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making clear the negative attitude of so many regional health authorities and the fact that a number of hon. Members attempted to obtain justice for women and publicity for the cause.

To its eternal credit, one regional health authority, the West Midlands, launched a public information campaign, which was extremely successful. It traced all women in its area who had been fitted with that shield and I am sure that hon. Members will appreciate that it was no coincidence that one third of the claims submitted to the

manufacturers from Britain by December last year came from the west midlands. The publicity campaign worked and women in that area who had been affected and injured had the compensation fund brought to their attention.

Just before Christmas there was a programme on London Weekend Television which featured the Dalkon Shield. That programme elicited a massive response from the region. Hundreds of women rang in and jammed LWT's switchboard. They asked for help, but the matter has still not been taken up nationally.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has said, no other health authority chose to follow the example of the West Midlands regional health authority. I wrote to my regional health authority, Mersey, and asked it to run an advertising campaign for the benefit of my constituents and others within the region. The regional authority twice refused my request. Sir Donald Wilson, regional chairman of the health authority, wrote to me on 16 November and said:

"In Mersey Region we have issued a press release that we hope"—

I stress "hope"—

"will be taken up by newspapers and radio giving this information and also announcing a telephone hot line to the Medical Department in the Region for personal enquiries."

I could not help wondering whether if the families of those who run our health authorities had suffered pain and suffering and heartache from the device, members of those authorities would have been so content for the future of their loved ones to rest on the chance that the media would be interested enough to pick up a press release.

I carried on my campaign in the region and I received a fair amount of publicity. I wrote to Sir Donald Wilson again on 22 November and I made it clear to him that:

"I am informed by the West Midlands Regional Health Authority that as long ago as 1986, a local advertising campaign was initiated, at a cost to the Authority of some £5,000."

Surely all of us recognise that £5,000 is absolute chickenfeed compared with the budget of a health authority. That money had made the facts about the Dalkon Shield clear to women who might have been fitted with the device and requested them to write to the authority for further information. In my letter I suggested that the Mersey regional health authority should contact the West Midlands RHA to find out the details of the campaign and the response to it because I knew that more than 1,000 women in that region had responded to its initiative. I received an interesting letter in reply from the regional medical officer who said:

"Sir Donald has asked me to thank you for your letter of 22nd November and to compliment you on bringing the Dalkon Shield deadline to attention on the radio."

The authority thanked me for my initiative, but how much better it would have been if that authority had launched an initiative and brought the matter to the attention of women everywhere.

It is estimated that about 10,000 British women have suffered from the Dalkon Shield and it is obvious that a substantial proportion of those women live on Merseyside. In many cases terrible injuries have been suffered by women, and many physical and psychological problems have been created by the device.

I am happy to say that the deadline for claims has now been extended to 1 July this year. I am sure that everyone will welcome that development, but the fundamental issue has still not been addressed. It is difficult to contemplate how those women who have not discovered up till now that they are entitled to claim will subsequently discover it by 1 July, unless a campaign is launched by the Government and by regional health authorities.

Even at this late hour I appeal to the Minister to respond and, if not launch a national campaign, to instruct the regional health authorities to conduct such a campaign so that every woman can be alerted to the likelihood that she may be able to claim from the fund that has been established by the manufacturers of the device. I hope that some publicity will flow from this debate, and if it does my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh will have performed a public service.

I stress, however, that even if women are alerted and register their claims they still face the prospect of legal battles in courts several thousand miles away. It does not follow that because they register their claims all their problems are over—another set of problems might arise. I am sure that everyone agrees that money alone cannot genuinely compensate for the constant pain and psychological trauma caused by miscarriages, which many women have suffered as a result of the shield. I submit that it falls on the Government to do all in their power to alleviate such suffering by ensuring that women are alerted to the likelihood of compensation.

The Bill is an obvious response to the dilemma faced by the women who have been caught up in the Dalkon Shield scandal. Once the deadline of 1 July is passed and women subsequently discover that they have suffered their injuries and problems because of the Dalkon Shield, they will have lost their rights to claim because they did not register by that deadline.

As I said earlier, the records of some of the women affected will never be traced. The arguments for a no-fault system have been put eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh. They have been put on previous occasions and, no doubt, most hon. Members support that argument. It seems only right that women who have been injured by contraceptive coils—the Dalkon Shield is not the only offender—should receive automatic compensation once the device has been found to be the cause of the injury.

I am grateful to have had an opportunity to present this case on behalf of women who have suffered grievous injury. I commend my hon. Friend on the measure. I wish him well in Committee and I hope that the Bill passes on to the statute book. It will certainly receive a great welcome from thousands of women who have suffered grievously from the device.

11 am

**Mr. James Arbuthnot** (Wanstead and Woodford): It is impossible to listen to the accounts of the horrible injuries suffered by so many people in so many different circumstances and not feel moved. It is also impossible to hear that damages of £3,500 have been paid for the death of a child without asking how that sum could possibly compensate for it. However, we are here to legislate and the legislation that we produce must not be a gut reaction to tragedies. It must attempt to analyse the problems and to provide answers to them.

The hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) talked about the appalling case of the woman who was awake for 40 minutes and suffered great pain while undergoing an operation and who has since suffered appalling

*[Mr. James Arbuthnot]*

psychological consequences. However, it is not enough for him to talk about that without showing how his Bill would assist in such cases.

As I have just said, £3,500 cannot compensate for the death of a child, but how can £10,000 be sufficient compensation for it? No figure would be high enough. Any figure that compensates purely for death has to be an arbitrary figure. The hon. Member for Leigh called for a realistic assessment, but there can be no realistic assessment of bereavement damages.

**Mr. Lofthouse:** Why not?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I have a two-year-old son. If he were to die, £3,500 could not compensate for it; but nor could £10,000 or £10,000 million. The higher the figure of bereavement damages, the more I would be likely to have the uneasy and unhappy feeling that I had profited from his death. For that reason, bereavement damages have to be not only arbitrary but token.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I shall give way only twice because I have no interest in delaying the debate.

**Mr. Lofthouse:** Surely the hon. Gentleman's argument means that he believes there should be no payments for damages.

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I accept that point and my argument could mean that. However, there is a place for nominal, arbitrary and token damages to recognise, as nominal damages do in other cases, that damage has been suffered.

I accept that the House may disagree with me and feel that the damages figure is too low. However, if it does feel that, there is no need for new legislation to increase the figure. Under the Administration of Justice Act 1982 the Lord Chancellor already has the power to increase the figure. I recognise that he has not used that power and I think that he is right not to do so. However, there is no need for new primary legislation.

Another point that arises is whether bereavement damages should be payable to a wider class of people than at present. I think not. The death of a close relation is not the time to conduct an inquiry into the closeness of that relationship which, in one case, the contents of the Bill would necessitate. That is even more so if, as I believe, bereavement damages should be arbitrary, nominal and token.

We have heard about the insurance consequences. We cannot consider legislation in isolation from the consequences of it. If the consequence of the Bill is that damages will be increased—however laudable that may be—inevitably insurance premiums will increase. The hon. Member for Leigh rightly and openly accepted that in his speech. The consequence of an increase in insurance premiums would be that fewer people would take insurance.

**Mr. John Evans** (St. Helens, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) is a member of Lloyd's. Can he inform the House whether he has an interest in this matter?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I was coming to that, and I will do so.

**Mr. Evans:** Does the hon. Gentleman have an interest?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I have an interest, and I was about to mention it.

Another consequence of increasing damages is that insurance might become less available to certain types of profession or product. That would mean that people who were injured——

**Mr. John Garrett:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman has an interest in this matter, should he not have declared it at the beginning of his remarks?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker):** The requirement is that if an hon. Member has an interest, direct or indirect, in a debate or proceedings before the House he should declare it. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) has said that he intends to do so.

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** If the consequence of an increase in insurance premiums and damages is that insurance becomes less available for certain types of profession or product, it will decrease the protection available to the consumer.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) rightly said that I have an interest in insurance. I do have an interest in that I am a member of Lloyd's. However, the hon. Gentleman suggested that it was ridiculous to suppose that it would be the directors of insurance companies who would suffer. It will not be insurance companies or their directors who will suffer and their profits will not be affected. If insurance premiums increase and insurance becomes less available, the consumers—the people in the street—will suffer as they will not be protected by insurance.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** The hon. Gentleman has made a point which comes from a vested interest. He emphasised that the profits of insurance companies will not decrease. Opposition Members understand that. I have been fair in offering time for an adjustment by the insurance companies of their premiums. I do not believe that it will deter people from taking insurance. We are simply trying to legislate for reasoned financial justice. I accept that it is an arbitrary figure. How does one assess, and society recognise, the right sum for the loss of a child? The claimant, if he feels inclined, can choose to do something that places a premium on death or suffering. Although compensation is not in some ways compatible with death, people have rights and they can make the claim even if they give the compensation to a drink-drive charity fund or set up some form of trust to avoid the very matters that form the crux of the Bill—any form of personal injury, accident or loss of quality of life.

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The hon. Gentleman's intervention was obviously made from the heart, and it covered several different points. I shall deal with insurance rather than bereavement damages, from which I have moved on.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that I spoke from a vested interest. In fact, if he analysed what I said he would see that I was speaking against my interest when I said that the profits of insurance companies would not be affected by the Bill. Since I was speaking against my interest, it was not right to suggest that I spoke from a vested interest.

As I have maintained, under a regime in which insurance premiums went up and insurance was less available, it would be the consumers who suffered.

**Mr. Gale:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I said that I would give way twice. I have no interest in delaying this debate as there are other debates to follow.

The question of insurance relies very heavily on the assumption that damages will rise as a result of the Bill, which was its apparent aim. However, that aim will not be achieved by the Bill because it is hard to see how merely establishing a board will affect the level of damages. The Bill does not instruct the board to increase damages and, unless the House gives the board that instruction, in theory damages will be calculated on exactly the same basis as they are now. Therefore, if the Bill will not necessarily increase damages, will it, as is hoped by those who sponsor it, increase and improve the consistency of awards of damages?

**Mr. Gale:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** As I have said that I will give way twice, that is what I must do.

Will the Bill increase or improve the consistency of damages? The present system achieves consistency in damages in two ways: the application of established principles by experienced judges in the courts; and if that goes wrong, by the supervisory role of judges on appeal. I ask the hon. Member for Leigh how the establishment of a board would improve the present position.

The trouble with schedule 2 of the Bill is that it aims for standardisation, which creates two difficulties. First, no two cases are the same—each case involves pain, suffering, loss of future and past earnings, loss of amenity, cost of treatment and many other matters. The court already takes into account all those factors when assessing damages.

The second difficulty is that, frankly, the Bill's attempt to standardise certain forms of injury is not a success. For example,, it is impossible to discover a suitable figure for injuries involving visual impairment of both eyes without the scope of a figure being so wide as to be meaningless.

On page 9, paragraph 12, on the subject of "Mental and Behavioural Disorders," the Bill's drafters have simply given up. If one turns the page to find out what is meant by mental and behavioural disorders and to see how the Bill analyses those matters, one finds a blank page. There is no breakdown of the categories.

It has been suggested that the Bill will save time and costs—a figure of up to £100 million a year has been suggested. I am sorry, but it will not do so. When the courts consider the level of damages, they will have to take into account not only the points raised by the Bill but all the other points to which I have referred. The Bill cannot remove the relevance of personal circumstances or medical evidence, however much it might wish to do so. It will not save costs or time.

Although entitled to take into account actuarial evidence, the courts choose not to do so because they have their own system of multipliers. It has been suggested that actuarial evidence is correct, or more accurate, but it cannot be said that either system is correct or accurate. Both have to rely on relatively arbitrary guesses. However, one point in favour of the present multiplier system is that it is simple and, in general, more consistent than actuarial evidence.

The hon. Member for Leigh suggested that actuarial evidence would be better and more accurate. If that is so —which I doubt—it would be at the expense of simplicity and consistency, which would not be an improvement. It would certainly increase the costs of litigation—something that the hon. Gentleman wants to avoid.

The Bill is full—one might almost say fraught—with good intentions. However, it does not achieve even its limited aims and should not be given a Second Reading.

11.18 am

**Mr. Robert Litherland** (Manchester, Central): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on introducing the Bill. I also congratulate him on the way in which he presented the Bill with deeply felt passion. When he referred to individual cases it was with deep and genuine emotion and we could not help but be moved—especially by the constituency cases to which he referred.

My hon. Friend said that the present system was designed for the rich, not for the people whom the Bill is intended to assist. I wish to refer to the case of one of my constituents—a young man called Martin Foy. He was nineteen and a half years old, mentally disabled and being cared for at Calderstones hospital near Blackburn. His father received a telephone call telling him that Martin had suffered an accident when falling off an armchair. He was told that it was nothing to worry about, but Mr. Foy was worried and went into Manchester, where he missed the last bus to Blackburn. First thing the next morning he shot off to Calderstones hospital hoping to see his son.

When Mr. Foy arrived at the hospital he found that his son had been moved to Blackburn infirmary. He then discovered that his son had not hurt his neck, as had been suggested, but had a fractured spine and a complete severance of the nerve connection at the point of fracture. The specialist informed Martin's parents that the fracture was the result of a violent injury.

For several months Mr. Foy was under the impression that Martin had fallen off a chair, but after he had made numerous inquiries it was revealed that Martin's spine had been fractured while he was being restrained. Nurses and officials at Calderstones hospital gave conflicting versions of what had happened. It was never established how many nurses were involved: some reports said that one nurse, who had been under domestic stress, had dealt with Martin that night. I have asked why Martin was not sedated if his behaviour was violent, but have received no adequate reply. Why were the parents kept in the dark?

We have the word of medical personnel against that of a mentally disabled young man, now completely paralysed. That young man cannot speak for himself, and the solicitors are therefore having a very hard time in trying to equate possible compensation with his injury—if there is ever to be such compensation.

We can only try to understand what a traumatic experience this has been for Martin's parents. As they now have no faith in the hospital, they took Martin home to care for him themselves. The result was a massive strain on their financial and physical resources. Mr. Foy lost his job and suffered heart attacks; Mrs. Foy's health also suffered.

*[Mr. Robert Litherland]*

They bore the burden, however, with a dedication and determination that won admiration from all who knew them.

Mrs. Foy wrote me a letter, saying:

"I am writing to you because you have been so kind and helpful to my family since our son had this terrible accident in Calderstones Hospital.

I am sure you know that my husband has had a very severe heart attack and is in Manchester Royal Infirmary, having been transferred there from North Manchester General Hospital.

He is to have a pacemaker fitted and the Consultant has told me that he will never be able to be an active man again.

I am sure that all the worry about Martin and about the Court case has helped to make my husband ill and contributed to his heart attack. The terrible thing that has happened to Martin has now affected all our lives."

We pose the question: how do you compensate for that?

I contacted the Secretary of State for Health and received a reply from the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the gist of which was that the case should be dealt with through the legal channels. The Under-Secretary would not intervene. He apologised, however, for what he described as an unsatisfactory reply.

I wrote to the Prime Minister, who replied that words were inadequate to those who had suffered so much, and offered her deepest sympathy. She wrote:

"I do appreciate the agonies which Mr. and Mrs. Foy must have gone through since their son, Martin, was so badly hurt and I can well understand their concern to discover the circumstances in which this tragedy happened. I know that words are of little value to those who have suffered so much but I hope that you will pass on to Mr. and Mrs. Foy my deepest sympathy."

Understanding and sympathy, however well intentioned, could not alter the circumstances of Mr. and Mrs. Foy. They are not rich people, and their son's irreversible injury has made them so much the poorer. The Bill aims to allow an independent board to give judges an idea of public feeling—and there was considerable public feeling in the Foy case. I am sure that public feeling about the level of compensation for

"suffering and loss of quality of life"

would have been welcomed by the Foys.

The definition in clause 3 of loss of quality of life would have been both interesting and testing in the case of Martin Foy. What was his quality of life, as a mentally disabled person, before the injury that caused him to become paralysed while in hospital? What of the damaging effect on the whole family's quality of life?

If the Bill can alleviate the pain and assist the lives of my constituents, the Foys, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh on having the foresight to present it. It is worthy of support from both sides of the House. The Foys do not want compensation; they want money only to give their son some comfort. We have heard the voice of compassion from my hon. Friend, and we have listened to the voice of vested interest in profit from the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). I know which side I shall be voting for.

11.26 am

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): I, too, begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on winning his place in the ballot, and—perhaps more significantly—on the reasoned, moderate and sensible way in which he introduced the Bill. It is notable that he has attracted if not unanimous support, none the less support from both sides of the House.

If this were a Third Reading debate, I confess that I might have some difficulty in supporting the hon. Gentleman, but he has been so receptive in his response to questions about elements of the Bill as drafted that I feel confident that any imperfections that I may see in the measure are entirely capable of being removed as it proceeds through the House.

Such criticisms and observations as I am about to offer are not theoretical. I declare an interest, in the sense that I have appeared both for and against persons seeking damages whose right to claim damages, and the amounts that they would be entitled to claim, would have been affected by the Bill. I have also appeared both for and against insurance companies. That takes me naturally to what was said by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot).

I understood the hon. Gentleman to be saying that the Bill, if passed, would affect insurance costs. When a court awards damages, it does not take acount of the fact that insurance is available. It takes no account of the consequences for insurance costs of a particular level of damages. If it did there would always be compelling arguments for never raising the level of damages, as to do so would be to raise the level of insurance costs.

One of the more significant features of the development of the law on compensation in recent years has been the recognition that it must take account of the level of inflation. For some time, even after inflation had begun to assume dramatic proportions, the courts declined to take it into account, but eventually they were persuaded that that was inappropriate and indeed unjust. There is now an obligation for damages, while not reflecting exactly the retail prices index, to take account of inflation. Clause 7 recognises the position in Scotland since the passing of the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976 and, by implication, approves of that change. I understood the hon. Member for Leigh expressly to approve of that change and its consequences for Scotland.

Prior to that change, a relation of a deceased person claimed solatium, which was no more than pain and suffering. Now, an award is made for loss of society, which, as its terms clearly show, embraces wider considerations than the grief that a spouse might feel about the death of a husband or wife. It embraces issues such as companionship, and, for children, the absence of guidance and stability in the formative stages of development.

The expression "bereavement damages" is more restricted in itself and the concept that it must necessarily encompass. It is much more restrictive than "loss of society", and on one view may be said to give little colour to what is intended. As hon. Members have made clear, giving damages at a certain level does not bring a deceased person back to life. Nor, in the case of personal injuries, does it restore one's condition before the accident.

If the hon. Member for Leigh is satisfied that loss of society has proved a successful concept in the law of damages in Scotland, is there not justification for considering whether it should be adopted in English law? It has worked well in Scotland. Initially, there was a hiccup, because when awarding damages judges interpreted loss of society as being approximately equivalent to solatium. Dingwall v. Alexander established that loss of

society means more than an award for pain and suffering. Since that decision, the concept has been sufficiently flexible to allow a gradual and legitimate increase in awards made under this head.

I accept that clause 6(4) should try to fix a minimum award, but I ask the hon. Member for Leigh to consider why it is necessary to impose a maximum. No matter how many people may be sufficiently closely related to be entitled to bereavement damages or loss of society, the value of a death is being fixed at a maximum of £50,000. That is unattractive in principle and many families would find it repugnant because it would fix an arbitrary ceiling on the value of a death.

The hon. Member for Leigh referred in detail to the constitution of the board and the introduction of lay representation. The hon. Gentleman accepts and understands that in Scotland civil jury trial is available to people seeking damages for personal injury. It is with some regret that those familiar with practice north of the border have observed the terms of the consultative document issued by the Lord Advocate and Secretary of State, which seems to suggest that the right to civil jury trial should be withdrawn. I hope that those who will consider responses to that document will read today's proceedings. Many of the speeches and observations that have been made bear directly on the issue that will have to be canvassed if that right is withdrawn.

Under the Bill, there can be one solicitor and one barrister from England on the board, and the separate Scottish legal jurisdiction may be unrepresented. Given that the hon. Member for Leigh has recognised the merits of the Scottish system, he may think it advantageous to allow a legal practitioner from Scotland to be on the board.

**Mr. Frank Doran** (Aberdeen, South): There may be scope for a separate Scottish board.

**Mr. Campbell:** As the hon. Gentleman says, there may be scope for a Scottish board.

Clauses 3 and 5, which deal with amounts of compensation and actuarial evidence, are more than overdue.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, instead of having a separate Scottish board, it would be better to have a United Kingdom board? It would be nonsense if different compensation were paid north and south of the border, whichever side was advantaged or disadvantaged.

**Mr. Campbell:** I fear that that is the current position. The hon. Member for Leigh is arguing not that compensation on either side of the border should be exactly the same, but that there should be more consistency, which is precisely the effect of clauses 3 and 5.

The hon. Gentleman is urging not that courts should be bound by compensation established by the board or evidence from actuarial sources but that they should have regard to compensation established by the board and the actuarial evidence. That is a matter with which the courts are familiar, and they fulfil such obligations on many occasions. The clauses say to the court, "You will continue to have wide discretion, but in exercising it you will have to satisfy an appellate court, if necessary, that you have taken due account of the compensation that the board has established or the actuarial evidence." There is nothing unattractive in principle in that suggestion. Indeed, it would lead to more equitable settlements.

Observations have been made about the level of awards in the United States. Particular reference was made to awards following the Piper Alpha tragedy. The awards were said to be based on what was rather archly described as a mid-Atlantic settlement. The idea being conveyed was that jurisdictions were competing for damages actions. Actions could have been taken in Scotland, England and Wales or the United States. For reasons that have already been explained, damages awards are frequently higher in the United States. A compromise was reached because those responsible for payment were anxious to make payment against the risk of being taken to court in the United States and having to make higher payments. There is injustice in the idea that the damages to which one may be entitled will depend on the good fortune of whether a decision on whether a person or company has been negligent can be made in the United States rather than Britain. That problem will exist so long as there are competing jurisdictions. We can at least ensure that greater consistency in the competing jurisdictions is found in levels of damages within the United Kingdom.

Notwithstanding my criticisms, which may easily be resolved in Committee, the Bill deserves the support of the House. The calculation of damages for death or personal injury has for a long time followed a restricted path. The use of the multiplier and the multiplicand has frequently been seen to be arbitrary and insensitive. It is necessary that the House should take unto itself the responsibility of reviewing from time to time the way in which damages are awarded to persons entitled to them. The Bill provides a valuable and effective opportunity to do so, and I hope that it will get the Second Reading that it undoubtedly deserves.

11.40 am

**Mr. John Garrett** (Norwich, South): I support the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on bringing it forward. Further reforms are needed, and I agree with the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who spoke about no-fault schemes. The Bill paves the way effectively and is about as far as we can go at present.

I feel entitled to speak on this subject because of my fairly extensive experience of personal injury litigation—although, I am pleased to say, in a technical, not personal sense, as I carried out a substantial research project. A few years ago, in a professional capacity, I participated in an exceptionally thorough examination of hundreds of personal injury cases, from accident through to conclusion. I found it a saddening experience and was made aware of many human tragedies. I wish to make it clear that the evidence that I shall quote is from published or personal sources and does not draw in any way on the report to my client.

Every year there are 3 million accidents involving injury in Britain. Within a three-year time limit of an accident, there are some 300,000 formal claims. Each year there are about 30,000 writs or summonses issued in the High Court and 25,000 in the county courts. Fewer than 10 per cent. of formal claims ever reach court. In the High Court 9,000 actions are set down each year, and 1,300 trials go all the way to judgment.

*[Mr. John Garrett]*

The two salient features of personal injury litigation are delay and cost. High Court cases take an average of four to six years from accident to conclusion. Even in the county courts, where the amount in dispute is usually under £3,000, the delay is, on average, three years from accident to completion. Amazingly, legal costs in the High Court amount to £70 per £100 damages and in the county courts £175 per £100 of damages. Those delays and costs cause anguish to the plaintiff. They show massive inefficiency in the system and mean that compensation is not available until long after it is most needed, which is soon after the accident.

**Mr. James Lamond** (Oldham, Central and Royton): Is it not a fact that if there are considerable delays before claims come to court and those claims turn on the evidence of witnesses of the accident, the witnesses' memory will be clouded, understandably, by the passage of time, so sometimes claims may fail on those grounds?

**Mr. Garrett:** My hon. Friend is right. The Pearson study some years ago on personal injury litigation made that point about the consequence of inordinate delay.

All this inefficiency is paid for by insurance companies, trade unions and legal aid funds, which means that ultimately the costs fall on us who are insured, members of trade unions or taxpayers. The Lord Chancellor's review concluded that the system was inefficient, dilatory and disproportionately expensive.

In personal terms, it is much worse than that. We have heard some very disturbing personal cases described in the debate. I know a young woman who was terribly crippled and ended up with almost total physical incapacity following a road accident. The fault was clear so her case took three years to settle in the High Court. That was pretty quick—at the bottom end of the time span taken by these cases. She had to sit in court while her barrister, who knew nothing of the case, described at length her poor marriage prospects in order to talk up the level of compensation. The barrister for the insurance company played down the consequences of her injuries by saying what a wonderful carer her mother was, so the compensation that she might need would be that much less, and saying that she could always be carried upstairs if she needed to get around the house. There was a talking down of the benefits. In the end, thanks to her legal advice, the young woman got less in compensation than she was offered before the court hearing, because her barrister urged her to pursue the matter all the way to and through the courts, and took £3,000 a day for his advice.

That is not an untypical example of the delays, hassle and humiliation that people suffer when they have to sit in court and hear, for example, their marriage and career prospects and life expectancy discussed. Fifteen years ago, the Pearson commission showed that of those who did not make a claim 20 per cent. did not know how to do so, or did not know that they could claim—that happened in many Dalkon Shield cases—11 per cent. were too upset or found the whole process too daunting and 5 per cent. were just glad to be alive and could not think about the accident, so did not make a case against those who had injured them. At least 100,000 people a year are not getting their rights where fault can be established under our tort system.

The delay and cost are often unavoidable, because one must wait for the plaintiff's medical condition to stabilise. People's condition deteriorates—for example, arthritis in broken limbs sets in. Doctors take an inordinate time to produce reports on these cases. In the published study to which I referred much is made of the inordinate wait for doctors to produce medical evidence.

Waiting for a trial is another thing altogether. It takes two years in the High Court in London before a defendant is supplied with the details of the plaintiff's case and a year in the High Court before a judge can be made available, so there is a queue to get before the court. There are also long delays for a person who has an inexpert solicitor, and there are many of them in this game. Usually, fast progress is made in an industrial injury case when the matter is handled by those groups of solicitors who are known in the trade as trade union firms. They take up industrial injury matters and know how to speed them along. A solicitor in a small town in a rural area may get these cases years apart and be daunted by the prospect of working out how to carry the case forward.

The proposed Compensation Advisory Board should accelerate the process of deciding the quantum of an award and increase the present derisory bereavement award, but there would still have to be proven negligence or fault. I and many others have long maintained that the only long-term solution to the problem is a comprehensive no-fault national compensation scheme. We need such a scheme, under which an injured person is simply compensated for his injuries. There is a fair amount of international experience on this with which I shall deal after I have given way.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the argument in favour of no-fault compensation is at its strongest in what is described as medical negligence cases, where the establishing of negligence is frequently difficult and frequently depends on being able to summon to the assistance of a plaintiff in England, or the pursuer in Scotland, another medical expert who is willing to be critical of the action, or inaction, of the person responsible for the damage to the patient?

**Mr. Garrett:** Such cases are extraordinarily protracted because of the unwillingness of the medical profession to give evidence against itself. I hoped to work the word iatrogenic, which refers to injuries caused by doctors, into my speech.

No-fault compensation was discussed thoroughly over a decade ago by the Pearson commission, but it ran away from the issue. The best-known scheme for no-fault compensation is in New Zealand and it simply pays compensation for injury by accident, including medical, surgical, dental or first-aid misadventure. The Pearson commission concluded that such a scheme would not be applicable to Britain because New Zealand was an agricultural country. The commission meant the New Zealand did not have many personal injuries—unless somebody was hit by a runaway sheep, for example.

However, although the commission could not buy the deal of a complete no-fault compensation scheme, it proposed a variant of the no-fault arrangement for road injuries. Of the overall figure of 300,000 injuries for which a claim is made, 40 per cent. occur on the roads, 40 per cent. are industrial and the rest, increasingly, are medical or similar injuries. The Pearson commission proposed a

variant for road injuries, in addition to the continuance of the industrial injuries compensation scheme. The Lord Chancellor's review, the most recent work on the matter, never even considered a no-fault scheme. Although a no-fault scheme was discussable a decade ago, it cannot be mentioned today. The Lord Chancellor proposed a scheme for speeding up litigation.

We all know why nobody refers to no-fault compensation schemes any more. The reason is the alliance between the pecuniary interests of lawyers and their coincidence with the trade unions, which provide a legal service to their members. I have here a typical trade union journal, published by the National Union of the Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades in my constituency. Quite rightly, the trade union can boast to its members about a series of excellent settlements of industrial injuries, such as a member receiving £100,000 in compensation, or a defective track causing injury and the union getting £920 for the man. A member of the Preston, Glossop and district branch contracted dermatitis and the union got £6,000 for her. Even the back of the journal says that the legal department handled 709 cases and raised in compensation £946,000.

This is a difficult issue because trade unions have done a first-class job for their members for a long time in such matters, and it is a key service. However, many people injured at work are not members of trade unions. Perhaps some of them cannot be members. There are many people injured on the roads who have no access to the expertise of a trade union firm that could push through such a claim.

**Mr. James Lamond:** When discussing no-fault compensation, does my hon. Friend recall that the last act of the Callaghan Government was to introduce the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers Compensation) Act 1979 of which I have some experience because it covered byssinosis in the textile industry? It divided those who suffered from byssinosis into two categories. One category covered those who had no former employer left in business. They received fairly reasonable lump sum compensation without any questions being asked. The second category were those who still had employers in business. They were required to carry out the normal procedures. The trade union, of course, supported them in their claims, but those people felt that they had been dealt with harshly because one group received compensation without being required to prove fault and the others did not. However, the scheme was at least a concession towards the goal that my hon. Friend and I hope will be achieved.

**Mr. Garrett:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, because I did not know about that case. It illustrates the point that a number of us have been trying to make for some time.

In addition to the excellent proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, we now need an updated Pearson commission and a study of the scope for a no-fault compensation scheme. Of course, people would immediately call attention to the cost on public funds. I imagine that claims under such a scheme would probably treble and that there would be 200,000 or 300,000 claims a year carried to the point where they would have gone to court under the present system. The Chancellor of the Exchequer continually boasts of having a £17 billion surplus and one would have thought that even £1 billion or £2 billion would be worth spending on such a system. It would not be wholly new money involved because many of the people who receive awards would receive them from public sources anyway.

We must return to the question of a comprehensive, national, no-fault compensation scheme. I realise that that may ruffle a few feathers and that the legal profession will not care for it too much, but the case for it is so clear that the least that the Government can do is to set up a commission on it. There have been at least 30 commissions since the war dealing with such litigation, but we need an updated examination of the case for no-fault compensation. Meanwhile, my hon. Friend's Bill deserves a Second Reading because it represents a major advance and can be built on in the future.

11.58 am

**Mr. Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley): First, I want to take up a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) about what is not in the Bill. I must say, however, that if the Bill is given a Second Reading and completes its passage through the House, it will be a major step in moving to a fairer system.

Many solicitors and barristers may not agree, but no-fault compensation should become law. I say that because I worked in the coal mining industry before coming to the House in 1983 and that industry has a history of injuries. There have been some unfortunate and sometimes fatal injuries and a history of accidents over many generations. The unfairness of the present system is highlighted in almost every mining community where similar accidents have led to major differences in the benefits paid, because people have been unable to prove negligence on the part of the employer.

My trade union has always argued that no one ever sets out to get injured at work, although it is always difficult to prove negligence on the part of the employer and the payment of compensation is by no means certain.

It is especially difficult to prove negligence in the administering of anaesthetics, for example. It is almost as though a cloak of official secrecy protects those who work in hospitals. It is very difficult to get hospitals to acknowledge that mistakes have been made. As an MP, I have experience of this matter; there are one or two cases under consideration in my health authority area at the moment. It is difficult to obtain a formal admission of negligence on the part of a hospital employee.

Just as no one sets out to get injured at work, no one goes into hospital intending to come out feeling worse. One can hardly say, "I went into hospital knowing that I would come out worse than when I went in. It was my fault. I was to blame, I could choose whether to go into hospital or not." That is nonsensical. I hope that, before too long, legislation providing for no-fault compensation will reach the statute book so that we can get rid of such anomalies.

I support the Bill because it represents an important stepping stone. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) rightly said that many of its provisions will help people to get round existing problems. He rightly referred to "the obstacle course" that lies in the way of those who seek compensation. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South referred to one or two of those obstacles. It is important to highlight as often as possible the problems that people face with the legal system, one of which involves finance. Even if someone

*[Mr. Kevin Barron]*

knows how to gain access to the legal system it may be difficult for him to find the necessary finance. In addition, it can take a very long time for a case to reach the court and hence for compensation to be awarded.

It has been pointed out that in some instances the legal process is deliberately held back to try to dissuade people from seeking to obtain the compensation that they deserve. We cannot rely on a legal system that allows such things to happen to provide justice for people seeking the compensation that is rightly theirs once negligence has been proved.

Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware that there is much public disquiet about the present system for determining the amount of compensation to be paid once negligence has been proved. That has been said on many occasions—not least by the commissions set up to look into such matters. One of the best comments that I have seen in recent weeks appeared in *The Observer* on 26 February. It puts into perspective ordinary people's feelings about how sums of money are paid out under the current system:

"But most claims for personal injury compensation are set by the precedent as recorded in the lawyers' Bible, 'Kemp and Kemp on Damages". A sum of money, plucked out of the air by a High Court Judge becomes the standard award for specific personal injury. Huge awards for damages reported in the papers are the exceptions. Long before they ever reach the courts most cases are settled for small sums based on the precedents recorded by Kemp and Kemp."

People are very worried that a so-called lawyers' bible should determine the amount of compensation to be awarded in injury cases. The Bill goes a long way towards taking such decisions away from Kemp and Kemp. Those on the Compensation Advisory Board will have expert knowledge in all relevant matters, including the knowledge of how the victims of pain and suffering caused by injury feel, and of the degree to which those feelings should be compensatable. The Bill provides for a more broad-brush approach to the problem than we have under the present system, which uses precedent set by High Court Judges.

My hon. Friend should be complimented on clause 1, which would establish the Compensation Advisory board. We have received a briefing from the Association of British Insurers whose members complain that they have been left off the board. As my hon. Friend says, there are three spare places, and there is room for additional experts. The Bill is not carved in tablets of stone—a fact on which I complimented my hon. Friend. If the insurers felt that they could make a good case for being represented on the panel, they could put that argument. I suspect that some other bodies may feel that they should be represented, and they, too, can argue that they should take up one of the three spare places. I hope that we shall be in a position to satisfy all those who feel that they have been left out the drafting of the Bill.

Under from clauses 3 and 5, the evidence collected will have to be broader than in the past. I have an example of what happens under the present system. In some cases negligence may have been proved; there may be no dispute and it may have been established that an individual's negligence has contributed to an accident. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh said, even in such cases compensation is decided on the basis of a host of factors, such as the person's age, his possible loss of earnings and so on. Recently, I read in the press about one of the victims of the Brighton bombing, who was in his seventies. He was running a business—he was still in work—but the compensation awarded did not take that into account because of his age. There is something gravely wrong with a system that allows the non-payment of compensation to the victim of a gruesome attack even when negligence has been proved. That person was not compensated because of his age. There are many other respects in which the system for awarding fair compensation for the terrible things that happen is defective.

One of the main aims of the Bill relates to the actuarial evidence that will be collected. Pecuniary losses such as loss of earnings and medical costs must be addressed in the Bill, and it must also address non-pecuniary losses such as pain, suffering and loss of quality of life.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh spoke about a clause in the Social Security Bill that is going through Parliament which says that various social security payments are affected by court awards. I have checked a case that came to my notice in my constituency last week. A person who worked for the National Health Service was recently awarded a lump sum of £2,600 from the National Health Service injury board. She received that award because she was injured at work and eventually had to leave work. She is now a single parent and has been living on state income since 1983. In 1985 she went on to supplementary benefit, which is now called income support. She has been told that she will have to forfeit £1,500 because she was on state means-tested benefit from 1985.

Income support is payment by the state for pain and suffering to somebody who has had an industrial accident and where negligence has been proved. That woman was the victim of an industrial injury and is now seeking repayment of the £1,500. Pain and suffering should be defined in a more formal way and people cannot be blamed for thinking that it is defined on a whim by a judge.

The Bill aims to ensure that as far as possible a person receives compensation commensurate with what he has lost. Some people fear that the way in which the system works means that some people are being under-compensated. I have an example that highlights this problem. A briefing that I have received on the Bill says:

"If a twenty year old was injured and suffered an annual loss of £10,000 for the rest of his life, the largest amount of compensation he could receive would be approximately £190,000 for that loss. Although he would probably have forty five to fifty years left to live.

The loss is assessed by taking the injured person's annual loss and multiplying it by a figure. The figure that is chosen is not the life expectancy of the person. The reason being that if the annual loss was multiplied by the life expectancy the claimant would be overcompensated because he would receive a lump sum and the income he would earn on it."

That is obviously true and some people could well argue that somebody had been over-compensated. The briefing goes on to say:

"If the twenty year old received a lump sum of £500,000 as compensation for his lost income, he would also have the income he could earn on it.

The courts attempt to calculate the compensation to take into account the fact that income will be earned on the lump sum. The aim is therefore to multiply the claimant's annual loss by a figure which will produce a lump sum which when added to the income it will earn each year amounts to the claimant's loss. The result is that the figure chosen is much lower than the person's life expectancy.

The problem occurs because as the Pearson Royal Commission stated the figure chosen is never higher than 18 or 19. The courts arrive at this figure because they assume that

an injured person will invest the lump sum in stocks and shares. This is because in the past the only way of guarding against the possible erosion of the lump sum by inflation has been to make such an investment, (the price of stocks supposedly takes into account current inflation rates)."—

that is not always done—

"Pearson stated that such a method was clearly inadequate and was based on an assumption that the income earned on the stocks will be 4 to 5 per cent. This has led to the maximum being 18 or 19 which can be too low."

Someone in his teens or 20s has good prospects of earnings and in certain cases could be under-compensated. The briefing goes on:

"The introduction of inflation proof government stocks in 1981 has meant that the effects of inflation can be dealt with without having to invest in normal stocks and shares. In fact the courts assume that a person will choose the most prudent investment available, working on the basis that it would be wrong to force a claimant to put the money which will be used to provide his medical care or income into riskier ventures. The security given by inflation proof stocks means however that less income is earned on them. The present income rate is (net of tax) approximately 3 per cent."

That is not a high rate of interest. The briefing says:

"The difference between 4-5 per cent. (which is the assumption that the courts make) and 3 per cent. does not appear to be that great in terms of percentages. But using the actuarial tables formulated by a working party of lawyers and actuaries the resulting difference in the amount of damages can immediately be seen.

Using the example of the man aged 20 who suffered an annual loss of £10,000 for life, using a discount rate of 4-5 per cent. multiplier is 19·8 years, and damages for pecuniary loss would be £198,000. Using a discount rate of 3 per cent (as the net of tax rate of return on index-linked stocks) gives a multiplier of 25·7. The award would be £257,000. In either case, some further deduction might be made to allow for contingencies other than death, e.g. temporary loss of earnings resulting from ill-health or unemployment.

There is therefore a substantial financial difference between the two ways of calculating the person's losses. We feel that because of this people may run out of money with many years of their lives left to run."

If the courts persist in using current methods there is no doubt that people will be under-compensated and they may not find that out until later in life. I shall not go into detail about what would happen if there was another stock market crash, but people could not be given a guaranteed return on stocks and shares. Somebody living beyond his 60th year might find that he had been under compensated 30 or 40 years before and that would be disastrous. There are not enough guidelines and the system of using precedents for compensation may not be adequate to cover a person's needs for the rest of his life.

I hope that the Bill will reach the statute book. If my hon. Friend wins another high place in the lottery for private Member's Bills I hope that he will introduce a Bill about compensation for old people who have suffered industrial or medical accidents. We need to bring real justice into the law of compensation because we must treat people as they should be treated and get rid of the lottery in the High Court.

12.18 pm

**Mr. Alfred Morris** (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on his good fortune in the private Members' ballot. After winning his high place in the ballot, he quickly decided to make some of the most needful people the beneficiaries of his good fortune. He has worked very hard since then in winning parliamentary and public approval for his Bill, which enjoys all-party support and has been welcomed by a very wide range of non-political interests: legal, medical and voluntary organisations, both large and small, not least those which work in the interests of disabled people and their families.

On this special day for him, I congratulate my hon. Friend also on both the content and manner of the speech with which he opened this important debate. He was strong on issues of principle and flexible on procedure. That combination will have won him further support in all parts of the House and we on these Benches give him our full backing in seeking a Second Reading for his Bill.

This is a private Member's Bill fully deserving of that description. As I quickly discovered when winning the opportunity to legislate as a private Member myself, in the ballot of November 1969, many who win high places in the ballot introduce Bills that are, in fact, Government measures masquerading as private Members' Bills. The private Member's reward for helping Governments in this way is to receive the whole range of help given to Ministers in promoting legislation. Their Bills and speeches are drafted for them. They are briefed on every aspect and detail of the legislation and its effects. Among many other favours, they enjoy not just the benevolence but also the practical assistance of the Government Whips' Office.

That easy road was not chosen by my hon. Friend. In association with Citcom—and I join my hon. Friend in acknowledging the special help of Henry Witcomb—my hon. Friend has put forward a private Member's Bill, properly so-called, which richly deserves the reward of a Second Reading today.

There will be many technical and drafting points to consider in Committee and we on the Opposition Benches will play a full and constructive part in the discussion of any and all suggestions for improving the Bill upstairs. The central issue now is whether the Bill should be allowed to proceed there and I hope both sides of the House will be decisively in favour of its going into Committee.

It is now more than 10 years since Lord Pearson published his report on compensation for personal injuries. Since then there has been scant progress towards giving the report any meaningful effect. We are all only too aware of the anger felt by many people about the failure to address the issues raised by the report. They include many issues of great complexity, but one is of fundamental importance, namely, that there must be some action to improve the quality of justice for the individual.

The main thrust of Lord Pearson's recommendations was that there should be radical improvements to the tort system with a gradual extension of no-fault compensation schemes. While the whole question of no-fault schemes merits urgent attention, there is plainly no likelihood of wide-ranging change in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, many people must still face the need to confront the daunting obstacles that obstruct the path to justice. Even if there is any move towards a no-fault scheme in the short term, it will be of only a limited nature.

There is little prospect of a no-fault scheme that would cover more than medical or minor road traffic accidents and, therefore, the tort system will still have to be used for people who are injured or bereaved by other accidents.

First among the problems they face is that of access to justice. Ability to afford it is often beyond the means of ordinary citizens. Secondly, even if they are able to afford to pursue their case, there is the difficulty of finding a lawyer who is suitably qualified in personal injury and medical negligence.

*[Mr. Alfred Morris]*

Thirdly, there is the problem of delay in achieving a legal settlement, of which the Lord Chancellor said on 4 July 1988:

"Delay, especially in personal injury cases, emerges as perhaps the most serious problem of all."

Fourthly, there is the difficulty of proving one's case when the burden of proof so often seems unfairly loaded in favour of the defendant. Fifthly, if all these problems are overcome, the levels of compensation in this country are, as we have heard in the debate, deplorably low.

Again, the handling and financing of multi-claimant cases present particular problems. Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will remember the struggle that many of the victims of Opren had to obtain the money to sue the drug's manufacturers. Many had to rely on the generosity of a business man to ensure that their voice was heard. Fortunately, their claims were resolved although, as we have heard this morning, they were resolved in an atmosphere of bitter controversy.

One year on from Opren, there are now at least four other major cases involving thousands of people looming on the horizon: tranquilliser users, British nuclear test veterans, women who allege that they have been injured by the Copper 7 IUD device and haemophiliacs who have contracted the HIV virus. Many of these unfortunate people are caught in the trap of inability to sue because they lack the means to do so. They have no prospect even of stating their case in a court of law.

One of the women involved in the Copper 7 case recently spoke out about her own plight and that of the hundreds of other women like her. She has had to have four operations to remove her uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes and cervix. She will be on hormone therapy for the rest of her life. She believes her childlessness resulted from pelvic inflammatory disease caused by a Copper 7 device. Yet she has been told that she and her husband earn too much for her to qualify for legal aid. She says:

" . . . it seems that there is no justice for the likes of us."

Even if they sold their house they would not raise anywhere near enough to meet potential legal costs of £250,000.

I have also had put to me the case of a woman whose life was turned into misery after becoming dependent on tranquillisers after 22 years. She and her husband have life savings of £20,000 and they are not entitled to legal aid. Her husband says that they were devastated to learn of the sums that might be involved and could not even begin to consider taking legal action against a huge multinational drug company, whose resources are enormous compared with their own.

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay) *rose*——

**Mr. Lofthouse** *rose*——

**Mr. Morris:** I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse).

**Mr. Lofthouse:** My hon. Friend rightly referred to haemophiliacs. Is he aware that of the 5,000 haemophiliacs in this country, 1,200 are already HIV positive following the use of contaminated factor 8 by the Health Service? Is he also aware that 835 people with haemophilia have developed AIDs and that 87 have already died, leaving many widows and fatherless children?

**Mr. Morris:** I am deeply aware of those grievous statistics from my work among disabled people. My hon. Friend is eminently right to emphasise their significance in this debate. He and I are talking about very human problems which this House cannot ignore. They underline the importance of my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh's initiative in dealing in his Bill with the low levels of compensation for bereavement and injury and in putting some political heat into this issue.

All of us know from our postbags that the problem the Bill addresses is of deep concern to many people. The Bill has attracted widespread support from over 50 national legal, medical and voluntary organisations. These latter include the Haemophilia Society, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, MIND, the National League of the Blind and Disabled and the Spinal Injuries Association.

The Bill deals with the deep sense of injustice and insult which is felt by people who suffer the loss of a member of their family and then find that the value put on his or her life is £3,500 or even less.

I know of a mother and father who lost their son, who was in his mid-20s, in the Herald of Free Enterprise tragedy. They were told that, under the present law, only parents of children who are under 18 could claim. The father is now heavily involved in the Herald Families Association and speaks bitterly about the restrictiveness and narrowness of the law.

The further restriction on the ability of children to claim is even harder to understand. Admittedly a line must be drawn, but few will accept that it should be drawn as tightly as it is. It is also difficult to see any logic in the distinctions which have been drawn between those able to claim under Scottish law and those who can do so under English law. It really ought not to matter whether a fatal accident occurs in Gretna Green or in Berwick-on-Tweed. I believe that, in this delicate area, people should be allowed the choice to decide how they come to terms with a death caused by someone else's negligence. Some may wish to claim compensation; others may not. The choice should be theirs alone. That is why my hon. Friend has my support in seeking to extend the categories of people entitled to claim and to ensure that there is uniformity beween English and Scottish law.

I also support the Bill's intention to increase the amount available as bereavement damages. Some may argue that there is provision in the Fatal Accidents Act 1976 for the sum to be raised, but the fact is that as yet it has not been increased. On the contrary, it has been eroded by inflation and I am told that its real value has fallen by approximately 40 per cent. to £2,500 since it was introduced. Not only must further erosion be prevented; the amount must be increased in real terms above its present derisory level.

What do we say to the solicitor who complains that one of his most difficult tasks is telling bereaved parents that their child's life has been valued at £3,500? How do we comfort a mother whose daughter was killed by a reckless coach driver and who is told that her daughter's life was worth such a small sum of money? Surely any sum chosen will be seen as reflecting the significance that society attaches to a death caused by the negligence of another person. So my hon. Friend's Bill is an important, albeit limited, first step in the right direction.

My hon. Friend's Bill also tackles a problem that affects people injured in all forms of accident. They range from

those on the roads to those that occur in the workplace and to accidents caused by a defective product or a criminal incident. The Bill is a response to the challenge from Mr. Justice Hirst which my hon. Friend spoke of with some emphasis when he opened the debate. I make no apology for repeating Mr. Justice Hirst's challenge to the House. He said in reference to the Opren case that both the assessors and the court had been obliged to base their awards on the levels of damages established by legal precedent, which is binding in law, and he went on to say:

"There is nothing wrong with critics questioning or condemning these levels, so long as they recognise that only Parliament can change them . . . So long as the present levels remain in force, the Courts have no alternative but to apply them."

That was widely read as a challenge to Parliament to untie the hands of judges. The Bill seeks to deal with the challenge, and it may be our last chance for a long time to alleviate the distress that wholly inadequate compensation can cause.

The Bill would make cases of obviously inadequate compensation less likely, but there is an urgent problem that we must have clarified today when the Minister rises to speak. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh drew attention, rightly, to the effect that clause 18 of the Social Security Bill, now before the House, will have on reducing damages for pain and suffering. Is the Minister aware how seriously this will exacerbate the problems of people who have been injured? Will he now give a definitive response to the concern which has been expressed about clause 18 in its present form? In doing so, let him reflect on cases like that of the elderly woman, who was left deeply shocked and injured after the Brighton bomb explosion. That may have been the case briefly referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). She spent over a year recovering from the incident. Unable to work, she lost her business. Over four years later the injuries to her leg still cause her intense pain. She frequently falls over and is unable to walk without a stick. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which has to award compensation in line with awards in the civil courts, has offered her £5,000.

I have also had raised with me the case of a 40-year-old woman who was involved in a road accident. She was badly injured when a lorry knocked her down and ran over her left leg. She suffered very severe fractures and her leg was also extensively scarred. She fought a two-year battle to save the leg from amputation that involved six operations, one of which was 10 and a half hours long. Ten years later she is still troubled by soreness and discomfort. She walks with a limp. She cannot walk more than one and a half miles without having to rest for the remainder of the day. Her leg is grossly scarred. The judge in her case described its appearance as "grotesque", a fact of which she is all too painfully aware.

She has no sensation in the leg, so that she is not aware when the scars ulcerate. The leg injury has resulted in a degeneration in her spine and she suffers from a dull but persistent ache in her back. She has been forced to give up work. Her outdoor hobbies have been reduced, more particularly those which involve playing with her two children.

She was awarded £30,000: first, for the pain she suffered at the time of the accident and during the operations she underwent; secondly, for the pain she still has to endure both physically and through the knowledge that her life has been so badly devastated; and thirdly, for the loss she has suffered in being unable to do many of the things which she did before—the loss in her quality of life. Yet her compensation must also cover the extra costs of disabled living. For example, she now has to drive an automatic car which cost her £2,000 more than the standard version. She cannot obtain life insurance. She will have to bear the increased cost of buying a bungalow should she move from where she now lives. When those and the other hidden costs of disability are taken together and costed out over the rest of her life, how adequate is her compensation?

It just cannot be right that individuals can obtain libel damages of £500,000 or more for injury to reputation, but only a few thousand—or even a few hundred pounds—for a physical injury that may handicap them for life.

When I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh talk about the woman who received £7,500 for her terrifying ordeal during the birth of her second child, I was reminded of the libel award made to an actress who was referred to by a well-known television critic as being "an ugly middle-aged rock star whose bum is too big." The actress received an award of £10,000. I am not, of course, saying that damage to reputation is unimportant, but to most people the discrepancies between libel and physical injury awards are absurd.

Some people will argue that awards in defamation cases cannot be compared with those involving personal injury, because their aim, quite clearly, is to punish the defendants. While this may be true, no one has suggested that juries should be abolished in defamation actions, although there has been the proposal that a jury's power should be limited to stating whether the award should be nominal, middling or substantial. If a public input is to be retained in defamation cases, it should be allowed in what many people regard as the far more serious matter of personal injury.

The Compensation Advisory Board will provide that public input and will include people with in-depth knowledge of the effects of disability and injury. It will provide much needed guidance for the courts. All of us can recall cases where there has been a public outcry over a sentence imposed by a judge. Clearly, there is need for judges to pay attention to public feeling over sentences; but equally, there is need for some guidance over the level of awards to compensate for loss in an injured person's quality of life.

One way of involving public opinion would be to reintroduce juries for public injury cases. The Bill does not take that course. It would only lead to uncertainty in the system with differing awards up and down the country. The board proposed in the Bill provides an element of public guidance as to levels of compensation while avoiding the problem of uncertainty. It should do much to reduce the inconsistencies in awards and settlements, which are a major factor in the sense of injustice many people feel. Far from tying the hands of the courts, it will provide them with comprehensive and up-to-date guidance on levels of compensation. Perhaps more importantly, it will be a valuable tool for the thousands of small firms of solicitors up and down the country who are unable to specialise in personal injury work, in guiding them towards the kind of levels of compensation they should be achieving for their clients.

I turn now to the question of actuarial evidence, the introduction of which I support. In this regard, I must

*[Mr. Morris]*

remind the House that a working party chaired by Sir Michael Ogden QC, who is also chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and which included representatives of the English and Scottish Law Societies, the Faculty of Advocates and the Bar, as well as of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, unanimously recommended that the actuarial tables it produced be used in personal injury cases. I should add that the cost of those tables would be between £3 and £4 from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

For those unfamiliar with the present procedure for calculating a person's loss of income or the cost of medical care it may seem surprising that actuarial evidence is not widely used by the courts. One would have expected the courts to have taken such evidence into account without being told.

Actuaries spend their lives compiling detailed analyses of people's life expectancy. The insurance industry bases itself on their calculations and many people feel that judges should do the same.

There is another area in which Lord Pearson's report —much praised but, as I have said, almost totally ignored —criticised the present system. The report advocated the greater use of mathematics where it could be useful and called for the introduction of periodic payments instead of lump sum awards. Whether or not periodic payments were introduced, there would still be a need, however, to ensure that the existing system of lump sum payments was improved as proposed in the Bill.

Lord Scarman, whose work with Citcom is so widely applauded, has said:

"For more than ten years since a Royal Commission reported on the issue, we have known that we need to act on compensation for personal injuries . . . but we have not done so. I hope this campaign will effectively express the public's impatience."

My hon. Friend's Bill represents action and is the most important outcome so far of that campaign. This is a day of action—positive and humane action—and it is our duty now to show that we share the public's impatience by approving the Bill. I commend it most warmly to the House.

12.44 pm

**The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell):** I must begin in the sad but understandable absence of the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe), by congratulating him warmly first, on his success in the ballot and, secondly and with much more substance, on the clear and balanced way in which he presented the Bill to the House.

It is fair to say that the Bill raises a matter that is in no sense party political. It has cross-party interest and support, and thoughtful cross-party concern and criticism have been expressed on both sides of the House. There will be universal agreement in seeking to attain the objective, which the hon. Member for Leigh said was high in the aims of the Citizen Action Compensation Campaign, of fair and prompt compensation for sufferers of injuries when compensation is available at reasonable cost.

I congratulate the members of the Citizen Action Compensation Campaign on the energy and enthusiasm they have devoted to the worthwhile cause of trying to help people who have suffered misfortunes and the tragedy that is often associated with personal injury. The Government share and welcome the expressions of real concern by members of that campaign and their many supporters inside and outside the House.

The plight of those who have been injured and the distress of those bereaved in large-scale disasters has been highlighted in all our minds in recent times by the apparent amazing series of tragedies and unexpected events. There was the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise—where, happily, there was a prompt admission of liability and a prompt offer of settlement—and the fire on the Piper Alpha rig where that was also the case. There was the tragic disaster over Lockerbie, the M1 plane crash, the fire at King's Cross, the explosion at Abbeystead and the train crash at Clapham. What we hear, read and know from experience about such tragedies has brought the subject of the Bill very much to the forefront.

The main distinction between those events, tragic as they are, and the less-publicised, more everyday cases of the pedestrian or motorist injured in a road accident or the pensioner knocked down on the road, is one not of principle but of scale. No hon. Member would suggest that the pain suffered by an individual knocked down on a lonely road at night is any less real than the injuries and tragedy suffered by those who were present on the Herald of Free Enterprise or the relatives of those who died in that disaster; nor are their injuries any less disabling.

In no case—we appreciate this and it has been recognised by the hon. Member for Leigh—can money compensation undo the harm, but its compensatory effect is naturally of great significance to victims and their dependants when a question of dependency arises.

The Bill deals almost exclusively with the levels of damages payable in respect of personal injuries. However, in considering the subject, hon. Members have ranged more widely and sensibly in order to put the Bill in context. The motives behind the Bill can be applauded and its objective—fair and prompt compensation at reasonable costs—has the Government's support.

However, I have some words of reservation. The Government have not yet been convinced that the aids to assessment proposed in the Bill would necessarily provide any substantial improvement in the present system. The Government do not oppose the Second Reading. If it is the wish of the House, we are prepared for the Bill to be considered in detail in Committee. The hon. Gentleman has said that there are many sensible matters which could be discussed in Committee.

At this stage, it is right—if for no other reason than to focus the minds of Committee members—to mention the Government's reservations on the Bill, and the methods that it proposes to try to provide extra assistance and support for the assessment process.

**Mr. Orme:** I welcome what the Solicitor-General said about the Government's attitude and his support for a full examination of the Bill. But where do the Government stand in relation to clause 18 of the Social Security Bill, which relates directly to this problem?

**The Solicitor-General:** I understand the right hon. Gentleman's question and although, understandably, he was not in the Chamber at the time, he will know that his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) also asked that question. As

soon as I have made my general comments to the hon. Member for Leigh, I shall respond to that question, recognising that the Social Security Bill is in Committee.

The award of damages that may be made in a personal injuries action is intended to compensate the claimant for any losses that he has suffered as a result of his injuries. It is not a single sum plucked out of the air or a book, but is usually—particularly in the more complex cases such as those mentioned by several hon. Members—a sum made up of a number of different components or heads of damage, each of which will be carefully assessed by the judge according to the individual circumstances of each case. Only the judge, who knows all the circumstances, can make the proper assessment.

The heads of damage that will be recoverable are well established and fall into two broad categories. The losses suffered may be pecuniary and capable of valuation in monetary terms or they may be non-pecuniary, which are obviously incapable of precise valuation, but on which some value must be placed.

Obvious examples of pecuniary losses include the claimant's consequential loss of earnings or—if he works in private business—loss of the profits that he would have made had he not been injured. Such losses include medical and other expenses that he has incurred.

The most obvious non-pecuniary loss or solatium—as I have learnt from Scottish Members to call it—is pain, suffering and loss of amenity of life caused by injury. If the accident has resulted in death, the deceased's estate may recover the pecuniary losses suffered by the deceased, such as medical expenses incurred before his death, and his dependants are entitled, through the estate, to claim for their loss of dependency.

It is fair to say, and I think that it is acknowledged on both sides of the House, that judges have built up a wealth of experience and expertise in the assessment of damages under these heads, though there is an understandable tendency to say that these matters are plucked out of the air or out of the lawyer's bible, "Kemp and Kemp", and that there is no good rhyme or reason for the assessment of damages.

The speech of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) indicated in its construction—albeit not in the conclusions he wished to draw from it—the great detail that goes into trying to achieve a fair assessment of damages in an individual case. If one considers the tools of the trade such as "Kemp and Kemp"—of which the large book I have here is just one volume—in the context of the very detailed schedule attached to this Bill, which runs to more than 100 items on several pages, one realises the sophistication of the process on which one has embarked. The House will want to reflect on how far a board standing back to consider the matter in, inevitably, general terms can give much assistance to a court which is doing its work properly against a background of existing material.

**Mr. Barron:** I quoted from a newspaper to show the public perception of how the damages are awarded at present. Kemp and Kemp may be a good authority in legal circles, but the public feeling is that the present criteria should be laid to rest. Public dissatisfaction relates to wider issues than those reflected in legal judgments such as Kemp and Kemp.

**The Solicitor-General:** The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. I trust that this debate, and any further debates on the subject, will assist public perception and help people to realise that when cases are brought to court they are considered against a background of deep knowledge and understanding. I shall deal shortly with the process of bringing cases to court, which has much to do with promptness and, therefore, with fairness and effectiveness. The sufferer will thus be encouraged to come forward and make a claim.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Does the Solicitor-General agree that the Bill does nothing to inhibit the judge's ability to exercise his or her discretion? It merely seeks to add two elements—first, a level of compensation determined by the Board, and, secondly, actuarial evidence. Under the Bill, the judge and the sophisticated exercises that have been referred to would have to have regard for those factors. Far from their discretion being limited, it is, if anything, underlined by the Bill, apart from the requirement to have regard to two important elements which seem to demand substantial support in the House today.

**The Solicitor-General:** I understand what the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying, and I think that, as far as it goes, it is fair and accurate. I think, however, that we must wait and see how the Bill is fleshed out before we can establish to what extent it inhibits the courts. I hope to deal more fully with that aspect in the body of my speech.

**Mr. John Garrett** *rose*——

**The Solicitor-General:** Will the hon. Gentleman allow me a moment? I shall give him another opportunity to speak, and I certainly wish to address the points that he has made.

The task of assessing the correct damages in individual cases is far from easy, especially the assessment of elements that are to represent losses not intrinsically capable of expression in money terms. It would be unacceptable to all of us, and to the public at large, for a major disparity to exist between essentially similar injuries that have caused similar degrees of pain. On the other hand, the awards must reflect the severity of the injuries and the degree of actual suffering undergone by the individual.

The necessary balance is achieved through the application of a fund of judicial experience. Although I have not done so recently, I practised for a time in this area of law and had to acquaint myself with that fund of judicial experience. I think that the hon. and learned member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) would support me in saying that it is profound and detailed, and has been built up and subsequently reinforced by the supervisory safeguard of the appeal court.

The complaints heard most often from accident victims do not usually relate to the amount of damages. The usual ground for complaint is the length of time that it can take after the accident to recover the award and the resulting worry and uncertainty during the wait, as well as—here I pick up the sedentary, and accurate, comment of the hon. Member for Rother Valley—the disproportionate expense and complexity that may be involved.

**Mr. Dave Nellist** (Coventry, South-East): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that for many years compensation has been a major factor for families whose youngsters have been killed on YTS schemes? Until last April, under a scheme analogous to the industrial injuries scheme, industrial death benefit of £52 a week was paid to

*[Mr. Dave Nellist]*

a single parent and £78 a week to parents for the death of a youngster. The scheme finished last April and compensation is not available to parents whose youngsters are killed on the scheme. The abysmally low level of compensation has been a major factor for that group.

**The Solicitor-General:** I have heard the hon. Gentleman raise that point in the House before, and I am sure that he will continue to pursue it as he thinks appropriate. He will recognise that it is not central to the subjects that we are debating. The hon. Gentleman is dealing with benefits, not damages for pain, suffering and loss of amenity.

**Mr. John Garrett:** The Solicitor-General made heavy weather of the creation of the board, which will be only an advisory board. I know why he did so—the Prime Minister is wholly opposed to the creation of quangos. If my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) alters the Bill and calls the board an agency, the Prime Minister will be in favour of it. She is in favour of breaking up Government Departments so that they consist of agencies. I guarantee that my hon. Friend will receive the Prime Minister's acceptance of a citizens' compensation agency.

So far, the Solicitor-General has referred to people as male.

**The Solicitor-General:** There were more profound aspects to the hon. Gentleman's speech. Males and females suffer injury, and if I said only "male" or "female" rather than "people" I stand rebuked.

I was dealing with how one brings a case before the courts. The report of the civil justice review, which was published in June 1988, is highly pertinent. Its implementation is being carefully considered by the Lord Chancellor. It made a number of recommendations for the reform of litigation in general and personal injuries litigation in particular. The overall aim of the reform, as set out in the terms of reference assigned to the review body by Lord Chancellor Hailsham, is

"to improve the machinery of civil justice in England and Wales by means of reforms in jurisdiction, procedure and court administration and in particular to reduce delay, cost and complexity."

I do not wish to take an unreasonably long time detailing the reforms proposed by the review from which personal injuries litigants can hope to benefit. The form and order of their implementation is yet to be determined. Nevertheless, it is worth outlining—it is highly pertinent to the Bill's intentions, albeit not to the form in which it is put in the Bill—one or two of the proposals that are likely to interest personal injuries litigants.

The review recommended that a number of steps should be taken to ensure that evidence is prepared and exchanged at as early a stage in the litigation as possible. These steps are to include arrangements for prompt release of accident reports by the police and medical reports by hospitals. Changes to the rules of court are recommended, as a result of which medical reports would be served as soon as possible after the issue of a writ, with the possibility of applying to the court for an order for their production within a specified period. The reports are to be supported by up-to-date statements of special damages and loss of future earnings estimates. The objectives of the review's proposals are to encourage greater openness between the parties at an earlier stage, with the aim of encouraging settlements wherever possible and ensuring that each side comes to trial, should trial prove necessary, properly prepared to meet the legal and factual issues which the other side will raise.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): My hon. and learned Friend talked about delay. Is he aware of the long delays that can occur if a child is damaged at birth and the parents do not qualify for legal aid? The parents may be told that they have to wait 16 years until the child has reached an age when it qualifies for legal aid and can bring a case. Is that not absurd?

**The Solicitor-General:** Yes. My hon. Friend makes it sound absolutely absurd. However, this focuses on the problem of legal aid which always arises and with which I shall deal later—the margin between the level at which legal aid is available and the level of wealth necessary to pursue a particularly difficult case. I recognise my hon. Friend's point, but I am not sure that the matter under discussion really relates to waiting 16 years for a child to get legal aid for himself or herself.

Another principal aim of the review's recommendations which may be of interest is the simplification of court procedures to render litigation more accessible to the general public. The review therefore recommended the substitution of one method of commencing proceedings for the various methods currently in use—only one line of entry to the courts, without having to choose between a complex variety. The review also recommended increased use of automatic directions by the court, the adoption, where appropriate, of an increasingly interventionist role by the court, the standardisation and modernisation of court forms and the increased availability of advice from advice agencies and lay persons, among a number of other similarly aimed innovations.

The last block of recommendations that I shall mention were aimed at handling cases at the appropriate level in the court system, remedying the present system whereby they are too often handled at too high a level, at unnecessary cost to the parties and causing unneccessary delays in the handling of other business. The jurisdictional reforms are too complicated to outline here in any detail, but it is clear that much thought has been given in the review to reducing court delays and to providing the right sort of forum for each case. It is interesting to those who have looked into the civil justice review—the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) had clearly been reading it—that one of the review's proposals was that cases involving up to £25,000 should be capable of being dealt with in the county courts. The figures for 1986 and 1987 suggest that about two thirds of all personal injury cases would be capable of being comprehended in the county courts. There would be easy cross-access to the High Court if the circumstances of the case made it appear more valuable. People would not, therefore, be stuck in too low a court in the probably unlikely event of it being necessary to move up.

I hope that my brief outline of some principal features of the review show that litigants in general—although it is for my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor to make an announcement in due course—can hope for significant advances in the speed and accessibility of justice in the near future.

I should like to come to the heart of the Bill—the Compensation Advisory Board. Clause 1 would set up a fairly large new body, to be publicly funded, for the

purpose of recommending the levels of compensation payable in respect of the pain and suffering and loss of quality of life—solatium in Scotland—attributable to particular classes of injury. The list in the schedule runs to nearly four pages, and is obviously not exhaustive even as regards type of injury, as is recognised in clause 2(1)(b), which allows the Board to make recommendations in respect of other classes of injury. There is also provision in clause 2(1)(c) for recommendations to be made for plaintiffs of different ages, or in different categories. Those recommendations, reviews of them and adjustments based on increases in the retail prices index would be published.

Clause 3 would place the court under a duty to have regard to the published compensation levels. Clauses 2 and 3 will rightly focus the attention of the House—and the attention of the Committee, if the Bill proceeds—on some of the pertinent points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), who gave an example about eye injuries of a continuing nature. The Bill proposes that the board should cover a great range of suffering and, therefore, of compensation. It would be difficult for the board, with the best will in the world, to give close guidance on all of them.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** As I have described the board, it would represent a balance and a mixture of interests. It would be right to include in that mixture expert advice from people close to the scene who have considerable experience of personal injury problems and who know how the injured have suffered. That is an imperative in arriving at what we consider to be the just financial awards. The Solicitor-General talks about a large board, but I remind him that the board is not a quango that will go in perpetuity. It will run for the first year on recommendations and in the second year it will tie up the loose ends.

Let us consider the cost of what the Solicitor-General said was a large board. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in its last accounting year cost just short of £5·5 million. The fees to board members alone amounted to £916,000, apart from the costs of the administrative staff. I must emphasise that my board, if set up, would not cost even 15 or 20 per cent. of the cost of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

**The Solicitor-General:** That is a helpful intervention. My comments are intended to focus attention on the real problems on which the board—however expensively or economically set up—will have to focus. The House will want to be satisfied that the board would be able to provide the judiciary with advice that would advance the cause of the litigant. That is why I picked up the example of visual impairment in both eyes or mental and behavioural disorders, which are broad concepts.

The House will be conscious of the independence of the judiciary, which is one of our country's constitutional principles which has always been jealously guarded. There is common ground that it must continue to be protected, for that protection is vital in upholding high standards in the administration of justice. We must be careful not to proceed in a way that might erode that principle.

Apart from the issues of principle raised, the establishing of a new, non-departmental public body is not a measure to be lightly undertaken, as the hon. Gentleman will recognise. It should certainly not be undertaken without strong evidence of need. The many variables that one sees in the four-page schedule, on which the board's recommendations would be based, are among the even more numerous variables that the judges already take into account in assessing damages under these heads.

No two cases raise identical sets of factors, and the judge would always have to consider the individual circumstances of each case, however detailed the breakdown of the recommendations might be. The more detailed the recommendations were, the more difficult they would be for the board to achieve and, in a sense, the more of a straitjacket they might be to the courts.

We have yet to be convinced—although we have minds that are capable of being convinced—that an advisory board would serve a useful purpose and that its recommendations would affect the amounts awarded in individual cases or lead to a saving in time or expense. We should focus our attention on that question because the lawyers among us can envisage that the procedures proposed might in some cases even be used as delaying tactics. I have in mind clause 4, under which parties would be able to apply to have an injury, or particular class of injury, which has not been the subject of a recommendation, referred for a recommendation. It is possible that the reluctant defendant on the look-out for delay might not find it too difficult to present special features of an injury that distinguished it from those already subject to recommendations and thus use the board, in some degree at least, as a means of putting off judgment day or perhaps to make more complex rather than more simple the process of discussion and consideration by the courts.

It would be a pity—unless we are satisfied that what we are doing is correct—to introduce another vehicle for delay-minded defendants in the face of our current endeavours to find ways of reducing the possibility of unnecessary delay.

I know that the hon. Member for Leigh will understand if I answer some of the points raised by others who have spoken in the debate. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe asked about the recovery of social security benefits from tort damage awards. As the House knows, the matter is being discussed in Committee and hon. Members will not expect me to go into all the detailed arguments that will properly be raised there. The proposal arises first from the 1981 White Paper. Then, in a report of August 1986, the National Audit Office proposed that social security benefits should be recovered by the then Department of Health and Social Security from awards of tort damages.

The National Audit Office criticised the existing system of offsetting a tortfeasor's—a wrongdoer's—liability to pay damages to an injured person by deducting from an award a proportion of the social security benefit that the injured person has received. The National Audit Office said that the defendant should be required to pay to the DHSS the amount deducted from the awards. The position is that when a defendant or his insurer pays compensation for personal injury—whether pursuant to a judgment or an out-of-court settlement—the payer must account to the Department of Social Security for the amount of benefit, as certified by the Department, already received by the plaintiff. This will not apply to small compensation payments of less than £5,000, to which existing rules will apply, or for any period of benefits exceeding five years. I hope that that has clarified the subject of the clause that is being discussed in Committee.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) asked about the Dalkon Shield. In the years following the

*[The Solicitor-General]*

voluntary withdrawal of the Dalkon Shield from the United Kingdom market, the manufacturers, Messrs. A. H. Robins, have written to doctors on a number of occasions and placed advertisements in the women's press. That information given appeared in an answer given to the House by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. The decision about funding for local advertising campaigns—for which the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, is pressing—is a matter for individual health authorities, and no doubt the hon. Gentleman will take the matter up with them.

Hon. Members have referred to Opren and the comments of Mr. Justice Hirst. As the House will recall, there were claims against the manufacturers Messrs Eli Lilly and others by about 1,400 or 1,500 plaintiffs who were said to be affected by Opren. The important point about that is that there was no admission of liability by the company, and as a result one was not dealing with a sum of money that affected total compensation. Overlooking that point can lead to a rather misleading impression in the context of the Bill.

The company had offered a global sum of about £7 million, including £2·5 million for costs, and the plaintiffs' solicitors had set up an informal apportionment scheme to distribute the settlement among the 1,400 applicants who considered that they had been affected by Opren. Apparently, most of the plaintiffs accepted the award under the scheme, but about 30 of them challenged the amount of their awards on a summons to Mr. Justice Hirst and the judge remarked that the assessments had been made in accordance with awards by the courts in such cases. I understand that he set up his own arbitration scheme for the 30 objectors and that not all of them have been disposed of.

As I have said, there was no admission of liability in that case and the global figure of £7 million recognised some discount, although we do not know how much, for the hazards of litigation and the acceleration of payment. In the context of the debate, to some extent the case highlights the fact that it is rather difficult to focus one's mind on individual figures.

The next matter that I shall deal with was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), in some detail by the hon. Member for Norwich, South by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), and by some other Members who talked about no-fault schemes. Those schemes have been debated in the House on other occasions and I do not want to go too far into the matter, except to say that it seems to have taken up about one third of the debate. No-fault schemes always seem extremely attractive in prospect until one looks into them in detail. That is not to say that they should not be further looked at in detail, and hon. Members will want to look closely at them.

The principal attraction of no-fault schemes is that they are seen as providing standard compensation more promptly and at lower cost than fault-based systems. They have been shown to have—certainly in Sweden and New Zealand—rather serious disadvantages, not least that they can prove more instead of less expensive to administer. They also tend to provide inadequate levels of compensation and sometimes cause undesirable relaxation in the duty of care—a problem has arisen in New Zealand about which people there have publicly expressed disquiet.

While fault may no longer be the criterion by which claims must qualify, there remain some important distinctions that lead to a great sense of unfairness between sufferers who are entitled under the schemes and those whose sufferings may be no less painful but who are not entitled under the schemes. There are new distinctions between, for instance, those suffering as a result of medical accident and those who are congenitally ill or ill because of some infection, or those suffering from the ill effects of treatment which has not fully succeeded but where there is no question of negligence.

There can still be long and detailed arguments in court or at an appropriate tribunal that are very agonising to the sufferer and that will lead to his being denied compensation. As I recall, when this was last raised in an Adjournment debate which I answered, the end question was, "Do we compensate everybody for everything?" The answer that is usually given is that we try to do that by way of a comprehensive social security scheme, which, together with earlier ideas of workmen's compensation, are aspects of the no-fault system.

**Mr. Lofthouse:** Does the Solicitor-General agree that we do not always give compensation even when there is evidence of injuries, for example, to coal miners who are suffering from emphysema? Other countries give compensation, but we ignore such people even when the illness is caused by the industry in which they work.

**The Solicitor-General:** I must defer to the hon. Gentleman whose knowledge of the coalmining industry is much greater than mine although my father-in-law had a great deal to do with emphysema and the compensations to be given because of it——

**Mr. Lofthouse:** Did he get any such money?

**The Solicitor-General:** No, he did not—he just worked as a doctor. I cannot give a detailed answer to the hon. Gentleman's question and although I could talk much more about no-fault compensation schemes, I do not want to take too long.

I turn now to the issue of actuarial evidence. Clause 5 is expressed to entitle parties to personal injuries litigation to adduce and rely on actuarial evidence for the purpose of establishing the capital value of any future pecuniary loss. The clause also requires the court to have regard to that evidence. Both limbs of this clause are unnecessary, for reasons which I shall explain.

In personal injury actions, it is often necessary to assess loss of earning capacity and to arrive at a sum which a plaintiff has been prevented by the injury from earning in the future. Essentially, the same assessment is needed where the injury has resulted in death and the claim is for loss of dependency. The established method of calculating that lump sum is to take the "multiplicand"—the plaintiff's present annual earnings—less the amount, if any, that he can still earn, and multiply it by the "multiplier". The multiplier represents the number of years during which the loss of earning capacity will last. The total is then subject to a discount to reflect the immediacy of a lump sum payment in place of the annual or other staged receipt of earnings which the plaintiff would otherwise have expected. The concept of the

multiplier and the way in which it is to be estimated is a matter of considerable sophistication in the jurisprudence of the court.

Expert actuarial evidence, which is what we are discussing, including actuarial tables, can be of some assistance in arriving at the right multiplier. They are often used as a tool by the courts, but their usefulness should not be overstated. Actuarial tables appear in Kemp and Kemp, which has been bandied about so much this morning, and can provide indications of probabilities based on a limited number of contingencies, such as average life expectancies. However, the facts that the courts have to deal with in many individual cases involve so many contingencies in the life of the individual whose case is being considered that actuarial evidence, which is general and overall, can make only a relatively small contribution to the overall picture.

On a wider scale, a whole variety of policies may affect the correctness of the multiplier. On a more domestic scale, economic contingencies such as loss of employment may need to be taken into account. This was discussed in great detail between the Institute of Actuaries and my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor. It is accepted by the actuarial profession that these matters are not capable of scientific evaluation, that there is no sound statistical basis for them and that they cannot, therefore, fall within the scope of an actuary's or accountant's expertise.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** The Solicitor-General is making —probably rightly—a case for the difficulties of arriving at value judgments. Does he accept that while one does not begrudge the awards to those who receive large sums in compensation, the attitude that the Government take is negatively neutral, if not hostile, and that that contrasts with the way in which they have suddenly produced £1 million for the Zeebrugge disaster fund, £1 million for the Piper Alpha disaster fund, £250,000 for the Clapham disaster fund and £150,000 for the Lockerbie disaster fund? I assume that the Government make those judgments purely on the ground of emotion, so why cannot they show some emotion for the many hundreds of widows who have received a mere pittance after years of struggling through the courts?

**The Solicitor-General:** I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said to see to what extent it is focused on the heart of the Bill and, although I understand the sincerity of his observation, his point does not bear directly on the Bill. In so far as I am directing my remarks, they are a careful analysis of the Bill to try to assess whether the setting up of a new body, which is the primary function of the Bill, will assist the common cause of prompt and fair conclusions to litigation, which is what we are dealing in.

I am not aware of any rule that prevents actuarial evidence from being called. The present position is that the judges may have regard to actuarial evidence, and indeed they do. It is one of the tools of the trade. They will have regard to properly adduced evidence when to do so is of assistance to them. It would be wrong to insist that they should have regard to any particular piece of evidence, actuarial or otherwise, whether or not it was relevant or helpful in the case, simply on the basis that a party had adduced it and sought to rely on it. The judges will understand when it is helpful and when it is unhelpful, and their objective is to do justice.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** We have never claimed and neither do we in the Bill that actuarial evidence is the answer to everything. What we have said is that Pearson and the recommendations of the Law Commission said that a set of actuarial tables had been specifically drawn up for use in personal injury litigation. That is the heart of the Bill. Pearson said that the tables were drawn up by a committee that included every conceivable actuarial and legal professional body. We cannot get any closer to some rational assessment of the terms under which awards should be made and how we should consider the criteria for making them. It must be understood that actuarial evidence is not the complete answer. We believe that under the chairmanship of Sir Michael Ogden, who investigated this formidably, that is the nearest and best that we can use in the present circumstances.

**The Solicitor-General:** I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I commend again the balanced way in which he argues for the Bill. We must decide whether it is necessary to have an Act on the statute book to achieve what can and does already happen. That is the issue on which we must focus our minds.

Clause 6 would modify the statutory provisions dealing with bereavement damages. There has been a good deal of misunderstanding about the nature of a bereavement damages award. The suggestion which is often made is that when there has been a fatal accident the maximum damages award that can be made, regardless of any of the circumstances, is limited to £3,500. That is in no sense the case. It is mistaken to imply that anybody puts that value on a life or that that is the maximum recoverable in a claim. That is not the case and never has been. Bereavement damages is a head of damages standing independently of other heads of damages which may be recoverable after a fatal accident. In particular, it should not be confused with a loss of dependency claim which a bereaved dependant may have following the death of a family breadwinner. Bereavement damages was a new head of damages introduced by the Administration of Justice Act 1982 at the fixed level of £3,500, which is criticised.

I appreciate and have listened carefully to that criticism. Everybody recognises that that sum is not intended to represent the value of anything tangible, let alone the value of the life which has been lost. It is offered as some attempt to give solace to close relatives who are left grieving.

The level was fixed at a small conventional sum for all cases—when I began practice, it used to be a much smaller sum, about £450—following the recommendation of the Law Commission, so that there need not be a judicial inquiry into the consequences of bereavement. That would be painful to the families. The Lord Chancellor has power under what is now section 1A(5) of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976, as amended, to vary the sum by order made by statutory instrument subject to annulment. Several hon. Members have made that point. It is not, therefore, necessary to use primary legislation to vary the amount of the award.

**Mr. Cunliffe:** It is now 13 years since that amount was fixed. Does the Solicitor-General not think that section 1A(5) should be rewritten to include a figure which we consider fitting when taking account of inflation and increasing costs during that period?

**The Solicitor-General:** The hon. Gentleman makes a case which I know will be listened to carefully. I do not think I can say more about it than that.

Under the present law, the relations entitled to receive this head of damages are the deceased's wife or husband, and—where he or she was a minor who had never married—the parents. Clause 6 of the Bill would extend the claim to the deceased's parents and children, and any other person who, in the opinion of the court, by virtue of his special relationship with the deceased, had suffered bereavement loss. That is qualified by clause 6(3) to mean relationships which were, in all the circumstances, substantially the same as relationships with spouse, parents and children.

The class of relations entitled under the present Act to claim this head of damages was defined according to the recommendation made by the Law Commission, whose recommendations were made following wide consultation and consideration of other systems of law which allowed similar awards to different classes of relations. It concluded that husband and wife should be treated in the same way as parent and child, but did not feel justified in recommending any further extension.

The Government are demonstrating their real concern in the whole area by introducing carefully considered reforms directed to produce substantial improvements in the position of claimants. Our aim is to achieve worthwhile reform by practical steps which are realistically obtainable and which can be carried forward and implemented effectively.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** Several anxieties have been put to the Solicitor-General about clause 18 of the Social Security Bill. That Bill, if unamended, will clearly have a seriously adverse effect on what this Bill is seeking to achieve. Will the Solicitor-General urgently inform the Secretary of State for Social Security of those many anxieties?

**The Solicitor-General:** Most certainly. I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend is made aware of what has been said in this debate.

The Government are determined to ensure that legal aid is provided efficiently and effectively and, as part of the Legal Aid Act 1988——

**Mr. John Garrett:** Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**The Solicitor-General:** I shall not give way, because I have given way very often to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Garrett:** Once.

**The Solicitor-General:** Twice, I hope.

**Mr. Garrett:** I made a short speech.

**The Solicitor-General:** The hon. Gentleman always finds his speeches very short.

The Lord Chancellor has appointed a Legal Aid Board whose task is to improve the administration of legal aid and to consider the arrangements for the delivery of legal services under the Act. The board will formally take up its role on 1 April this year.

The Government are also addressing themselves to other issues concerning the funding of claims. The House will have in mind the Green Paper on contingency fees that was published in January, in which the Government have invited views on whether some of the existing restrictions on contingency fees might be removed, thus allowing the introduction in England and Wales of speculative actions based on, or perhaps going beyond, the Scottish model. Also, in accordance with the suggestion made by the civil justice review body, the Government are exploring the case for extending the availability of representative or class action. That is of great importance for such cases as Opren. I have already mentioned that a large number of recommendations resulting from that review are designed to help all litigants, with a special commitment to personal injury claimants.

The Lord Chancellor hopes to consider the feasibility of a no-fault scheme that could be set up to cover claims—I believe that that is important because small claims also cause much suffering—arising from less serious road accidents. The Lord Chancellor hopes to make an announcement concerning the implementation of the civil justice review recommendations in the near future.

The Government's belief is that the primary need is to enable the courts to work smoothly and efficiently, rather than risk any impediment to their progress by imposing a new superstructure to tell them how to do any specific part of their business. The courts should not be constrained as to the use which they should make of the evidence adduced before them. The civil justice review has recommended the loosening up of the evidence rules in civil cases, and that process would in fact be partly undone by the proposals of the Bill. One of the main purposes of setting up the civil justice review was to speed up civil justice cases and we believe that that purpose might run a real risk of being impeded by the creation of the new superstructure examining compensation levels.

It is evident from our assessment of the proposals put forward in the Bill that the provisions relating to bereavement damages are partly covered already by the existing powers given by the legislation that introduced bereavement damages. Neither the remaining provisions on bereavement damages nor the provisions relating to actuarial damages would, by themselves, justify specific statutory measures.

The leading proposal is, of course, the setting up of the Compensation Advisory Board which would be intended to affect all personal injury cases. The Government are listening and the hon. Gentleman has put his case clearly, but we remain to be persuaded that the board, imposed as a superstructure on the court system, would amount to a significant improvement on the present system or a significant step forward towards the greater aim—it is a common aim—of improving the position of those who have the misfortune to be involved in accidents and to suffer injury.

1.40 pm

**Ms. Joan Walley** (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I shall be brief as we have already had a lengthy debate, to which I have listened carefully, and I know that many of my hon. Friends want to participate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) who introduced the Bill. I hope that the Solicitor-General's speech means that the Bill will command the support of the Government if, as I hope, it goes into Committee.

When we are dealing with personal injury cases we should not ignore the huge tragedies with which families must live. It is bad enough that people must cope with the

personal hardship and tragedy caused as the result of injuries and accidents, but they must also fight hard to receive compensation at the same time. People's ability to fight so hard in such dreadful circumstances always amazes me. I hope that the Bill commands the support of both sides of the House.

I have two specific comments, one of which relates to legal aid. We have heard a lot about that today and how it is able to support those families who need to make claims. From my constituency work experience, however, I know that legal aid is not always easily available. In one case with which I have dealt it has taken three years to ensure that my constituent has access to legal aid to pursue a specific claim for compensation. I urge the Government to consider the declining availability of legal aid for such claims and to act in the best possible way.

I know that the Bill is a marker and the first stage in the process. I do not think that anyone believes that it will solve all the problems relating to compensation, although I know that many of my colleagues would like it to do that. I realise that if the Bill goes into Committee our discussion will be restricted to it, rather than to the wider issues. It is important to consider, however, people's ability to make claims for compensation. There are many families, including some in my constituency, who want to make claims for compensation but who will be unable to benefit from the Bill should it become law because it is so difficult to prove negligence. That difficulty must be addressed.

I am particularly perturbed about a constituency case involving a woman who was badly injured in a serious gas explosion. Because of the delaying tactics used by British Gas, it was almost impossible even to get the matter to court. I have campaigned for three years to get something done about that case and I would dearly have loved to come to the House claiming that my constituent would benefit from the Bill, which I hope will become law in the not-too-distant future. Sadly and tragically, that lady has now died.

I know that there are many similar cases throughout the country in which, because of delaying tactics, people do not obtain the compensation that they are seeking. Such matters are connected to the Bill and I hope that in future legislation the Government will give serious consideration to speeding up the way in which we deal with compensation claims. I hope that they will look at ways of making it clear to companies—British Gas or whoever—that we are not prepared to accept years of delaying tactics to prevent compensation cases from going to the courts.

1.46 pm

**Miss Ann Widdecombe** (Maidstone): I am grateful to have an opportunity to speak in this debate since it is now obvious that I shall not have an opportunity to speak in another debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on the way in which he introduced the Bill. I wish to clarify certain matters which will affect the support given to the Bill by many people and I hope that the hon. Member for Leigh will intervene during my speech.

I am particularly disturbed by the inadequate provision under our existing law for women who suffer after unwanted abortions to which they consented as a result of an incorrect diagnosis of handicap.

There is a case before the courts now involving a woman who had to wait six years before being able to bring an action in respect of an abortion she did not want. She agreed to the abortion because she was told that her unborn child was severely handicapped. There is also the case, very much in the public eye, of the Carlisle baby. That mother wanted her child but was also told that it would be severely handicapped. The handicap turned out to be an inherited skin disease that would not have been life threatening and nor would it have impaired greatly the quality of life. She was told, in the alleged parlance of the consultant involved, that her child would be a monster. Therefore, she reluctantly consented to an abortion.

The abortion was carried out at 21 weeks gestation and the child was born alive.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Did the hon. Lady say that both cases are before the courts now?

**Miss Widdecombe:** No. I said that in the first case the woman had only just managed to obtain a decision after six years and that the second case was in the public eye. I understand that the mother is still considering action but it is not yet before the courts. I understand what the hon. Gentleman would have said.

The Carlisle baby lived for three hours during which time the NHS personnel did not know what to do and there was no ventilation equipment available. Also, the child did not have the handicap for which it was aborted.

That mother is having substantial difficulties. Is there anything in the Bill that will make it easier and swifter for mothers in such circumstances—those I have mentioned will not be the only cases—to obtain compensation, even though, in the words of one of my hon. Friends, there is no compensation for the loss of a child and even £10,000 million would be too little? I can find nothing in its provisions—unless the mother suffers from a severe nervous disorder—but if the Bill could be extended to cover such cases it would generate a tremendous amount of support and would be welcome. Will the hon. Member for Leigh clarify that point?

**Mr. Cunliffe:** I shall make two points to the hon. Lady. First, the cardinal principle of my Bill is not to deal with fault or liability, which is the job of the courts, but to raise the level of compensation. I have extreme sympathy with the two cases that the hon. Lady quoted, but it is not for me to judge where responsibility lies. If possible, I should like my Bill to embrace all types of personal injuries. If, after judgment has been made and liability accepted, the cases mentioned by the hon. Lady appear to fall within the framework of the Bill, I would relish the idea of supporting her aims.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying that.

Another large group of women who might benefit from compensation for an injury which is not generally recognised and receives too little attention from the medical profession are those who suffer from what is now recognised as post-abortion syndrome. This affects women who have undergone abortions and received too little counselling.

Often—particularly where young girls are involved—pressure is imposed. Sometimes parents want their daughters to take a particular course of action. Often the

*[Miss Widdecombe]*

options are not fully set out and—as in the two cases that I described—women are panicked into having abortions by being told that their babies will be grossly handicapped.

The physical and psychological effects of post-abortion syndrome are considerable. However, at present they are too little recognised by the medical profession, and it is difficult for such women to come before the courts and ask for compensation.

Those are important considerations that I would have raised later had I been given the opportunity. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Leigh would address them in more detail. I believe that more explicit provision could be made. If so, it would be very welcome. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for introducing the Bill.

1.53 pm

**Mr. Frank Doran** (Aberdeen, South): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on introducing the Bill. As someone who has been heavily involved professionally in the pursuit of damages and accident claims for personal injuries, I recognise that the Bill is a modest measure. However, it reflects the difficulties we face when the Government are not prepared to consider no-fault compensation—at least, I thought that was the case until I heard the Solicitor-General's comments. I was pleased to hear that the Lord Chancellor is considering such a scheme, albeit a limited one.

While the Solicitor-General's comments are fresh in my mind—although he is no longer present—let me make a couple of comments about what he said which are important and reflect the Government's attitude to the Bill. He rightly spelt out the principle that is applied when a court considers damages. He said that the court had to consider different compensation and heads of damages depending on the particular circumstances of each case. He suggested that the Bill attacked that principle in some way. I find it difficult to see how that can be read into a Bill that tries to assist the court in determining the levels of compensation which should apply. The Bill in no way takes away from the court's position.

The Solicitor-General waved about a large tome, Kemp and Kemp, and often referred to it. As a Scottish solicitor, I frequently—though perhaps not as frequently as the Solicitor-General—used that tome when assessing the worth of particular claims.

The Solicitor-General seemed to be contrasting the weight of Kemp and Kemp with the fairly lightweight provisions—as he seemed to consider them—in the schedule specifying the injuries covered by the board's deliberation. I do not accept that criticism. I come from a legal system based on principle rather than precedent. That English common law is based mainly on precedent is clear from Kemp and Kemp, which is a catalogue of court decisions on the level of damages in different kinds of case. The weight of the volume is to do less with principle than with precendent, and I welcome the way in which the Bill attempts to establish the principles on which compensation will be determined, rather than employing the present convoluted, complicated but nevertheless haphazard method, which allows judges to bring their personal views and prejudices to bear.

I had intended to say more about no-fault compensation, but I think that every hon. Member who has spoken, except for the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), has mentioned it already. The Solicitor-General suggested that there could be no move away from the complexity, difficulty and stress involved in making claims. I consider the most important principle in no-fault liability to be the shift away from the establishment of fault to the establishment of injury. That is the issue that causes the most difficulty and legal argument. Questions such as whether there was negligence and whether there was a duty of care are what consume the time of lawyers and courts. Once the issue of fault has been dealt with, it is not too difficult to deal with compensation. In the vast majority of cases it is negotiated without too many problems.

I have a considerable interest in the North sea. At present 30,000 men are working in one of the most dangerous environments not only in Britain, but in the world, and at times that number has been much greater. I have been closely involved with the Piper Alpha disaster, to which a number of hon. Members have referred. Out of the 167 men who died in that tragedy about 38 were employed by Occidental, the platform operators.

There is a class structure in the North sea. The men employed by the operators—few women work in the North sea—have premium terms and conditions of employment. Their salaries and wages are far higher than those of men employed by contractors; their terms and conditions, holidays, facilities and fringe benefits are far superior. The 38 men employed by Occidental who died in the Piper Alpha tragedy had one significant fringe benefit —an insurance scheme, paid for by the employers, which provided a death-in-service benefit without any question of the establishment of blame. The simple fact of a man's dying in service meant that his relatives were entitled to immediate compensation, in this case £100,000.

The 130 or so other men had no such scheme, being employed by a multiplicity of contractors. That opens up a major issue of principle. All of the relatives of those poor, unfortunate men are now involved in pursuing legal claims. They have been fortunate in that Occidental has been desperate to settle the claims as quickly as possible: eight months after the tragedy I am delighted to learn that the majority of claims have been agreed, and only the details of the negotiations need to be concluded. In the majority of claims for personal injury or death, long, detailed, protracted and stressful legal arguments take place. I ask the Government to consider insurance and employment. The anomalies in the conditions that existed on Piper Alpha exist on every platform in the North sea, and that can be extended to all employment.

Successive Governments have insisted that employers, regardless of the nature of circumstances of employment, provide compulsory liability insurance for their employees. It is a criminal offence for an employer not to provide that insurance or not to publicise or publicly display a certificate of insurance. It is a short step to require employers to provide compulsory insurance, which would offer a death-in-service benefit and remove from the courts and legal system the bulk of cases that require the payment of damages for death or injury. There would be a number of spin-off benefits. I would hope that, under pressure from insurance companies, employers would

improve their practices. In addition to other benefits, pressure on the legal aid and court systems would be reduced.

I recommend that step reluctantly, because my main interest is a no-fault compensation scheme that would allow payment of benefit without the stress of legal action and proof of fault. Within the current structure, the proposal for compulsory death-in-service benefit is fairly modest and would lead to a vast improvement. I base that on my experience of the Piper Alpha disaster, but the same arguments would apply to all the recent disasters.

Many hon. Members have spoken about the actuarial clause. The Solicitor-General tried to belittle the Bill's proposals. He suggested that the courts frequently had recourse to actuarial evidence, which they do, but they rely on precedent. Scottish courts use the multiplier system, and the maximum considered is about 15 years. In England and Wales it is slightly higher—18 or 19 years. In the majority of cases, the multiplier bears no relation to reality. I agree with the Solicitor-General that the multiplier is not an exact science and that there are imperfections, but it is impossible to be precise, because many imponderables must be considered. Scientific evidence or the best estimate of lifespan must be considered. Actuarial evidence is the most scientific and best estimate available.

I shall give some examples of how courts have considered the multiplier. A ship's nightwatchman was injured in an accident in May 1982 that rendered him permanently unfit for employment. At the time of the accident he was aged 53, but was 58 at the time of proof, which emphasises the delay before the case reached court. His employer asked for a multiplier of six and a half years to take him up to retirement. The defence asked for a multiplier of two years. The court argued and applied a multiplier of three years. At the time of the accident, he was 12 years below proper retirement age, yet the multiplier applied was three years.

In another Scottish example, the 32-year-old father of a six-year-old and a two-year-old was killed in an accident in December 1978. The mother was not married to him. The court decided that the appropriate multiplier would be 13 years from the date of death. By the time the multiplier expired, the children would have been 19 and 15, one of them still undergoing compulsory education and requiring support. I am conscious of the late hour so shall not go into a mass of similar cases.

I support clause 5 because it brings a greater principle to the consideration of the courts, rather than what can be disparagingly called the hidebound, precedent-based system of common law, which unfortunately has crept north of the border. It is important that we look at the practicalities of the system and what it means for a person who needs compensation. The courts operate on the principle that they should attempt to assess monetary compensation at a level that would put the injured person as near as possible to the position he would have been in had the accident not occurred. The multiplier's application is not based on scientific evidence or principle, except that of precedent, so the courts are manifestly failing to provide adequate compensation.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh for introducing the Bill. This has been a worthwhile and valuable debate. It has been enjoyable, too, especially for a Scottish solicitor who, like the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), has had to sit here listening to praise being heaped on the Scottish legal system. That is happening increasingly. We feel confident that we in Scotland have got the system right over the past 500 years and that this part of the country is now just beginning to catch up.

2.6 pm

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay): Like many hon. Members, I have a strong basic sympathy with the intentions of the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) to remedy a shortcoming or wrong in society. I should have thought that it was a natural instinct for almost everyone to want to provide remedies for people who have to wait ages for compensation for injuries, bereavement or loss of earnings. I share that gut feeling.

I am worried that in measures such as this we shift the emphasis from the operation of the law—which should deal with these matters—towards other bodies which we set up, be they industrial tribunals, compensatory bodies or whatever, to plug gaps. I was interested to see my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General in the Chamber and am sorry that he has left. The legal profession is responsible for much of the time that we must spend in the Chamber—not least on Friday mornings—trying to concoct measures to give ordinary citizens access to law that has been made difficult and complicated by the selfishness of the legal profession.

I applaud the Lord Chancellor's moves to simplify and open up the legal profession. I look forward to the day when there is a law shop on every street corner—along with the betting shop, the pub and so on—so that ordinary citizens can walk in off the street and obtain advice and access to an arbitration service that will solve problems quickly and simply. For that reason, I believe that the Bill is not desirable. Those who govern the least govern the best. Yet we are always adding to the body of law or Government orders, as I call them, with which our society is already overburdened.

There are three aspects to this business. The first is the role of the law itself and the Government have a strong responsibility to make the law accessible to ordinary citizens cheaply, quickly and simply. That is important. Secondly, there is the role of the individual and what he or she can do to take precautions against injury and the possibility of loss of earnings. There are many ways in which that can be tackled. Thirdly, there is the role of the market structure in providing the means whereby people can obtain suitable compensation. It is part of the seductive lure of this place that we think that we can ravel up all the ragged edges of society. Life is a messy business, yet there are many times when people of good intent think that they must step in and do something.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) made the point about people who go through pregnancy and are than affected by depression. Women can be depressed by a termination of pregnancy that they think was unwise but, equally, they can become depressed by being made to go through with a pregnancy that they do not want. My hon. Friend's long-term intentions would increase the incidence of that, especially for people who have to bear a child after rape, because such women would be forced to go through with the pregnancy. However, I shall not dwell on that.

There are many areas in which people feel that they have a legitimate cause for asking for compensation. Most

*[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]*

of the legal technicalities have been dwelt on at length and I do not want to go over them again, or over the fact that the Bill, in trying to lay down specific amounts, is bound to create many anomalies. When we start laying down crude sums, such as a mimimum of £10,000 or a maximum of £50,000, that can work both ways. The amounts suggested often become maxima and, may often not be appropriate. In normal circumstances, damages should possibly be much greater, but the courts tend to lean on the criteria set down by law and that may be to the detriment of people who feel that they have some claim against the system.

The Bill is flawed in trying to lay down actual amounts of money. That could work against people. As an example, let us consider the industrial tribunal, which was originally thought to be one of the protections for workers against employers, who are always reckoned to be the bad guys. In many cases, trade unions and employees believe that the tribunal system works against them. Such tribunals were set up with the best will in the world, but they do not have the long-term effect for which the people who instigated the legislation hoped. That in turn leads to calls for yet more legislation.

It is often forgotten that people have free will and can make arrangements for themselves. They could do more about taking up insurance. It is easy to say that people never do that. However, it is legitimate for the Government to ask for people to be insured against certain things so that the burden does not fall on society. Long before the Beveridge report, we had legislation that required people to carry insurance against sickness. As a result, there were hundreds of little friendly societies which provided that opportunity for people. The process was not difficult because people did not have to go to complicated insurance brokers, as they do today. Somebody came round to the house and collected the sum each week. The levels of compensation and assistance during sickness were often better than they are under the present legislative structure. Individuals could be asked now to carry insurance for injuries, for example. Employers are required to have liability insurance so that they have the financial back-up for possible damages claims against them when people are injured at work. There is a legitimate case for the Government to insist that people have insurance of their own. It need not be complicated or difficult. I am sure that the insurance industry would look for ways of meeting that need.

Similarly, one can insure oneself against the payment of legal fees. Much has been made of the cost of litigation, and I sympathise with those who have referred to it. I have legal expenses insurance; some may think that I need it more than most. It is not the most expensive thing in the world and it is very useful. It means that if one feels that someone is trying to rip one off or that one has a case one does not have to say, "I can't do anything about it." If I need to, I can phone someone up and say, "Look, old boy. You may think you can swing this one on me, but I am legally insured, and as far as you want to go, I'll go too." That sharpens up people's wits and may make them decide not to go ahead after all or persuade them to compensate me out of court. The individual should have insurance of his own.

The Government have a role to play in making the courts more open. I am sorry that the Solicitor-General has gone out again, because I wanted to tell him what I think about the legal profession making it difficult for the rest of us to get justice. The Government should make the courts more accessible, cheaper and quicker. All in all, there are better ways of trying to compensate people and get help for the helpless.

Last, but not least, we must remember the role of the welfare state. In addition to any compensation that one might receive the state will support one—albeit perhaps not in as grand a style as one would like. No one in this country goes without, even if injured. We have a tremendously well-developed system for helping people who are in some way unfortunate, whether because of physical injury or mental inability. That is an important part of the way in which we can help those needing compensation.

Although it is well meant, the Bill is not well thought out. We should pay far more attention—as I am sure the Solicitor-General and his colleagues now intend to do—to making the normal process of the law more accessible to individuals so that the courts can take each case individually and work out the compensation that should be arrived at. That is likely to be the best deal that the citizen can get.

2.18 pm

**Sir Hal Miller** (Bromsgrove): A common theme of the last two speeches has been the role that could be played by insurance in helping to solve some of the problems that the Bill rightly addresses. There is widespread concern not only about delay in gaining access to the courts and a decision in court on liability but about the amount of compensation awarded.

Before I go further, I must apologise to the House that I have not been present for the whole debate, although I have been here since half-past nine. I have been trying to deal with a very important constituency matter—the western orbital route. In case hon. Members think that that is rather far from the subject of the Bill, I refer them to a recent campaign and to the scientific agreement, which I think has now been reached, that much damage, injury, pain and suffering can be caused by lead poison. But that is not the purpose of my remarks.

I hope that I will not be subjective, as some hon. Members have been, in speaking about the claim by the supporters of the immediately following Bill that there is a deliberate attempt to filibuster. My record is clear. I have always voted in favour of a reduction in the period of termination and think that a much shorter period could have been achieved much earlier if the necessary good will had been shown by the sponsors of the appropriate Bills.

We are debating injury, pain and suffering. Much attention has been devoted to recent disasters and accidents, but I should like to speak about industrial, occupational and criminal injuries. There is a widespread feeling that the levels of compensation for people affected by such injuries simply do not match some of the awards recently handed down by the courts in libel cases. It has reached such a stage that many of us wonder how we could get a suitable libel against us so that we could bring a successful action and secure a considerable sum of money.

Some awards for libel far exceed the cost of the actual harm and bear no comparison at all to the pain and suffering caused by personal injury.

I have read the title, the interpretation and the clauses in the Bill and it seems that it is not confined to personal physical injury. That was why I alluded earlier to the pain and suffering caused to people who live adjacent to motorways or to motorway construction. Considerable pain and suffering are caused by the noise and the obstruction of light, quite apart from the lead poisoning about which I have already spoken. Is the Bill restricted to physical injury?

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) talked about nervous depression induced by a mistaken medical judgment. In slight contradistinction to her argument I recall the case of a constituent from a poor family——

**Mr. Orme:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me to intervene. I know that he has come to the debate at a late stage and has given the reason for that. Is he attempting to talk the Bill out or is he prepared to sit down in two or three minutes so that we can proceed with the vote?

**Sir Hal Miller:** I have never had any intention of talking Bills out and I do not know which other hon. Members wish to speak. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, it is open to him to move. That the Question be now put. I do not know how the Chair would respond to that. I have received letters from my constituents asking me to take part in this debate and that is what I am doing.

I am speaking about the different types of injury for which people genuinely and correctly feel they are given inadequate compensation a long time after liability has been established. That is why I welcome what my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General said about some progress being considered towards the introduction of no-fault compensation, which could apply in a limited range of matters. Steps should also be taken to speed up the legal process.

I am thinking of people other than the lady about whom I was speaking when the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) intervened, who tried to provide sensibly for her family. She had an operation to prevent her conceiving further children above the four that the family already had. However, despite that operation she conceived a fifth child. That was a serious matter for that family and the difficulty encountered by that lady in achieving compensation for that medical mistake drew my attention to the difficulties that people experience.

There is a great deal of argument in industrial occupations about the responsibility for industrial injury. I am thinking of a big firm in my constituency where there is an occupational disease called white finger. I have been trying to establish for several years that that disease should be treated as——

**Mr. Cunliffe** *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

*Question put accordingly and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).*

## Abortion (Amendment) Bill

*Order for Second Reading read.*

2.26 pm

**Miss Ann Widdecombe** (Maidstone): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have a few minutes in which to introduce the Bill. The Bill seeks to reintroduce the provisions of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill that was brought before the House last year. Our reasons for doing so are simply that last year, despite widespread support for that Bill, we were unable to obtain a final vote despite having concluded the debate on Report. It is our belief that, in the interests of parliamentary democracy and in the light of the considerable interest in this subject in the country, there should be an opportunity to vote on the Bill.

At the moment this country has a law that allows one child to be kept alive in an incubator, to be loved and cherished and to have all the resources of medical science poured upon it, and a child of identical age, gestation and sentience to be dismembered alive in its mother's womb. That is not a civilised law. It is those excesses and abuses of the Abortion Act 1967 that many hon. Members who would not support me in my absolute stand on abortion nevertheless wish to see eradicated.

Our first duty is to the unborn children who suffer horribly from some of the methods of abortion that are most commonly used in the private clinics where 88 per cent. of late abortions are carried out. We have a duty to them to introduce a law that will afford them exactly the same protection as we afford to children of the same age who are in incubators, that we afford to children when they are born, and the same protection that we afford to children regardless of what tragedies might strike them in later years.

The unborn have no less right to protection than the born. The unborn who have developed to a stage such that once born we would recognise them as fully human, with full civil rights, should have exactly the same protections. What we would not do to a child in an incubator we should not do to a child in the womb during abortion.

Our law asks for equality of treatment between children. It is a law that would recognise the rights of the mother not to be pressurised or misinformed. It is a law that seeks to protect those least able to look after themselves—that is, not only unborn children who have no voice and who rely entirely on us to protect them, but pregnant women who want to continue with their pregnancies but who sometimes find that the pressures of society, particularly eugenic pressures, combine to force them into operations which they later regret and from which they suffer continually.

One of the good results of the extensive debate on this subject last year is that at last we are beginning to recognise the effects on mothers who suffer—

*It being half past Two o'clock,* Mr. Deputy Speaker *interrupted the business.*

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 7 April.*

## Private Members' Bills

### DATA PROTECTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** Not moved.

### MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 March.*

### CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CONTROL) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 March.*

### RESALE OF TICKETS BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 March.*

### POLL TAX (RESTORATION OF INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 April.*

### NET BOOK AGREEMENT (ABOLITION) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 April.*

### ABOLITION OF DOMESTIC RATES ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 March.*

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that it was the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) who objected to the Bill?

### FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 April.*

### CONTROL OF SMOKE POLLUTION BILL

*Bill read a Second time.*

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Hunter.]*

*Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.*

*To be read the Third time on Friday 14 April.*

### PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 April.*

### LONDON GOVERNMENT BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day?

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): I wish to move the Bill. I make no objection.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I asked for a day for the Second Reading.

**Mr. Corbyn:** I could not hear what you were saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker; there was some mumbling from Conservative Members.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? We must deal with that first.

**Mr. Corbyn:** I am quite happy for the Bill to be debated now; or, failing that, next Friday.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 March.*

### AGE OF LEGAL CAPACITY (SCOTLAND) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? Not moved.

### RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 March.*

### JUNIOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS (REGULATION OF HOURS) (No. 2) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 April.*

### HARE COURSING BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Second Reading what day? Not moved.

### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION

"That the draft African Development Bank (Further Subscription to Capital Stock) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 20th December, be approved.

That the draft African Development Fund (Fifth Replenishment) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 20th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

*Question agreed to.*

**Mr. Gerald Bermingham** (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. While there was a slight noise during the Hare Coursing Bill, I sought to get to my feet to tell you the adjourned date for the Bill, being one of its supporters.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It was not moved. No one said "Now" when the title of the Bill was read out, so it proceeded no further.

**Mr. Bermingham:** I was getting up to move it on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), but, unfortunately, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, moved so quickly that objection was made before we had time to say anything.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We cannot take the matter any further at present, but I can advise the hon. Gentleman that the Bill can be restored on Monday by an instruction to the Table.

**Mr. Bermingham:** I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Miss Ann Widdecombe** (Maidstone): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point of order is exactly the same as that of the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), but it is on the Definitive Map Modification Bill. I tried to rise, but you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did not take note of that. There was too much noise.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I must remind the House that an hon. Member must say, "Now, Sir." Unless an hon. Member says that, I can, according to the rules, proceed no further. No one said, "Now, Sir" on the Bill. I can give the hon. Lady the same advice as I gave the hon. Gentleman.

## House of Commons Members' Fund

**Mr. Alfred Morris** (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move,

That in pursuance of the provisions of Section 3 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948 and Section 2 of the House of Commons Members' Fund and Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981 the maximum annual amounts of the periodical payments which may be made out of the House of Commons Members' Fund under the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939, as amended and the annual rate of any payments made under Section 1 of the said Act of 1981 shall be varied as from 1st April 1989 as follows:

(a) for paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the said Act of 1939, as amended, there shall be substituted the following paragraph:

1. The anual amount of any periodical payment made to any person by virtue of his past membership of the House of Commons shall not exceed £2,709 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring his income up to £4,983 per annum, whichever is the less:

Provided that if, having regard to length of service and need, the Trustees think fit, they may make a larger payment not exceeding £5,220 or such sum as, in their opinion, will bring his income up to £7,494 per annum, whichever is the less:

(b) for paragraph 2 of that Schedule there shall be substituted the following paragraph:

2. The annual amount of any periodical payment to any person by virtue of her being a widow of a past Member of the House of Commons shall not exceed £1,359 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring her income up to £3,633 per annum, whichever is the less:

Provided that if, having regard to her husband's length of service or to her need, the Trustees think fit, they may make a larger payment not exceeding £2,610 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring her income up to £4,884 per annum, whichever is the less:

(c) in paragraph 2A of that Schedule for the words 'the annual amount of any periodical payment' to the end of the paragraph, there shall be substituted the words:

'the annual amount of any periodical payment made to any such widower shall not exceed £1,359 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring his income up to £3,633 per annum, whichever is the less:

Provided that if, having regard to his wife's length of service or to his need, Trustees think fit, they may make a larger payment not exceeding £2,610 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring his income up to £4,884 per annum, whichever is the less:'

(d) in Section 2(1) of the said Act of 1981, for the words from the beginning to the end of paragraph (b) there shall be substituted the words:

'the annual rate of any payments made under Section 1 shall be—

(a) £1,578 if the payments are made to a past Member; and

(b) £789 if the payments ar made to the widow or widower of a past Member.'

The motions on the Order Paper are in the names of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who share with me the responsibility as trustees of administering the House of Commons Members" fund.

The purpose of the first resolution is to increase the levels of grants which may be made in accordance with the Members' fund legislation. Those were last revised in April 1988 and the proposal now is that they be increased from 1 April 1989 by approximately 5·9 per cent. in line with the increases approved for public service and state retirement pensions in April this year.

*[Mr. Alfred Morris]*

As the House is aware, pension arrangements for Members were first introduced in 1964. In the intervening years many improvements have been secured and, although much remains to be achieved, today Members of the House can at least look forward to retirement pensions, as of right, which reflect their length of service in this House. Former colleagues who left the House before 1964 had no such provision and some of them, now of advanced years, are living in straitened circumstances. The Members' fund is able, within stringent limits, to make a modest contribution to their incomes and thus help to ease financial hardship.

It will not have escaped your notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Members' fund was established 50 years ago this year to provide:

"grants . . . to persons who have been members of the House of Commons or to their widows or widowers".

The House of Commons Members Fund Act 1939 required a qualifying period of at least 10 years' service, but trustees were empowered:

"in special circumstances to make payments"

even though service was less than 10 years. The Act provided that the annual grant should not exceed £150 or such lesser sum as would bring income up to £225 a year. The corresponding figures for a widow or widower were £75 and £125 a year, respectively.

Higher levels of grant and income, reflecting length of service and need, were introduced in 1961. The House of Commons Members Fund and Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981 introduced grants "as of right" to past Members who had at least 10 years' service, all before 1964, and to the widows and widowers of such past Members.

**Mr. Allen McKay** (Barnsley, West and Penistone): As a result of the 1981 Act, how many "as of right" recipients have there been?

**Mr. Morris:** At the present time the number of recipients of payments "as of right" under the 1981 Act is as follows: ex-Members 41, widows 42. There are 83 recipients in all.

Extensive efforts have been made in recent years to identify and then to contact past Members or widows and widowers in need of help from the fund. Right hon. and hon. Members can assist the trustees by drawing to our attention the names of any past Members or widows and widowers of former Members who might benefit from the fund. Inquiries are pursued with the utmost discretion and in the strictest confidence.

I need not detain the House at length as the provisions for which we seek approval are set out in detail in the resolutions on the Order Paper. They may be summarised as follows: first, grants to past Members. Subparagraph 1(a) seeks to increase the basic annual grant for former Members to £2,709, subject to an income limit, including the grant, of £4,983. In the case of former Members with longer service and in need, the grant may be increased to a maximum of £5,220, subject to an income limit of £7,494.

Grants to the widows and widowers of past Members are dealt with in sub-paragraphs 1(b) and 1(c). They seek to increase the basic annual grant for them to £1,359, subject to an income limit, including the grant, of £3,633. In the case of longer service and where there is need, the grant may be increased to a maximum of £2,610, subject to an income limit of £4,884.

With regard to "as of right" payments under the 1981 Act, to which reference has already been made, sub-paragraph 1(d) seeks to increase the grants paid under the 1981 Act to £1,578 a year in the case of past Members and to £789 a year in the case of widows and widowers. The additional annual cost of those proposed increases is estimated to amount to £7,400.

The second resolution relates to the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948, section 4 of which authorises the trustees to make:

"such periodical or other payments as they think fit"

to past Members or the widows, widowers and children of past Members:

"for the purpose of alleviating special hardship"

Section 4 of the 1948 Act, together with section 1 of the 1957 Act, as amended, provides that in any year, for the purpose of making such payments, the House of Commons may, by resolution, direct that the whole or any part of the amount contributed by Members in that year, together with up to £22,000 of the Treasury's contribution in the year, be appropriated. The total which may be appropriated under this provision is £37,600. Currently, there are eight beneficiaries receiving grants totalling £13,100 a year under this section and the moneys to be appropriated are needed to continue these grants and to fund any further cases which may arise.

Finally, I wish to record our warm appreciation to Mr. J. L. G. Dobson and his colleagues in the Fees Office for their skilled and unstinting help to the trustees and for their always humane concern for those whom we seek to serve [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".].

I commend the resolution to the House in the confident expectation that they will receive unanimous support.

*Question put and agreed to.*

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS FUND

*Resolved,*

That the whole or any part of the sums deducted or set aside in the current year from the salaries of Members of Parliament under Section 1 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939, and the whole or any part of the contribution determined by the Treasury for the current year under Section 1 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1957, as amended by the House of Commons Members' Fund and Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981, be appropriated for the purposes of Section 4 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948, as amended by Section 12 of the Parliamentary Pensions etc. Act 1984.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, at the sitting on Monday 6th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Community Charges (Scotland) may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question already proposed from the Chair.

*Ordered,*

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 7th March, the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House may be proceeded with, though opposed, after the expiration of the time for opposed business; and shall lapse two hours after it has been made, if not previously disposed of.

*Ordered,*

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 8th March, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall put—

(1) the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary King relating to the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987 (Continuance) Order 1989 and the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations 1989 not later than Seven o'clock; and

(2) the Question on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary King relating to the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 not later than Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

## Petty Officer John Black

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

2.46 pm

**Mr. Michael Latham** (Rutland and Melton): On 27 June 1986, I initiated an Adjournment debate about the death in Spain of Petty Officer John Black. The reply was given by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), who was then a junior Minister in the Ministry of Defence. I should like to pay tribute to him for the help and support he has always given to me and to the late Mr. Black's mother and stepfather, Mr. and Mrs. Crane, who live in Melton Mowbray, in my constituency.

The fact that I have sought a second Adjournment debate on the matter two and three quarter years later shows that I remain dissatisfied with the outcome of events since then. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, whom I welcome to the debate, will be able to give further help today.

I do not want to go over the same ground as in 1986, but I should give some brief background. Petty Officer Black was in Spain on leave with a friend, Miss Pat Jeffs, over Christmas 1983. On Christmas day he died suddenly in her rented apartment in Sabinillas. Two Spanish pathologists examined his body. An inquest held at Portsmouth in May 1985, 18 months after his death, found that he was unlawfully killed.

Following pressure from me and the *Leicester Mercury*, which has played a noble part in this sad case, the Ministry of Defence agreed to fund two visits—the first to Gibraltar and the second to Spain—by two senior Scotland Yard police officers. Those visits took place at either end of 1987. Without dwelling on it, I must express regret that it was nearly six months before the Spanish Government allowed the second visit to Spain itself.

On 2 March 1988, I was allowed to read the full police report in the office in the House of my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering. I was not allowed to take a copy of it. Despite specific requests from me, neither Mr. and Mrs. Crane nor their solicitors have been allowed to see the report, on the ground that such police reports remain confidential. I cannot understand such a rigid rule in this case because my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering wrote to me officially on 23 March 1988 summarising the report fully. It would certainly breach no confidences if Mr. and Mrs. Crane had seen the report. They have, of course, seen my hon. Friend's letter to me.

The report of the British police says that Petty Officer Black died accidentally as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a faulty water heater with no gas discharge or ventilator system. It is accompanied by a statement from the Home Office pathologist, Dr. Iain West. Dr. West, who had not seen Petty Officer Black's body but had seen photographs of it and read the Spanish reports, stated that the level of poisoning found in Petty Officer Black's body was entirely consistent with accidental carbon monoxide poisoning and that the injuries on his body were consistent with his collapse in the bath. The British police did not, so far as I am aware, interview the Spanish pathologists, and it is not clear to me whether they ever sought to do so. I find it difficult to consider that report as entirely complete without such interviews.

*[Mr. Michael Latham]*

To illustrate how crucial the views of the Spanish pathologist were, I shall read out the text of the British inquest in Portsmouth on 23 May 1985. I shall quote some answers given by one of the Spanish pathologists, Dr. Antonio Garcia de Galvez, to Mr. Howard Partridge, the solicitor for my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Crane. Mr. Partridge asked:

"If John Black had died from carbon monoxide from an appliance in the flat, would the doctor accept that there would be a much lower level of cabon monoxide in the blood?

Answer: With any domestic accident of this type the level would never be so high.

Question: Are you of the opinion that John Black did not die from carbon monoxide from that water heater?

Answer: I am of that opinion."

Another solicitor Mr. West, acting on behalf of Miss Jeffs, asked:

"Is there a report which indicates the percentage of carbon monoxide in the blood?"

Dr. Galvez said:

"Yes—72 per cent. I do not know where the carbon monoxide came from but it was not from the heater."

A little later he added:

"The concentration of carbon monoxide which John Black received was not accidental. This was not a domestic accident. It is my opinion that Black died too quickly for the heater to have been the cause, and furthermore the level was too high."

Later, the coroner asked the other Spanish pathologist, Dr. Francisco Alvarez Gonzalez:

"regarding the heater, did you agree with your colleague that the carbon monoxide in its intensity could not have been caused by the heater?"

He replied:

"I agree with my colleague. It is completely impossible."

Summing up for the jury, the coroner said:

"The death was caused by carbon monoxide poisoning. Did it come from the water heater? The opinions of the Spanish Pathologists indicate it would be impossible."

The jury then returned a verdict of unlawful killing.

In the Scotland Yard report, as summarised by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, the officers stressed the following points. First, no examination was made of the original water heater in the flat at the time of death. Secondly, following Petty Officer Black's death, the owner of the apartment seems to have disposed of the water heater and to have had a new one fitted and only then was a ventilator fitted. Thirdly, the British police are puzzled about how the Spanish pathologists could have been so definite about the faulty water heater because, they say, the original one was never examined. Fourthly, the police point out that none of the Spanish reports and photographs show the water heater, which was apparently positioned at the point furthest from the kitchen window.

It might be thought that the British police newly discovered that the heater had been changed and that there was no proper ventilation system before the change. However, that is not so. The Spanish legal proceedings, dated 8 May 1984, state:

"In the said apartment they have replaced the previous heater with a similar one and no check can be carried out, although originally it did not have the obligatory gas discharge system and ventilator."

That was repeated to me in a ministerial letter from Lord Trefgarne on 6 July 1984, and presumably the information was available to the British coroner at the inquest in May 1985.

Therefore, there is a direct conflict between the Spanish pathologists—who examined the body but did not see the defective heater, and who said on examination of the body that Mr. Black could not possibly have died accidentally—and the British police and Dr. West, who have examined neither the body nor the defective water heater but still feel able to conclude that Mr. Black died accidentally.

One of them must be wrong. If the Spanish pathologists are wrong, there was a perverse inquest verdict in Portsmouth. It is then, therefore, the duty of the Attorney-General to seek to have the inquest quashed and a new one summoned in order to put the record straight. If, on the other hand, Scotland Yard is wrong, then Mr. Black was unlawfully killed and some policeman somewhere should be looking for the killer or killers. At present, as far as I can see, no one is doing anything.

Let us suppose that the Scotland Yard officers are right and that the defective water heater—which has long since disappeared but which they say was inside the kitchen with no ventilator—accidentally killed Mr. Black. Who removed it, and why? Was it removed with the knowledge or the connivance of the Spanish police? Is there an innocent explanation?

Is not concealing vital evidence of suspicious death a crime in Spain? Has anyone been arrested and charged in Spain with possible tampering with evidence? Have any Spanish police been disciplined for incompetence, or indeed for possible collusion in the suppression of evidence, or were the interests of the owner of the flat and the reputation of the Spanish tourist industry put before the pursuit of justice?

What of our British Government? Are they content to leave the matter there? My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has tried to be helpful, but the net result of all my recent inquiries of Ministers is as follows.

First, the Home Office cannot require the British police report to be produced for my constituents. The Home Office says that that is an operational matter for the police commissioner, who refuses to release it. Secondly, the Ministry of Defence has apparently washed its hands of the affair. Ministers replying to me have said that it is now "outside their responsibilities" and that the Ministry has "no further standing in the matter."

Yet it was a Royal Navy petty officer who died, in circumstances that remain unexplained. Thirdly, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has told me that none of the interested parties has approached him to have the inquest quashed. Of course Mrs. Crane has not done so. She agrees with the Portsmouth inquest verdict. Why should she seek to have it quashed?

*The Sun*, in a feature about the case on 1 July last year, gave the impression that it would seek a new inquest on behalf of Miss Jeffs, but obviously the paper has not approached the Attorney-General either. The Portsmouth coroner, who could also have asked the Attorney-General to go to the court to have the inquest quashed, has declined to do so even after seeing the Scotland Yard report. Is the coroner satisfied with the original verdict? If not, why does he not act?

Fourthly, the Foreign Office, in a lamentable display of diplomatic sloth, has apparently taken no steps to acquaint the Spanish Government with the British police report, on the absurd ground that the report is confidential to the British police. On 15 February I asked my right hon. Friend

"whether Her Majesty's ambassador in Madrid has conveyed to the Spanish Government the report of the Metropolitan police regarding the death of Petty Officer John Black, RN; whether he has asked the Spanish government to investigate the circumstances in which the allegedly defective water heater was removed from the apartment in which Mr. Black was found dead; and what response he has received".

I also asked

"whether he will instruct Her Majesty's ambassador to ask the Spanish Government to show the Metropolitan police report on the death of Petty Officer John Black to the two Spanish pathologists who gave evidence to the inquest in Portsmouth in May 1985; and whether the ambassador will request guidance from the Government of Spain on the conflict of evidence between the pathologists and the Metropolitan police officers."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs replied:

"The report prepared by British police officers into the death of Petty Officer Black remains the property of and confidential to the Metropolitan police. It has not therefore been conveyed to the Spanish authorities." —[*Official Report*, 15 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. 200-01.]

That is an abysmal reply prepared by Foreign Office officials for my hon. Friend, and I am amazed that he agreed to attach his name to it.

The Ministry of Defence had a copy of the police report, and showed it to me. When I met my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces last March, officials from the Foreign Office and the Home Office were also present and had all read the report. Are we seriously expected to believe that they could not have conveyed the report—or, at the very least, the letter of 23 March from the Minister to me, which officially summarised it—to the Spanish Government?

I put it to my hon. and learned Friend that it was their clear duty to do so. There is a plain presumption from the British police report that at the least negligence and incompetence took place in Spain, and quite possibly prima facie criminal offences relating to the suppression of evidence. Is that all to be blandly ignored by the Foreign Office to avoid making waves between London and Madrid?

What about some compensation from Spain for Mrs. Crane, if her son really died because of the negligence and dangerous fitting of a defective heater, coupled with the possible suppression of vital evidence and either incompetence or collusion—or both—by the Spanish police? Will the British Government do nothing to press for the rights of British citizens, indeed, British service men?

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will not advise Mrs. Crane to get a Spanish lawyer. When she tried to do so, none was prepared to assist, as I said in the 1986 Adjournment debate. In any case, she cannot afford it.

Above all, the position cannot be allowed to continue by which no steps have been taken to test in open court, or by some other form of judicial inquiry, the glaring disparities in the conclusions of the Spanish pathologists and the British police. Mrs. Crane could not be expected to go to court to press for a new inquest, even if she could afford to do so. She is perfectly satisfied with the existing verdict. She believes that her son was unlawfully killed, and so did a British jury.

If the Attorney-General and the Government accept that verdict, they should be using every diplomatic step to have those responsible for the alleged unlawful killing found and charged. If they regard the verdict as perverse, Ministers should back Scotland Yard and advise the police to seek the Attorney-General's support for a new inquest, or the Attorney-General should act on his own and apply to the court or the Government should seek another method of judicial review. The British police, Dr. Iain West and, I hope, the two Spanish pathologists could give evidence in court and be subject to cross-examination. There is no other way by which this sad case will be resolved.

A young British sailor has been dead for over five years in most distressing and unsatisfactory circumstances. His mother still grieves for him and seeks justice. From start to finish, this case has been an endless tangle of misery and unsolved riddles. My file on the matter is vast. I look to my hon. and learned Friend to help me to close it today, but I give him notice that I shall continue with this matter in the remaining years that I serve as an hon. Member if I feel that justice has not been done.

3.1 pm

**The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell):** I pay tribute to the care and zeal with which my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Meltham (Mr. Latham) has pursued his concern and that of his constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Crane. This is the second occasion on which he has brought to the House for debate the distressing death of Petty Officer Black. He has been assiduous in his use of other channels in pressing the Government for assistance.

As my hon. Friend is well aware, the implications of this subject straddle the interests of a number of Departments. In addition to the Law Officers Department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office have been involved. In responding to his speech today, I have taken advice from those quarters. I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend for informing my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department in advance of a number of specific questions that he intended to raise today. However, I shall read carefully the record of this debate and write to my hon. Friend about any matters that understandably he has raised that I may not be able to answer.

Before addressing the specific issues raised by my hon. Friend, it would be appropriate to summarise the developments in the case since the matter was last discussed in the House on 27 June 1986.

In December 1986, two journalists, accompanied by the late Petty Officer Black's mother, visited Spain and Gibraltar to conduct inquiries into his death. On their return to this country, they alleged that Petty Officer Black's girl friend, Miss Jeffs, was in possession of information relevant to the case. In view of the possibility, however remote, of future criminal action, Scotland Yard was requested to interview her. This it subsequently did in February 1987, following consultations with Hampshire constabulary and Her Majesty's coroner for south Hampshire.

As my hon. Friend is aware, in March 1987 the police submitted a report which indicated that, contrary to the verdict reached at the inquest held in Portsmouth in May 1985, the evidence was susceptible to other interpretations. The interim report, however, recommended that a further visit be made to Gibraltar and Spain to clarify further outstanding points.

Permission for the visit to Spain was sought from the Spanish Government in June 1987 and was subsequently granted in late October 1987. Certain limits were imposed

*[The Solicitor-General]*

on the investigation in Spain; specifically, interviews with court officials were not allowed. Such restrictions are not uncommon and the Metropolitan police expressed themselves content with them.

Two police officers visited Spain in November 1987 where they were given full access to Spanish court records and evidence and were also able to interview officers of the Spanish police who had conducted the original investigations. They submitted their final report to their superior officer in February 1988. The gist of it was conveyed orally to my hon. Friend on 7 March 1988 by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. A comprehensive written summary was subsequently given to my hon. Friend on 23 March 1988 for transmission to the late Petty Officer Black's family. Their report concluded, as my hon. Friend will recall, that there was no evidence of foul play in the circumstances surrounding Petty Officer Black's death, which was caused by carbon-monoxide poisoning. They attributed this to a faulty water heater.

I shall now turn to the specific questions raised by my hon. Friend. He asked whether the British police thought that everything said at the Portsmouth inquest was wrong. It would not be appropriate for the police to comment on any judicial proceedings and, indeed, they cannot comment on the coroner's inquest held at Portsmouth in 1985. That is no part of their functions.

My hon. Friend also asked whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General was happy with the verdict of the inquest. A jury at an inquest must reach its verdict upon the evidence which is placed before it during the course of the hearing. Upon the evidence before the jury, it was open to it to reach the verdict which it returned. The Metropolitan police investigation has uncovered new evidence about Petty Officer Black's death which, if it had been placed before the jury, might have led it to return a different verdict. The Attorney-General has already made it clear in his reply to a written question on 16 February from my hon. Friend that he has to date not received any representations about the inquest. Until he receives any such representations, he cannot take a view on it.

As to why the British police did not ask to interview the Spanish pathologist, I understand that he had already given evidence before the inquest held at Portsmouth and it is not for the police to challenge or interpret that evidence. That is a matter for the British judicial authorities. The reason for the removal of the water heater is a matter to be investigated by the judiciary and, if subsequently necessary, by the Spanish authorities. The same answer applies to the question of any suggestion of collusion between the Civil Guard and the owner of the flat.

The reason why the report was not shown to the Spanish pathologist has already been explained to my hon. Friend in answer to recent written questions. It is the property of and confidential to the Metropolitan police. A copy has been passed to the appropriate authority—Her Majesty's coroner for South Hampshire.

My hon. Friend asks why the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis declines to agree to the release of the report of the further inquiries made by his officers. He suggests that it should at least be made available to the family and their lawyer. As has been made clear in reply to his recent questions, access to the report is a matter for the Commissioner. It is a general rule that police reports following inquiries remain confidential and are not disclosed to third parties, either in whole or in part.

This matter of principle came before the High Court in Peach *v.* Commissioner of Police [1986] 2WLR 1080. I shall describe the full reference so that it may be studied by anyone examining the debate. The reference states that this principle is maintained both in the interests of ensuring full and frank communications between the police and those whom they may interview in connection with an investigation and also in the more general interests of preserving the confidentiality of investigations and avoiding disclosure, other than in court, of information that may be prejudicial.

My hon. Friend will understand that that is a principle which has sound foundations. The police are given a great deal of information in the course of their investigations on the understanding that it remains confidential. Erosion of that understanding could reduce the co-operation of those people interviewed by the police. That is a matter of general principle going far beyond any individual case.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has no power to require the Commissioner to allow access to the report. However, with the agreement of the Commissioner, a comprehensive summary of the report—and this is important to stress—was sent to my hon. Friend by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 23 March 1988. Its contents may be used for the purposes of seeking a review of the matter if my hon. Friend's constituent, Miss Jeffs, or anybody supporting her, should wish to do so.

My hon. Friend asked whether the Government were happy to leave matters to rest. This is not a matter for the Government, but a question for the courts to consider, if they are so requested by an interested party. My hon. Friend asked also whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office should look into the matter again. As my right hon. and learned Friend has already made clear, he will consider the matter if he is asked to do so in the manner prescribed in section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988. For its part, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be in a position to act only in the light of the outcome of any future judicial proceedings in this country.

In conclusion, I reiterate that no progress can be made unless and until the necessary action is initiated in the way that I have explained. I respectfully urge my hon. Friend to draw to his constituents and to the attention of others who may have an interest in the matter the procedure for obtaining a fresh inquest and to impress on his constituents that there is no alternative.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Three o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Monday 6 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Benefits

1. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase disability benefits.

**The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott):** We are spending over £7 billion this year on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled. This is an increase of over 90 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. The results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' reports on disability will help us judge how well the substantial current expenditure is targeted and whether there are better ways of helping those in greatest need.

**Mr. Evans:** One improvement that the Minister could make in support for the disabled would be to scrap the six-month qualifying period for the terminally ill, many of whom, I am sad to say, die before they qualify. Does the Minister accept that such a step would be widely welcomed by those who have built up, supported and maintained the hospice movement and by those who support and nurse the terminally ill in their last months?

**Mr. Scott:** I have noted that. The point has been brought to my attention and we shall certainly consider it. There are somewhat complicated questions about medical ethics and about whether or not information could properly and compassionately be given to people who are terminally ill. I am giving the matter considerable thought.

**Mr. Dunn:** Does my hon. Friend accept that the figures that he has given for increases in mobility allowance expenditure since 1979 are more than welcome? What is the increase in the number of mobility allowance claimants since 1979?

**Mr. Scott:** Expenditure on mobility allowance has increased by 550 per cent. in real terms since we came to office. It is a significant increase in terms of expenditure and the number of those who are receiving the benefit.

**Mr. Fearn:** Will the Minister confirm that all those who reached the age of 60 before December 1984, who care for a relative and are eligible for the invalid allowance, will get their back pay, in accordance with the European Court's latest ruling? When will that back pay be paid?

**Mr. Scott:** If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the case which is before the Appeal Court, we would want to await its finding before coming to any conclusions.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** Does the Minister accept that there is great support for the point which my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) made regarding the terminally ill? Does he accept also that if the Government conceded his point, that would be entirely consistent with some of the major recommendations in Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care?

**Mr. Scott:** I take that point seriously, and I am giving it thought. We will probably look at it in the context of the OPCS surveys.

### Public Spending

3. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of public spending is taken up by his Department.

**The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore):** My Department is responsible for 31 per cent. of all Government spending in 1988-89. This is up from 25 per cent. in the last year of the Labour Government. It is thanks to the success of this Government's economic policies that the country is able to afford the massive resources devoted to social security spending.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that achievement. By what percentage has Government expenditure on support for the family increased since 1978-79?

**Mr. Moore:** Not surprisingly, support for the family has increased by 27·3 per cent. since 1979, in comparison —just in case the answer needs further embellishment— with the reduction of 7 per cent. under the Labour Government.

**Mr. Haynes:** Why is the Secretary of State bragging about the amount of money that the Government are spending on social security? I have mentioned it to him before. When will he wake up to the fact that some people in my constituency live in wheelchairs because they have lost lower limbs? They apply for attendance allowance but are regularly turned down. Why? What kind of instructions are going out from the Department?

**Mr. Moore:** I was not bragging. The emotions of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) are understandable, but I was happy to be able to reflect on the Government's economic success, which has enabled them to care in a greater and more effective way. I do not for one moment doubt the emotions and support of the hon. Gentleman or other Labour Members, but their economic failure when in office created great difficulties for those whom they wanted to support.

**Mr. Hanley:** By what percentage has the amount spent on the long-term sick and disabled increased since 1979?

**Mr. Moore:** Facts such as this are always difficult for the Opposition when compared with their own appalling record—*[Interruption.]* Of course, the Opposition want to speed quickly across such issues, which contrast so starkly with their own record. Expenditure on the long-term disabled and sick has increased by 90 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Secretary of State cease his practice of blaming social security officers for not making payments from the social fund? Is not the truth that the system is so circumscribed by regulations and rules that the payments simply cannot be made? Does the Secretary of State realise that Conservatives up and down the land are increasingly concerned about the Government's meanness? They want to vote Tory but want the Government to show more charity.

**Mr. Moore:** The hon. Gentleman is trapped in utter nonsense. I have never once criticised my social security officers about expenditure on the social fund. I have encouraged them to use their discretionary flexibility when dealing with community care grants. I have criticised authorities—especially Labour-controlled local authorities—which, despite their supposed interest in the claimant, sought to boycott the social fund in its early stages.

## Mainframe Computer

4. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when social security offices will be linked to the mainframe computer system.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** Already, Sir. Under the Department's computerisation programme, we have established pilot link-ups between 22 local offices and new mainframe computer systems for pensions and a central index. The largest and most ambitious project, dealing with the processing and payment of income support, was successfully introduced in Bolton and Edinburgh, south, local offices on Monday 27 February 1989.

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** I hope by that answer that my hon. Friend is effectively announcing the end of the Dickensian paper chase which used to cause so much frustration, not just to applicants but to staff in various offices up and down the country. Can he shed some further light on the matter, and say whether computerisation will permit on-line information at the point of inquiry at local offices? Will there be a link-up between local offices, for example, to ensure that the John Doe who applies in one of the Nottingham offices is not the same John Doe who applies at the office down the road in Derby? Such a system would, one hopes, eliminate fraud.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** My hon. Friend is quite right. It will be the end of the paper chase. In two years' time, when the national roll-out is complete, it will certainly be possible for an individual to go into his local office and see the information on the VDU screen, to which every office will be connected. As my hon. Friend suggested, that will also create the valuable by-product of helping to eliminate the small proportion of cases which are fraudulent.

**Mr. Allen:** Can the Minister confirm that there were problems at Bolton on the very first day of operation? Will he also confirm that the objective of the Government's strategy is to free social security officers to deal directly with clients? How many more people are dealing with clients face-to-face than before the system came in?

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The same number of people are dealing with clients face-to-face, but they do so with better and more accurate information and can answer questions quickly. The hon. Gentleman referred to the experience at Bolton. Minor problems were encountered in the offices there, but nothing substantial, and nothing that will in any way hold up our plans for introducing the system. The whole point of having a pilot period is to iron out small difficulties so that when the system rolls nationally there will be no problems.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Does my hon. Friend accept that it is welcome that Bolton was chosen for this pilot scheme? Will he say a little more about the benefits that will accrue from computerisation?

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), the benefits for the claimants are that he receives a quicker, more accurate and more complete service. The benefit for the staff is that they can work in a way that satisfies them because they can give a better service in better conditions. The benefit for the taxpayer is that he will save on administration in the system.

## Transitional Payments

5. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his calculation of the number of people who will receive no increase in their income support payments in April 1989 over April 1988, because they are in receipt of transitional payments or they have lost transitional payments during the past year.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The precise information requested is not available but we estimate that of the 4·4 million people on income support 3·9 million will gain from this year's uprating.

**Mr. McAvoy:** Does the Minister accept that even these estimates show the suffering that will be experienced by many people this April? The estimate is a disgrace. Surely, the Government should allocate more money to such a needy sector.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The estimates are encouraging in the sense that they will leave 14 per cent. of income support claimants still with transitional payments. The rest will be receiving a partial or complete increase. The hon. Gentleman should remember that transitional payments were designed to prevent a drop in the cash payments at the point of change. People who have them are being paid at a higher rate than is paid to people in the same circumstances who are coming on to income support.

**Mr. Soames:** Is my hon. Friend satisfied that those whose financial affairs will be altered by these arrangements have been warned sufficiently far in advance to allow them to make other arrangements?

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Local offices have certainly been informing people on income support of what their position will be after April, so those who will have no increase—the 14 per cent. that I have mentioned—will have been informed well in advance.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** Does the Minister accept that his answer to the original question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) was disingenuous? Does he accept that of the 3·9 million people that he mentioned more than 500,000 will not get the full

increase because of transitional additions, and another 500,000 will get no increase at all? That is not a small minority: it is a quarter of all claimants of income support.

Does the Minister also recognise that by definition none of these one million people received any increase last April? How does he justify a two-year freeze on the most frail and disabled claimants merely because they used to get a little extra help? How does he square that freeze with the often-repeated claim by the Government that they are targeting help on those most in need3

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I told the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) that 14 per cent. will still be subject to transitional payments after April. Secondly, I remind the hon. Gentleman that income support rates.for the groups he referred to—the elderly and the frail—will be increased next October.

## Income Support

6. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases of which he has knowledge 16 and 17-year-olds have ceased to receive income support without taking up a job or employment training place at the most recent date.

11. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases of which he has knowledge those aged 16 and 17 years have ceased to receive income support without taking up a job or employment training places at the most recent date.

**Mr. Scott:** Precise information is not available, but it is perhaps relevant that in the period 12 September 1988 to 24 February 1989 there were more than 3,000 directions under the discretionary powers covering severe hardship.

**Mr. McKelvey:** I thank the Minister for that reply. I am intrigued to know why figures are not available. Today in Kilmarnock, despite assurances by Scottish Ministers, 120 16 and 17-year-olds are looking for employment training programmes and only 50 programmes are available, so there must be a shortfall. The local DSS does not keep figures for young people who are denied benefit. How are we to know how large is this vast and growing army of young destitutes—Oliver Twists who come to London, for instance—looking for jobs and wandering the country, if there are no precise figures? That is a disgrace; the Minister should be ashamed to admit that he does not have the figures on these young people.

**Mr. Scott:** I am considering whether we need to collect these figures in future. As I have said, they are not available at the moment. The 3,000 hardship cases nationwide show the impact in this area. As I have undertaken on a number of occasions, we are carefully monitoring the impact of the new system on 16 and 17-year-olds and we have had evidence and representations from a variety of sources which we are carefully considering.

**Mr. Frank Field:** Does the Minister accept that his answer is totally unsatisfactory? I support the Government's strategy of saying to young people that they should either be in school or at work on YTS. Will he give an undertaking that when he next appears at Question Time he will be able to provide us with figures for the number of people who are now drifting around and on the streets because they are not able to claim benefit?

**Mr. Scott:** There is considerable difficulty in assembling those figures with any precision. As I say, I am considering whether we can get more information than we have at the moment.

**Mr. Baldry:** Does my hon. Friend agree that people who are unskilled, unqualified and unemployed at the age of 16 or 17 will almost certainly be unskilled, unqualified or unemployed at 20 or 25 years of age? The whole thrust of our policies must be to make sure that every 16 or 17-year-old has every incentive to get skills, qualifications and further education. Any culture that encourages young people to become dependent on income benefits as early as 16 or 17 is a disgrace.

**Mr. Scott:** I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. I can think of no worse start to life than to begin it on benefit. When the last Labour Government were in office 65,000 youngsters began their adult career in that way.

**Mrs. Beckett:** It is four years since the Government were warned of the dangers of cutting benefits to youngsters who cannot live at home, and a year since the Government went ahead and did that. Why are they still studying the inevitable results? How many more thousands of youngsters will have to disappear from sight while the Government hunt for an excuse for a climbdown?

**Mr. Scott:** We made special provision in regulations for the most vulnerable groups. We recognised that however carefully regulations were drawn some cases would always fall outside them. For that reason we introduced the severe hardship provisions and the use of discretion. We have had serious representations, not just rhetoric, about the impact on other groups of youngsters and we are carefully considering those.

## Fraud

7. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the efficiency scrutiny into his Department's anti-fraud procedures to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John Moore:** The scrutiny will be completed by 21 April. I am determined to maintain a vigorous campaign against those who cheat and rob the social security system. Great progress continues to be made in this area and investigations are producing good results. Benefit savings this year are expected to be about £250 million, over £50 million more than last year. This theft of public funds must be stopped, and I hope that the efficiency scrutiny will help us to get even better results.

**Mr. Evans:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that so far the campaign has been a great success? Nevertheless, £200 million or more this year is only the tip of the iceberg. Will he assure the House that he will continue to save taxpayers' hard-earned money from cheats and frauds and from people who deliberately go to the social security system to defraud the country? Will he further assure the House that he will maintain his vigilance? How much money does he think is still there to be saved on behalf of the taxpayer?

**Mr. Moore:** I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's attitude. No hon. Member and no member of the public in any way supports such abuse of the social security system, which is there to help people in need. We shall continue to maintain the kind of vigilant, effective effort which will produce results such as those that I have announced.

**Mr. Morgan:** Does the Minister agree that this problem will never be stamped out until his Department finds a way of getting at the collusive employer? There cannot be a fraudulent claimant without a collusive employer who allows the employee time off for signing on. The Minister has received advice from his departmental officials that there is no technique at the moment for getting at the collusive employer. Until he has such a technique, the problem of the collusive employer which creates fraud, especially in the building industry where it is virtually impossible to get a job but only phoney self-employment, will remain with us for a long time.

**Mr. Moore:** I do not accept that I am not seeking or following advice that would help us to pin down fraud, whether by employers or employees. I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said, and I shall look carefully at this subject. As I said, this issue is of concern to both sides of the House, and no one should be willing to see an abuse of the system through fraud, whether by employer or the employee.

**Mr. Kirkhope:** Is not the amount of publicity given to cases that are brought to trial insufficient to deter others from taking part in these disgraceful frauds? Could not the media and the press do more, and give more assistance in the campaign to prevent fraud?

**Mr. Moore:** I am looking forward to the results of the efficiency scrutiny. Publicity impacts and deters, so I shall be looking carefully at any recommendations about it. The cases that come to public attention already receive a considerable amount of coverage.

## Poverty

10. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to eliminate poverty amongst young people.

**Mr. Scott:** The Government believe that the best way to improve living standards for all groups is to manage the economy successfully, and, for young people, to provide necessary employment and training opportunities. This we have done.

**Mr. Wareing:** That utterly complacent answer is absolutely deplorable, and the Minister should recognise that a young person who is lucky enough to be on a YTS scheme has to pay 35 per cent. of his rates—sorry, 35 per cent. of his rents—20 per cent. of his rates and all of his water rates, and for all the costs of his heating. Many young people are destitute. Does the Minister accept that the Fowler reforms are not a great and radical reform but a charter for destitution? It is time that the Minister tried to live, as Matthew Parris once did, on the benefits that he is recommending for young people.

**Mr. Scott:** I reject the hon. Gentleman's allegation. He got into a terrible mess over his figures, and even when he got them, what he thought he had bore little resemblance to reality. The Government are increasing resources spent on support for social security, and increasing the targeting of it on those who need help most.

**Mr. David Martin:** How many young people benefit from family credit, and how does that compare with the number who used to benefit under family income supplement?

**Mr. Scott:** What is happening under family credit is that we are spending more money than we were profiled to spend. This is a successful benefit. We are about to embark on another advertising campaign to encourage greater take-up, and it would be in the interests of those involved if all hon. Members gave this benefit their full support.

**Ms. Mowlam:** It is not in order for the Minister to criticise the figures given by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), when the Minister is unable to tell us the number of cases of young people who are no longer on income support because of training and education. If the Minister is so convinced that young people are not suffering under this arrangement, why is there no disregard for young people on YTS after April 1989?

**Mr. Scott:** We are studying carefully the representations that we have received to see whether we need to take steps beyond those that I outlined in a previous supplementary answer.

## Social Fund

12. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will be increasing the social fund allocation per head of eligible claimants.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** When the social fund allocations for 1988-89 were announced in November 1987, the average allocation per head of supplementary benefit caseload was £39. The latest available figures show that the 1989-90 social fund allocation represents £46 per head of income support caseload.

**Mr. Harris:** Is the take-up for the social fund on target? I welcome the figures, but will my hon. Friend take it from me that in my constituency all the scaremongering that we heard about this fund seems to have been completely unfounded?

**Mr. Lloyd:** I am pleased to hear what my hon. Friend says about his local office. I can give him the figures for January, which show that there has been a welcome increase in successful applications. In January, the loans budget was 96 per cent. of profile, and the expenditure of the grants was 109 per cent.

**Mr. Allen:** Will the Minister accept that the social fund as a whole will be grossly underspent by the end of the financial year, largely because he and his colleagues have set the criteria far too high for local offices? Will the Minister be amending the criteria so that all of the social fund can be spent on the needy in Nottingham and elsewhere?

**Mr. Lloyd:** The criteria in January, when expenditure was up against the profile, were the same in almost all respects as they were when the social fund started. We have kept the budget for the coming year as it was last year, despite the underspend in the early part of the current year.

That shows that we have great faith that the rules as they are will enable the expenditure that we have seen in January to be continued and to be directed to those most especially in need, as is the object of the social fund.

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** Will my hon. Friend explain why there is such an extraordinary variation between one social fund office and another in almost identical areas? The three offices in Nottingham, for example, serve similar areas, but there are substantial variations in the per capita provision. Perhaps my hon. Friend will explain why that is so.

**Mr. Lloyd:** If my hon. Friend is talking about the difference between the per capita provision——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** No, he is talking about payments.

**Mr. Lloyd:** Well, provision was based very much on the pattern of single payments under supplementary benefit. The differences between offices reflect a series of factors, including the difference in the income support case load, the nature of the area, the attitudes of local voluntary and statutory groups and the efforts made by the local offices to ensure that the availability of the grants and loans is widely known.

## Widows' Pensions

13. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his policy to restore widows pension entitlement to widows aged between 40 and 45 years when the last child of the family leaves school.

**Mr. Scott:** As my right hon. Friend announced last Tuesday, we have decided on grounds of equity and fairness to extend entitlement to widows pension to women widowed before 11 April 1988 on the basis of the arrangements applying before that date. Our decision will bring in those entitled to widowed mother's allowance as well as widows allowance. For women widowed after 11 April 1988, there will be no change.

**Mr. Michael:** Will the Minister confirm the position for two women in my constituency, for instance, widowed in 1974 and 1975 respectively, whose last child will leave school within the next two years, and who would therefore have previously received the full widows benefit, they being between 40 and 45 at the point when the child leaves school? Will the Minister confirm that these widows will now receive the widows pension in full in accordance with the previous regulation? Will the Minister reconsider the inequity that will result for those who have been more recently widowed and to whom the new regulations will apply?

**Mr. Scott:** Those who would have been on the old widows allowance for six months and instead received the widows payment, and who under the strict application of the rules would not have gone on to become entitled to widows pension, will now be entitled to receive it. If the hon. Gentleman cares to write about the details of the precise case that he outlined, I shall give him a firm answer.

**Mr. Rooker:** Does the Minister's answer cover widows between 45 and 50, some of whom have lost £20 or more a week as the last child has left school? This has happened without any warning. They were always told that present widows would be protected. The Minister has never spelt out that when the last child leaves school, widows will lose massive sums. In addition, there is the gross unfairness faced by widows between 40 and 45 years of age who lost all their rights. In equity, the Minister must extend the provisions to include widows between 45 and 50.

**Mr. Scott:** I explained what would happen to those affected by widows allowance. That applies also to the widowed mother's allowance. The hon. Gentleman will recall that that was not covered by the commissioner's ruling. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided, in terms of equity and fairness, to include that group.

## Mobility and Attendance Allowance Units

15. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the last management audit was carried out on the mobility and attendance allowance units; and when it is proposed to hold a further audit.

**Mr. Scott:** The performance of the mobility and attendance units is monitored monthly. Their staffing and organisation is reviewed regularly so as to maintain sufficient staff to handle increasing work loads. The average time take to decide initial claims for attendance allowance and mobility allowance has reduced from over 14 and over 16 weeks respectively to about seven and a half weeks.

**Mr. Holt:** I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. He may be aware that last week I wrote to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security about my constituent, Mr. Moore, who has had to wait for a determination because of procrastination, delay, lost papers and the units' inability to answer the telephone. How much longer will Mr. Moore have to wait for the allowances due for Mrs. Moore, who died nearly two years ago?

**Mr. Scott:** As I said earlier, clearance times have been substantially reduced despite a steadily increasing work load. However, some claims, especially if reviews are involved, can take a considerable time while they are considered by the independent adjudicating authorities and perhaps even by the Social Security Commissioner. Neither Ministers nor officials can intervene in that process.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** Does the Minister accept that that is not a very good example of the way in which a service should be provided nationally rather than locally, and that people in my area find it very frustrating having to communicate with Blackpool and then not receiving the information they require? Would it not be much better to ensure that the service is locally based so that people can receive information and learn why their claims are taking so long?

**Mr. Scott:** As I said, the time taken to handle the initial claims has been halved, more or less, for those two allowances. It is moving very much in the right direction. I want to see the time reduced even more if that is possible, but some of the claims are complex and that is why we need the expertise of the central units so that they may be judged properly.

## Benefits (Elderly People)

16. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what percentage spending by his Department on benefits for the elderly has risen relative to the rate of inflation since 1979.

**Mr. Moore:** Fifty-one per cent. of benefit expenditure goes to the elderly. Spending on benefits for the elderly has grown by 22 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79.

**Mr. Cran:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that in addition to the excellent figures that he has just given, pensioners' total incomes also matter, and they rose by a pathetic 3 per cent. under the last Labour Government, but by 23 per cent. under this Government?

**Hon. Members:** Not true.

**Mr. Moore:** My hon. Friend is precisely right. He drew attention to pensioners' real incomes. He was referring to pensioners' average incomes, not simply and solely the state pension. With regard to the average income of all pensioners, my hon. Friend referred to the appalling performance of the Labour Government under whom pensioners saw their average income increase by only 3 per cent. throughout the whole five years that the Labour party was in office.

**Mr. McAllion:** Irrespective of actual spending on benefits for the elderly since 1979, will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government refuse to allow anyone over 65 to claim mobility allowance? Will he explain why people over 65 are not allowed to claim that allowance? People aged over 65 have the same need to move around as anyone else.

**Mr. Moore:** No, the mobility allowance was originally introduced for people in work or in comparable non-work situations. Eventually, the qualifying age was raised to 65 and in the Social Security Bill Standing Committee the Government are extending the upper age limit to 80. Considerable costs are attached, to the extent of £1 billion plus, to extend it beyond the age of 65. However, the massive increase in those able to receive mobility allowance is a reflection of the extra money spent by the Government on that benefit.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** When my right hon. Friend considers what scope he has to help the elderly, will he also calculate and place on public record the amount of taxpayers' money which goes on social security benefits for citizens of the Irish Republic who freely enter the United Kingdom without specific job prospects or their own means of support?

**Mr. Moore:** My hon. Friend refers to a feature of our historical relationship with the Irish Republic. I will go no further on that issue.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** In view of the Secretary of State's earlier comments, will he for the avoidance of doubt put on record the fact that under the Labour Government the basic pension increased by 20 per cent. in real terms in six years while under this Government it has increased by 2 per cent. in 10 years? Does not that tenfold difference between the last Labour Government and this Government put into perspective the relative priorities which the Labour party and the Conservative party give to pensioners?

**Mr. Moore:** I shall put on record that throughout the whole five-year period of the Labour Government, the total increase in the real average income of pensioners was 3 per cent. Pensions have increased by that amount almost every single year since the Conservative Government have been in office. I remind right hon. and hon. Gentlemen who are concerned about the least well-off in our country that in 1979 about 38 per cent. of pensioners were in the bottom one fifth of national wealth distribution. Happily, they now number only 25 per cent.—not 38 per cent., as under Socialism.

## Pensions

17. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the increase in real terms in basic pensions *(a)* from 1974 to 1979, and *(b)* from 1980 to 1989.

**Mr. Scott:** Chapter II, Mr. Speaker. As has already been indicated to the House, under the Labour Government the level of the basic pension increased by 20 per cent., and under the present Government by 2 per cent. Nevertheless, I confirm the figures given earlier by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, showing that pensioners' standard of living—that is what matters—has increased by 22 per cent. compared with 3 per cent. under the Labour Government.

**Mr. Morgan:** The Minister's reply highlights the 20 per cent. increase achieved under the last Labour Government, compared with the 5 per cent. improvement seen under the present Government. Does the Minister agree that, because of their upbringing, the elderly are particularly resistant to applying for means-tested benefits, it is important that the Government give some attention to setting a target by which time pensioners will be able to enjoy a 20 per cent. increase in real terms in their basic old-age pensions?

**Mr. Scott:** What matters to pensioners is their total standard of living, which has been increasing, and is increasing, under the Government. Under Labour, inflation wiped out the savings of a whole generation of pensioners, and that affected their standard of living more than anything else.

# ATTORNEY-GENERAL

## Queen's Counsel

45. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General how many Queen's counsel are practising at the criminal Bar today; how many were practising 10, 20 and 30 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

**The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew):** There are 601 practising Queen's counsel, of whom, according to records held by the Lord Chancellor's Department, 259 undertake some criminal work. The total in practice in 1979, 1969 and 1959 were 404, 391 and 181 respectively, but their specialities are not recorded.

**Mr. Greenway:** Can my right hon. and learned Friend say whether any of that increased number of Queen's counsel received any part of the £20,000 costs awarded against the two sisters in the Tesco case? Does he agree that it is horrendous that those two ladies should face such

appalling costs in their successful efforts to clear their names, following the accusation that they were involved in £2 worth of shoplifting? Does my right hon. and learned Friend further agree that Tesco has a moral obligation, if not a legal one, to pay those costs?

**The Attorney-General:** Of course I understand my hon. Friend's compassionate concern but he will recognise that I am unable to comment on any individual judicial decision, and I cannot make an exception in this case. My restraint must not of course be taken as concurrence in any of the adjectives that my hon. Friend chose to employ.

**Mr. Janner:** While I share the hope of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that Tesco will, for the sake of its own good name and of justice, pay those legal costs, is it not a matter of concern for the Attorney-General that the system of justice, including payments into court—whether or not they are received by Queen's counsel—has been brought into disrepute? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look into the entire matter, so that innocent people charged with shoplifting but cleared by a court will not find themselves under a massive burden of debt, which they have to meet because of a defect in the law?

**The Attorney-General:** The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that the Lord Chancellor is responsible for civil law policy, and I undertake to draw the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks to his attention.

## Legal Reform

46. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the Lord Chancellor's recent Green Paper.

**The Attorney-General:** As of 28 February 1989, 200 representations had been received in response to the Lord Chancellor's recent Green Papers. Of those, 44 per cent. were from members of the public, and the rest were from lawyers, including judges.

**Mr. Marshall:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Green Paper proposals should lead to cheaper legal services for all, and would benefit everyone in the community? Does he agree also that legal Jeremiahs who forecast an end to the independent Bar and to the family solicitor may be distinguished lawyers, but are jolly bad forecasters who do their profession a disservice?

**The Attorney-General:** The purpose of the Government's provisional proposals is to ensure that the public are provided with the most efficient and effective network of legal services at the most economical price. Opinions of every kind about the efficacy of the proposals, expressed in response to the Green Papers, will of course be assessed very carefully.

**Mr. Maclennan:** Bearing in mind that no Select Committee shadows the work of the Lord Chancellor's Department, and that it will be this House which is faced with legislation, and bearing in mind the blood-curdling imprecations of the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Hailsham, Lord Ackner and a number of other luminaries, does the Attorney-General agree that it might be appropriate to consider supporting any moves to set up a pre-legislative Committee of the House to take evidence on the proposals before they are brought before the House—especially in the light of widespread speculation that the Green Paper will be followed speedily by legislation rather than by a White Paper?

**The Attorney-General:** I rather lost track of the number of hypothetical questions incorporated in the hon. Gentleman's overall question. Those matters, however, are not for me but for the usual channels—and there I must leave the answer to that interesting question.

**Mr. Aitken:** Would it not be a logical extension of the bracing free-market philosophy of the Green Paper for the office of Lord Chancellor and, indeed, that of Attorney-General to be taken by non-lawyers in future? Does my right hon. and learned Friend not agree that the Peter Wright saga demonstrates that millions of pounds could have been saved if the Government had taken the cheapest available common-sense advice, namely that of non-lawyers?

**The Attorney-General:** My hon. Friend seems to have overlooked the fact that the Lord Chancellor does not have to be a lawyer. The Attorney-General does, but his salary is so low that I suspect that it represents the lowest cost available through competition.

**Mr. Fraser:** First, when the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor examine the Green Paper, will they learn some of the lessons of the Financial Services Act and ensure that they get these radical reforms right first time? Does the Attorney-General recognise that the effect of some other reforms has been to deny proper advice to those most in need of it—perhaps the poorest in the community? Secondly, what opportunity will there be for the House to be consulted? Parliamentary questions do not provide a sufficient forum for consultation about the terms of the Green Paper.

Finally, why does the Green Paper not say much about one branch of the profession—judges—and their selection, training and suitability? Would it not be better if a legal commission were responsible for the appointment of the judiciary?

**The Attorney-General:** As for whether the Financial Services Act and the way in which it has been implemented represent an analogy, those matters can be, and no doubt will be, properly addressed to the Lord Chancellor in response to the Green Papers. As for consultation with the House, there is of course absolutely no reason why right hon. and hon. Members should not make their representations to the Lord Chancellor, and he hopes very much that they will do so.

The appointment of judges falls outside the scope of the Green Papers, and I think that the hon. Gentleman will understand why that is so.

**Sir Anthony Grant:** Much of the Green Paper is extremely sensible, and valuable to the public and the legal profession. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware, however, that any proposal to move to the American system of contingency fees would be unacceptable? Does he not agree that it would be very undesirable for us to return to the days when certain lawyers were regarded with utter contempt and called ambulance chasers?

**The Attorney-General:** The proposals regarding contingency fees, and the argument underlying them, are set out with great clarity in the Green Paper. I do not wish to add to what is written there, except to say that the

American system—or, at any rate, what is commonly regarded as the American system—is not advocated in the Green Paper.

### Child Sexual Abuse

47. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General what his Department is doing to reduce the incidence of child sexual abuse, by securing convictions of perpetrators, and co-ordinating its approach with local government and other institutions in this area.

**The Attorney-General:** Crown prosecutors have been directed to accord priority to any child abuse proceedings that have been commenced and to keep the progress of such cases under constant review.

The CPS is represented on the Home Office advisory group which is considering the practical and legal implications of using a child's video-recorded interview as evidence in criminal proceedings, which is an important proposal. The CPS acknowledges the importance of inter-agency co-operation in the investigation of child abuse cases. The police and the social services, at local level, can always obtain legal advice from the CPS at an early stage in any investigation.

**Mr. Allen:** Will the Attorney-General please convey my thanks and those of my constituents to the CPS at local level in respect of its handling of the Broxtowe child abuse case? As that case was handled in an absolutely exemplary fashion, will the Attorney-General call for a report on the interdepartmental co-operation that took place, since we have heard a great deal about interdepartmental conflict in other cases? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman feel that there are lessons to be learnt, and will he have that report distributed to the CPS in other areas?

**The Attorney-General:** I am most grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said. As always, he is most supportive of the Crown prosecution service in his constituency, and that is greatly appreciated. I note what he has said, and I will make inquiries in the direction he has suggested and will write to him.

**Mr. Devlin:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is quite impossible for the House to deal properly with the Children Bill or to legislate on any other matter relating to child abuse unless it has some reliable figures? During the Cleveland inquiry we were bedevilled with varying claims concerning the number of children being sexually abused: one in four, one in 10, one in 100, or one in a million. Until we have some reliable figures we will not be able to draw up proper proposals for action. When can we have an inquiry into the extent of this abuse?

**The Attorney-General;** Such an inquiry would be outside my responsibilities, but I think that my hon. Friend will recognise that it is possible to acknowledge, and to respond to, public concern about the abuse of children. Undoubtedly child abuse exists to a serious extent, though it is not possible to quantify it precisely. No doubt, my colleagues will determine how best to meet people's concern.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Tigray

51. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to ensure that relief supplies are reaching the population of Tigray.

**The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten):** The international donor community will continue to do all it can to ensure that relief supplies reach those in need in all the drought-affected areas of Ethiopia.

**Mr. Wareing:** Now that the medical teams from the Relief Society of Tigray have confirmed the bombing of Hauzien and Sheraro and other towns by the Ethiopian forces, would not the best way of ensuring that supplies get through to the people of Tigray be to call an international conference embracing the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, so that an end might be brought to the strife in the area and that all those nations could partake in the relief of its desolate population?

**Mr. Chris Patten:** I should say, first, that we do try to provide humanitarian aid to those in need, wherever they may be. I do not think that it would be helpful to say precisely which channels have been used in the past, because that could prejudice the success of some of the relief efforts. However, it is a point that we have had an opportunity to discuss with the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs—to its satisfaction, I think. Of course, we urge all parties to the civil conflicts in Tigray and Eritrea to seek an early, peaceful and negotiated solution to their differences. It is not easy, to put it mildly, to distribute humanitarian assistance when there is a civil conflict raging.

**Mr. Jacques Arnold:** Does my hon. Friend not agree that in current circumstances one of the most effective ways to get help to Tigran and elsewhere is through the good offices of the international agencies that are working there? Can he tell the House to what extent Britain has contributed in that regard?

**Mr. Patten:** In the past couple of years we have provided, altogether, about £50 million for humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia. A good deal of that assistance has been chanelled through non-governmental organisations. At present we are providing 560,000 doses of vaccine, through agencies including the Save the Children and Concern, at a total cost of just over £250,000, to deal with the outbreak of meningitis, which, understandably, has caused a great deal of concern. We shall look promptly and sympathetically at any further requests for help with the meningitis outbreak.

### Uganda

52. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to provide additional aid to Uganda.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** During my recent visit to Uganda, I announced a further £21 million in aid on grant terms. Of this, £10 million is fast-disbursing balance of payments aid in support of Uganda's IMF-backed economic recovery programme, £5 million is for development projects, £5·66

million is an increase in the grant for the rehabilitation of Owen falls power station, and nearly £500,000 is for Oxfam's relief work for displaced people.

**Mr. Wells:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on squeezing in a visit to Uganda on his way back from Brazzaville after the Lomé convention meeting. What assurances can he give to the House that that additional aid, which is very welcome to Uganda, will be spent on the objectives that he has agreed?

**Mr. Patten:** We have had a particularly close and good dialogue and working relationship with President Museveni's Government in Uganda. They are faced with a Herculean task, but they have made an outstanding start to that job. Since President Museveni came to office we have committed or spent about £110 million in Uganda. I assure the House that we shall continue to support President Museveni and his Government in the excellent work that they are trying to do, which, I saw as is already showing some signs of success.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** In relation to Uganda and other African countries, was the Minister consulted by the Prime Minister prior to her statements during the last few weeks on CFCs? If that is not to be empty rhetoric, does the Minister accept that such statements must be followed up by money for the developing world? It may need money to rid itself of existing and future refrigeration plants.

**Mr. Patten:** Refrigerators in Uganda are at something of a premium just at the moment. Nevertheless, Uganda and other developing countries are threatened by global as well as local environmental problems. I addressed those problems in a widely unpublicised speech at Cambridge university last Monday, a copy of which is undoubtedly in the Library. That speech reflected many of the wise things that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said recently about sustainable development.

## Sub-Saharan Debt Relief

53. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he can report on the Toronto package on sub-Saharan debt relief.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** Seven countries have already benefited from concessional rescheduling at the Paris club. These countries are all implementing structural adjustment programmes supported by the IMF and the World Bank. We expect more to follow in the near future.

**Mr. Clarke:** The Minister has not given the figures, but if the British contribution is in the region of £2·5 million does it not compare unfavourably with the global debts of $73 billion that sub-Saharan Africa faces? Given the colossal difference between our contribution and the debt owed, would it not make sense to write off that debt and to make a substantial contribution to multilateral projects, including the Nordic plan?

**Mr. Patten:** As I should have thought the hon. Gentleman would know, we have written off old aid loans in Africa to the tune of £275 million. The initial costs of the Toronto concessions will be small, but they will grow as the Paris club agrees on more reschedulings. The main purpose of those concessions is to reduce the capitalisation of interest that leads to an exponential growth in the stock of debt.

**Mr. Sayeed:** Does my hon. Friend agree that those who doubt my hon. Friend's commitment to the destitute and the dying, thosewho have no chance of altering their circumstances, should have a look at a video recording of his excellent interview on HTV?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours** It is a pity that the Minister has not got any jobs to hand out.

**Mr. Patten:** All in good time. I would draw the attention of all comers, and the House, to HTV, were it not for the fact that I was appearing on BBC.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Notwithstanding the Minister's unpublicised speeches, his television appearance and his ambition, will he admit that in the past 10 years bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa has been cut in real terms by a cumulative figure of £600 million, while commodity prices have plummeted and interest rates have soared? Does he agree that what is needed is a major international expansion based on a just, new international economic order? Does he accept that the problems of debt and poverty are not just technical matters but are also moral issues?

**Mr. Patten:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities—demonstrating that none of us is entirely beyond ambition. We have spent £3 billion in sub-Saharan Africa through our aid programme since 1981. I am delighted, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is, that our aid programme is growing again in real terms, and much of that growth will go to real-terms increases in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Rain Forests

54. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international projects his Department is currently supporting to combat the destruction of the rain forests.

57. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he is doing to encourage conservation of the world's tropical rain forests.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** Details of our existing activities to protect rain forests are given in a supplement to the December 1988 issue of "British Overseas Development", a copy of which I have placed in the Library. We are encouraging recipient countries to direct more of our aid to forestry. We support international activity through the tropical forestry action plan, the international tropicial timber agreement and other multilateral bodies.

**Mr. Jack:** I am greatly encouraged by my hon. Friend's commitment to projects to safeguard the rain forests. Does he agree that we need to redouble our efforts, particularly in places such as Brazil, which faces 1,000 per cent. inflation and 1·5 million new entrants to the labour market for whom the most sympathetic international help is required? Will my hon. Friend consider sponsoring a conference on the lines of the current one in London on CFCs to deal with problems affecting the rain forests?

**Mr. Patten:** My hon. Friend's suggestion is certainly interesting. There have been a number of conferences on the problems in the forestry sector where—I agree with my hon. Friend—we need to redouble our efforts. I attended

such a conference recently, and most of the conferences have as an objective further strengthening of the existing international agencies and institutions so that they may play a more prominent part in securing the objective to which my hon. Friend refers,

**Mr. Dalyell:** May I pay tribute to the expertise of our impressive and concerned embassy in Brasilia? Is the Minister aware that those who are lucky enough to see it at first hand are absolutely appalled at the sheer horrific scale of the destruction near Altamira in the Xingu valley? Out of self-interest, ought we not to study what will happen to us in northern Europe if we do not do something to stop the destruction in eastern Amazonia, which, for reasons of physics, which I cannot go into just now, the air currents and the "hopscotch effect" across Amazonia could result in our having a climate similar to that in northern Labrador?

**Mr. Patten:** I endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the expertise in our embassy in Brasilia. I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman was able to visit Brazil and the important Altamira conference. What he said underlines what I heard last November from Chief Paiakan of the Kayapo tribe. What is happening in Amazonia is properly of considerable concern to the rest of the world. We have to find ways to help developing countries effectively to tackle their own problems and problems of concern to the whole world.

## Bombing Exercise (Scotland)

3.34 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proposed live bombing exercise to be conducted in the Moray firth on 13 March.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert):** There is no question of live bombs being dropped in the Moray firth. On 13 March, which is the day of delivery of the 1,000th Stingray torpedo to the Ministry of Defence, it is planned that three wholly inert practice Stingray torpedoes will be dropped in the Moray firth to demonstrate to the press the ability of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy to utilise this important weapon. All appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that shipping is not affected by this demonstration.

**Mrs. Ewing:** We welcome the fact that live bombs will not be used, but why did the Minister not take the opportunity that was offered on Thursday when I tabled a written question on the matter to deny that they would be used? When the Ministry of Defence was contacted by the press in Scotland during the weekend, it did not take the opportunity to deny that live bombs would be used. That has caused a great deal of worry to people involved in fishing, the oil industry and aviation in the north and north-east of Scotland. Why is it so important to drop even inert bombs in territorial waters rather than in international waters, as is usual?

**Mr. Neubert:** I learnt of the confusion only through the medium of the United States navy exercise called Exercise North Star 89 which is taking place from today until 15 March. During the exercise, aircraft from the US navy aircraft carrier USS America will undertake practice bombing missions. They will drop live ordnance on Garvie island and practice bombs on the training range at Tain. There is no question of live bombs being dropped in the Moray firth or anywhere else in United Kingdom territorial waters.

The concern has arisen as a result of a pamphlet, published by Mr. Malcolm Spaven, entitled "Scottish Defence News". He is an academic and adviser to several Opposition Members on aviation matters. He has confused the two events, and caused confusion and a great deal of unnecessary anxiety, for which I cannot be held responsible.

**Sir Hector Monro** (Dumfries): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is irresponsible of Opposition Members to raise this matter and to criticise the Royal Air Force for carrying out its training obligations within all the rules and regulations? Does my hon. Friend further agree that the two RAF stations—Kinloss and Lossiemouth—operate to the very highest standards in the Royal Air Force?

**Mr. Neubert:** That is undoubtedly true. My hon. Friend is right to suggest that this is, if anything, a mischievous attempt to confuse issues which would otherwise be entirely straightforward.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): When will Scotland stop being used as the playground of the Royal Air Force? Is the Minister aware that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) joined me, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) to protest strongly at the huge increase in low-level flying—down to 100 ft—over the whole of the south-west of Scotland?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The question is about bombing.

**Mr. Foulkes:** If they were doing it over Croydon you would understand, Mr. Speaker. It is all the same kind of thing. The Royal Air Force in Scotland and Cumbria does everything that it wants to. Does the Ministry of Defence ever say no to requests made by the RAF for such exercises and low flying?

**Mr. Neubert:** I must repeat for the benefit of the hon. Member that this request arises from a press facility arranged by Marconi Underwater Systems to demonstrate a very effective weapon. The use of ranges is entirely different and well established, and I am sure that the Scottish people want to contribute to the defence of the nation.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a bit rich for Opposition Members to complain about the RAF's activities when everybody knows that Scotland's location and the RAF bases there are essential to the well-being and safety of the United Kingdom? Does my hon. Friend agree further that the people who look after the servicing and supplies to those Royal Air Force bases would find it offensive if all such activities were stopped because they are the reason why those bases are there? If the Royal Air Force wants to continue low flying in my constituency, I am happy that it should do so.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Keep to the Moray Firth, please.

**Mr. Neubert:** It is always encouraging to have my hon. Friend with his long experience of the Royal Air Force behind me on these occasions.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Will the Minister explain why he did not take the opportunity to deny the story last week? Have not the fear and alarm been caused by a ridiculous public relations celebration to celebrate the 1,000th missile? If all reasonable steps have been taken to alert shipping, why has the Moray coastguard no knowledge of the exercise?

**Mr. Neubert:** It may be because the press facilities were arranged for a week from today—Monday 13 March. On the point about confusion and the timing of questions and answers, the "Scottish Defence News" pamphlet is dated February 1989. It has taken a long time for this scurillous rumour to surface.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): Does my hon. Friend agree that the torpedo to be used in the test, Stingray is easily the best lightweight torpedo in the world and that this test will provide another opportunity to show that the decision made nine years ago to go ahead with it was right?

**Mr. Neubert:** My hon. Friend speaks well of the weapon and I hope that the 30 press people leaving from London and going to Scotland to see it demonstrated in complete safety off the Scottish coast will be equally impressed by its effectiveness.

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Minister give an assurance that the disruption to

*[Dr. Norman A. Godman]*

the activities of our fishermen will be kept to a minimum? Will he also give an assurance that any debris left on the seabed will be cleaned up in the interests of our fishermen and their expensive gear?

**Mr. Neubert:** I shall certainly take note of the hon. Gentleman's point on the latter question. On the former, I assure him that every care will be taken not to disrupt local fishermen.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister accept that the practice of dropping live bombs on Garvie island, which has been properly regulated for many years, has met with complete acceptance locally because of the way in which it has been conducted and that there is no question of opposing in principle the use of live weapons on those ranges? However, can he tell us when he learnt about what he has described as mischievous rumours and how quickly he moved to quell them?

**Mr. Neubert:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. On his second point, I learnt about the confusion from the *Sunday Mail*, the source of all this anxiety.

**Mr. Allan Rogers** (Rhondda): The Minister has been extremely dismissive in his answers. Is it not true that a notification about live bombing was issued by the Civil Aviation Authority in relation to the Moray firth? Is that not another example of the complete lack of liaison between the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Defence, which we see in other spheres?

**Mr. Neubert:** The original premise of that question is wrong. What follows, therefore, is equally wrong.

**Mr. Andrew Welsh** (Angus, East): Will the Minister answer the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)? Why was the Moray coastguard not informed?

**Mr. Neubert:** I have already replied to that question. I pointed out that this press demonstration is taking place a week from now and that arrangements for it are made by Marconi. All who need to know will be notified.

## Train Accident (Purley)

3.43 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon):** With permission, I wish to make a statement about the serious railway accident that occurred at Purley at the weekend. The House will also wish to be aware of a further railway accident between two passenger trains which, I understand, occurred at 12.50 pm today in Scotland. Reports of that accident are still coming in.

At about 1.40 on Saturday afternoon the 12.17 Littlehampton to Victoria train ran into the back of the 12.50 Horsham to Victoria train as it was crossing from the up slow line to the up fast line just to the London side of Purley station. The collision derailed both trains and six of the carriages of the Littlehampton train fell down a high embankment. Five passengers were killed and some 80 people were admitted to hospital.

The House will, I know, want to join with me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the injured and the bereaved; and our thanks to the rescue and hospital services and the local people, who responded so magnificently to the emergency. British Rail is carrying out its own internal inquiry into the circumstances and the causes of the accident and has announced some preliminary indications.

Officers from the railway inspectorate, including the deputy chief inspecting officer of railways, attended the scene of the accident and have already started their investigations. I have today appointed the deputy chief inspecting officer to carry out an inquiry into the accident. His inquiry will be wholly independent and will be held in public. The report will be published. I have asked him to report to me as quickly as possible.

The fact that there have been two serious accidents on British Rail, and now a third, within three months is naturally a cause for concern. Mr. Anthony Hidden is already conducting an inquiry into the Clapham rail accident. As part of his inquiry he will be considering whether any broader management lessons need to be learned. On the evidence we have so far about the Purley accident, it is perhaps unlikely that there will be any common features with the accident at Clapham. But if in the course of the investigations any such issues were to emerge I have agreed with Mr. Hidden that they will be brought to his attention so that they can be taken into account in formulating any recommendations he wishes to make on management of safety on Southern region or generally in British Rail. My immediate priority is that both inquiries should be completed quickly so that immediate action can be taken without any delay.

**Sir William Clark** (Croydon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a most unfortunate occurrence, especially since there have now been three such incidents? Yesterday I visited the scene of the accident and it was a sickening sight. I should like to add my expression of sympathy to the families of the bereaved and those who have been injured, and to add my congratulations to the ambulance, fire and police services and the hospitals. Many of my constituents should be thanked for the free help they gave immediately while waiting for the ambulances, including the supply of blankets, sheets and

so on. Many young people—teenagers—helped by climbing ladders up the steep embankment and smashing windows in order to get out passengers.

I must tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of the concern of the general public. We welcome the independent inquiries, but they seem to take so long. The accident at Clapham occurred three months ago and the inquiry is still taking place. If any extra safety measures are needed, they should be implemented immediately, that should be done. Waiting for a report simply delays matters. We have a worried public and they must be reassured as soon as possible. I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that any necessary safety measures are introduced at once and that we will not have to wait months and months.

**Mr. Channon:** I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said, especially about the help received from local people. All the reports I have heard have referred to the magnificent help given by the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and others in the locality. They helped enormously in a difficult and sad task.

I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's comments about the time taken by inquiries. That is why I have chosen this particular form of inquiry and why I want both this and the Hidden inquiry to be completed as quickly as possible. I can give a further assurance to my hon. Friend that there is no need to wait for the conclusion of the inquiries for measures to be taken. Should it emerge during the course of the inquiries that any measures are necessary, I shall ensure that they are acted upon immediately.

**Mr. John Prescott** (Kingston upon Hull, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I offer our deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of those killed or injured in Saturday's terrible accident. We also extend our sympathies to those killed or injured in Glasgow this lunchtime, the first details of which we have just heard from the Secretary of State.

We express our great admiration to the emergency services who were, yet again, called upon to respond swiftly and with skill and courage. For the fourth time in three months our emergency services have responded to a major transport tragedy with unfailing professionalism and dedication. We also pay tribute to the way in which people in nearby houses reacted with such speed and compassion, whether it was running to get a ladder from the garden shed to help with the rescue or making a cup of tea to comfort the injured. Their natural human reaction was to do what they could to help. They must have been a great comfort to the injured, especially in those terrible moments before the emergency services arrived.

We welcome the fact that British Rail has acted so swiftly to accept full responsibility for the accident. When the news came through early on Saturday afternoon, I am sure that, like the Prime Minister, we all had the same dreadful feeling of,"Oh no, not again" as we were faced with yet another transport tragedy.

It is two years today since the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise. Since then we have witnessed a major loss of life at King's Cross, Piper Alpha, Clapham junction, Lockerbie, the M1 air disaster, Purley, and now Glasgow. The regularity with which such tragedies have occurred only heightens our sense of shock and the desire to do all that is possible to improve passenger safety. I ask the Secretary of State to ensure that, on this occasion, he gives the House all the relevant information that is available, which he has not always done in the past, as we saw with the Lockerbie statement.

Does the Secretary of State share my concern at the speed with which some sections of the media have sought to blame the driver of the Littlehampton train, Mr. Morgan, even as he lay seriously ill in hospital over the weekend? Will he review the practice by which such interviews are conducted?

How many incidents have there been in the past year of trains passing signals at danger? Will the Secretary of State consider some of the issues that have been brought to my attention and to which the inquiry should address itself? Does he accept that it would be much easier to determine the circumstances that lead to such accidents if trains were fitted with black boxes similar to those on aeroplanes? Would that not help to remove a lot of the speculation and controversy that follow such tragic accidents? Will he ensure that the inquiry studies the nature of injuries sustained at Purley, Clapham and Glasgow so that we can learn appropriate lessons about the design of coaches, seating and internal layouts?

Does the Secretary of State accept that there is growing concern among the travelling public about safety and a lack of confidence in the policies presently being pursued by British Rail? Does he accept the view of the former head of signalling and safety at British Rail, Mr. Stanley Hall, an acknowledged authority on these matters? In this morning's *Dail Mail*, he wrote:

"Over the years, railways gradually became safer until they reached a very high standard. But during the 1980s, the trend has not continued. BR seem to have reached a worrying plateau of safety."

Will the Secretary of State comment on the fact that, if Mr. Hall had still been employed by British Rail, under the new British Rail rule changes he would have been dismissed for writing such an article of criticism? Does he share my concern that British Rail is looking to disband local safety committees? What does that tell him about British Rail's management's approach to safety? According to the Secretary of State's railway inspector's report, since the early 1980s, accidents and injuries have increased by 30 per cent. and collisions have increased by 20 per cent. Does he accept that there is now cause for concern about British Rail's safety record? Is it not true that, in the past five years, excluding the King's Cross fire, 73 people have been killed in rail accidents? That is not including the tragedy in Glasgow today. In the five years before that, no one died or suffered a major injury in a train crash.

We welcome the fact that there will be a full inquiry into the Purley accident, but, in the light of the spate of recent tragedies, will the Secretary of State also consider a broader independent public inquiry into pasenger safety to ensure that standards are not being compromised to meet financial targets that are too tight and demanding? Does he acknowledge that the increased capital investment in British Rail has been provided not by greater Government resources but by the payment of higher fares? Does he accept also that the level of current financial support, in the form of the public service obligation grant paid by the Government, has been cut by over 35 per cent. in five years, a saving of over £2 billion at current prices?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with Mr. Stanley Hall, who said that safety is being compromised because

*[Mr. John Prescott]*

the Government are tight-fisted with their current financial support? Does he accept that the financial climate—*[Interruption.]* I am reporting to the House what has been said by an authority on safety who made accusations about the level of financial support affecting safety, and I ask the Secretary of State to listen carefully. Does he accept that the financial climate set by himself and in which British Rail operates means that new safety measures such as the implementation of a new advanced warning system, which is being installed elsewhere in Europe, has not been adopted?

The House needs to reassert the paramount importance of safety on the railways. Does not the Secretary of State think that an important step in that direction would be for the Government to find time for a debate on the Fennell report into the King's Cross fire which was published three months ago and has not yet been debated in the House?

**Mr. Channon:** I agree with the first part of what the hon. Gentleman said and join in his tributes to those who helped in the appalling disaster.

If the House wishes, I can bandy about party political points on the level of investment, although I had rather hoped that I would not have to do so. However, as I have been challenged on specific points, let me tell the House that current investment in British Rail is £560 million, which is an incredibly high level—one of the highest levels in real terms in the history of this country.

**Mr. Peter Snape** (West Bromwich, East): Self-generated.

**Mr Channon:** Whether it is self-generated or not is not the point that Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) had in mind. He asked whether the British Rail network was starved of investment. It is not. The hon. Gentleman also asked about rail working expenses. Rail working expenses and revenue investment in Network SouthEast have risen by 9 per cent. in real terms during the past three years. Therefore, his points on those matters amounted to nothing.

I accept that the House and the public have a right to be reassured about the safety record of this country's railway systems. That is far more important than scoring party political points in the Chamber. As a result of the Hidden inquiry and other inquiries, I am determined that hon. Members should be in possession of all the facts and, therefore, see that safety remains one of British Rail's top priorities for the future. I have reinforced that extremely important point with its chairman.

**Mr. Humfrey Malins** (Croydon, North-West): The majority of those who were injured in the Purley accident were admitted to the Mayday hospital in Croydon, in my constituency. I am sure that the House would want to know that, on Saturday, everyone associated with the Mayday responded magnificently to the challenge. Doctors, nurses, auxiliaries, secretaries, porters—literally everyone—rallied to the call and worked selflessly to care for the patients. I express sympathy for the bereaved and injured, and I repeat that everyone connected with the Mayday responded wonderfully to this awful accident and deserves our heartfelt thanks.

**Mr. Channon:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I have heard many reports about the magnificent work done in the Mayday hospital.

**Mr. Jim Sillars** (Glasgow, Govan): May I and my colleagues be associated with the expressions of sympathy about the accident at Purley? Will the Secretary of State provide us with further details on the accident in Glasgow? His statement was rather light on that matter.

I think that the Secretary of State will regret saying that the questions asked by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) were purely party political. People are lying dead in various parts of the country and the general public is now deeply concerned that, perhaps, the Government have subordinated the ethic of public service to their ideological anxieties about financial restraint. Is it not time to have not just individual inquiries into such accidents but a comprehensive review of British Rail's standing in relation to Government policy on safety?

**Mr. Channon:** I note the hon. Gentleman's initial remarks and accept his views and those of his party.

As for the Scottish railway accident, it is difficult for me to give the House accurate information. It occurred only a few hours ago, just before one o'clock this afternoon, outside or near Glasgow at Milngavie—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members' disagreement with that shows the unwisdom of my trying to give detailed information. Messages are coming through all the time. I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) will be kept in touch—indeed, I shall ensure that he is.

I agree that there is public concern about British Rail and about safety on the railways. It is important that it should be allayed. It is a pity when hon. Members start throwing partisan statistics around. There should be a general view throughout the House that we want a better safety record for British Rail. Historically speaking, it has been good, and I am determined that it should be further improved as a result of the inquiries.

**Mr. Michael Marshall** (Arundel): I want to express my sympathy for the bereaved and injured and my appreciation of the voluntary help and the work of the hospitals, including Mayday, which I visited yesterday. I am also taking this opportunity to speak on behalf of my right hon. Friends the Members for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) and for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who, for reasons known to the House, cannot be present this afternoon.

May I ask my right hon. Friend two questions? First, will he accept that comparisons with European safety practices should be made as part of this and other inquiries? My second question relates to a matter that caused me and many of my constituents grave problems over the weekend. Will my right hon. Friend use his good offices to end the absurd practice of giving out one emergency telephone number which then becomes clogged up, thereby causing unnecessary anguish and suffering to many of the families concerned?

**Mr. Channon:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I realise that he speaks for our colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), who are concerned about the situation.

It is fair to say that British Rail's safety record bears comparison with that of the other major rail networks in Europe—but I want it to be improved.

I agree with my hon. Friend's point about difficulties with telephone numbers. The problem has been examined on a number of occasions. It is not my direct responsibility, but I have already asked for it to be looked into.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor** (Truro): I wish to join in the expressions of sympathy to all who have been bereaved or injured in the one accident—we do not yet know what may have happened in the other accident at Glasgow.

The public's view was that one accident could be excused as misfortune, but their concern that the Government were being careless grew with the second. Now, after three, people will say that there must have been underinvestment, certainly of time and effort, in safety. They may also say that there has been too little financial investment.

Will the Secretary of State ensure that the inquiry extends to the general issue of investment specifically in safety measures by British Rail? Will he further ensure that decisions on the Channel tunnel high-speed link are taken with reference to the conclusions of the committees of inquiry into safety?

**Mr. Channon:** I note what the hon. Gentleman has said about his party's expression of regret, which I welcome.

Railway investment is now at its highest level for 20 years—£560 million this year, and an average of £755 million over each of the next four years. That is a prima facie case for saying that what the hon. Gentleman suggested was improbable—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) does not understand the difference between the public service obligation and investment levels. Investment is high by historical standards, and it is growing.

British Rail's top priority is safety. I have never turned down an investment proposal from British Rail. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) can rest assured that the Hidden report will cover any points relevant to this.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. May I say to hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies that, in view of what the Secretary of State has said, there is not much point in calling them today? I shall look with sympathy on this matter tomorrow.

**Mr. Anthony Nelson** (Chichester): As one who had constituents travelling on the train and whose constituents regularly use the route in large numbers, may I take this opportunity of expressing appreciation on their behalf to the relief services, the hospitals and everyone else who helped them so readily and selflessly in their plight?

My right hon. Friend will know that there is heightened concern in the south and south-east about the incidence of these accidents and the extent to which overcrowding on trains and congestion of trains in the area may lead to more such incidents. To what extent is consideration being given to additional safeguards that may prevent the overriding of automatic stopping systems? I do not of course refer to the cause of this accident.

Despite the generosity and immediacy of compensation by British Rail, to what extent does my right hon. Friend think that £3,000 for a death or a voluntary sum of £10,000 are adequate? The families concerned consider such sums grossly inadequate.

**Mr. Channon:** My hon. Friend is right to raise the issue of compensation, which is a matter for British Rail, which has accepted full responsibility. Generally it has a good record of dealing with compensation claims and I am sure that it will consider such claims sympathetically.

My hon. Friend rightly does not want me to prejudge the inquiry's outcome, and I do not want to comment on anything that may be relevant to the cause of the accident. I should have joined the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in saying how much I regret it when people speculate or come out firmly about accidents' causes before they have the facts. They should not blame persons or causes until they have the facts.

Anything relevant to these disasters will have to be considered. The Hidden inquiry can take everything into account when formulating any recommendations that it wants to make about the management of safety on Southern region, or more generally in British Rail.

**Mr. John Fraser** (Norwood): The Minister must recognise that there will be vastly increased traffic on Southern region as a result of the building of the Channel tunnel. Is he saying that the inquiry will be specifically instructed to consider a higher level of safety which will eliminate human and mechanical error as far as possible in the light not only of the accidents but of the future increased traffic that Southern region will have to bear?

**Mr. Channon:** Of course, our objective is to improve the safety record on Southern region and throughout British Rail—that is one of British Rail's top priorities. The House will want to be satisfied about that and will ask me to report back about it from time to time.

**Mr. Andrew Bowden** (Brighton, Kemptown): Does my right hon. Friend accept that all forms of travel inevitably involve a degree of risk? Is it not highly irresponsible to exaggerate that risk for party political purposes? On the journey from Brighton today I spoke to 22 of my constituents on the train, only one of whom had any serious doubts about British Rail's ability to maintain the highest safety standards. It is disgraceful that that confidence should be undermined for sordid party political purposes.

**Mr. Channon:** I note what my hon. Friend says. The important consideration which should unite both sides of the House is that we should work together to improve safety standards. I shall certainly try to.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): Although the figures may back up some of the statistics—I believe that only six people were killed in collisions between 1980 and Clapham—does the Secretary of State agree that there is another side to this which he has not mentioned? Will he look at a letter published in the September issue of *Modern Railways*, written by an anonymous driver out of Waterloo, who pointed out the low morale of train drivers, the fact that they have sometimes been asked to be on duty for 12 hours, and the fact that for the first time ever train drivers are leaving Southern region to take up alternative occupations? Is the Minister aware that, in correspondence that I have had with it, Southern region management does not deny those allegations?

*[Mr. Nigel Spearing]*

Good financial structures and good industrial relationships are surely a sine qua non of safety. Is it not now clear that by the Government's various actions in this and other public services they have been through some double yellows, other single yellows and have now passed two reds? When will the driver put on the brakes?

**Mr. Channon:** I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's partial support on the accident figures in the first part of his question. I shall have to examine exactly what he said. I am not sure whether my figures are exactly the same as his, but they are not dissimilar.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the morale of drivers and the hours that they spend on duty. If those factors are relevant, they will be considered by the inquiry into this accident. I shall read the letter to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the travelling public are entitled to expect three things from British Rail: first, that trains should leave and arrive on time; secondly, that passengers should travel in comfort and have access to seats; and, thirdly, and more important, that they should be able to travel and arrive safely. As my right hon. Friend has said, British Rail needs to restore confidence in those aspects. Will he therefore take steps today to summon Sir Robert Reid to a meeting so that my right hon. Friend can be satisfied that there is sufficient safety built into the fast rail link from the Channel tunnel to the London termini? None of us wishes to contemplate being in the House to listen to a Secretary of State for Transport giving an account of the massive death toll caused by trains with a frequency of one every eight minutes colliding while travelling at 160 mph across Kent. Safety applies no more and no less to the county of Kent.

**Mr. Channon:** I share my hon. Friend's concerns. British Rail's first duty is to ensure safety. The other two duties about which my hon. Friend spoke are important, but they are not as important as safety, which is the top priority. British Rail agrees with me about that. I have already discussed this sad situation with Sir Robert Reid.

My hon. Friend spoke about the fast rail link in Kent. Should proposals come forward from British Rail for that, I am sure that, among other matters, British Rail will have to satisfy the House that it is proposing a safe solution.

**Mr. Sam Galbraith** (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The accident in Scotland happened just outside Bellgrove station, in Glasgow. Once again, on behalf of my hon. Friends I extend deepest sympathy to those who were involved in the accident and to the relatives of those who were killed or injured. Will the Secretary of State ensure that this accident will also be the subject of a full public inquiry?

**Mr. Channon:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he says. I am sure that he speaks for all Scottish Members, at this early stage. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport has gone to Scotland to examine the situation, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), is also at the site. I shall certainly consider what the hon. Gentleman says to see whether an inquiry is necessary or appropriate. I would not rule that out. May we have a few more hours to find out the exact situation? I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman is kept informed.

**Mr. Robert McCrindle** (Brentwood and Ongar): Given the immense pressure on Network SouthEast as thousands of commuters, including my right hon. Friend's constituents and mine, insist on being carried to London at peak hours, is it surprising that there is perhaps anxiety emerging that the increasing density of traffic that is necessary to meet the demand can continue to be met against a background of continuing safety? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the extension of the Hidden investigation into the Clapham accident is adequate to deal with the specific point of reassuring commuters that safety and increasing density of traffic go hand in hand?

**Mr. Channon:** I hope that it will. The measures that I have announced are the inquiry by the railway inspectorate and the need, if necessary, for Mr. Hidden to take further steps. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend. I entirely agree that his constituents and mine want reassurances about safety and they are entitled to have them. I shall do my best to ensure that they have such assurances. I hope that my hon. Friend and I can work together in this regard.

It is worth bearing in mind that, in spite of these appalling disasters in the past few weeks, British Rail's general safety record is extremely good. Every day it safely carries millions of passengers, and our investment and other measures should make it possible for British Rail to give an even safer service than it does at present.

**Mr. Peter Snape** (West Bromwich, East): May I ask the Secretary of State to give the House details of the Glasgow accident when they become available? Will he accept that we are not playing party politics by quoting the former British Rail head of signalling and safety who, writing in this morning's *Daily Mail*, said:

"the . . . Government which is very generous with capital investment is also very tight-fisted with current support.".

Does the Minister accept that that tight-fistedness has an enormous impact on the day-to-day running of British Rail and on the safety measures to be taken in the industry?

Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that any inquiry into these latest accidents looks not only at finance but at safety, and at questions of staffing, salaries and overtime working, especially in the south of England? Does he agree that having people in responsible positions, such as drivers, signalmen and signal technicians, working 12 hours a day for seven days a week is not conducive to safety? Will the Department provide the money to allow British Rail to develop a new automatic warning system capable of differentiating between caution and danger signals as an additional aid to the driver?

Are there no deaths or tragedies and, based on his performance today at the Dispatch Box, are there no circumstances in which the right hon. Gentleman would review his own situation?

**Mr. Channon:** The House will form its own judgment of the merits or otherwise of the hon. Gentleman's latter comments. Until I heard his comments, I would have said that the hon. Gentleman was not making party political points, but I am not sure about whether to say that now.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Mr. Hall's article. I understand what he is saying. He alleges that the

investment may have been adequate but that the running expenses are not. I answered that earlier when replying to a question about the increase in resources that have been available to Network SouthEast in the last three years. When the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard*, he will find that I gave a full answer to that point—*[Interruption.]* I clearly understood that, but whether the hon. Gentleman does must remain open to doubt.

I was asked about making a statement on the Glasgow accident. We shall consider the matter and decide upon the most appropriate course.

**Mr. Harry Ewing** (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to register my protest that sufficient information about the Scottish rail accident is not available to make a report to the House. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in Conservative Members moaning. The tragic accident at Lockerbie happened in a much more remote area than Glasgow. From my recollection, it took place at 7.15 and within two and three quarter hours the House was suspended so that a Minister could make a statement at 10 o'clock. It is simply unacceptable that an accident which took place in Glasgow before 1 o'clock today cannot be reported on by Ministers at 18 minutes past 4 in the afternoon. One cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that Ministers are evading their responsibilities in relation to this Scottish accident.

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham):** I must put the record straight. After the Lockerbie disaster, I made a business statement at 10 o'clock to the effect that a statement would be made the following day. The hon. Gentleman is wide of the mark.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am sure that I voice the feelings of the whole House when I express sympathy to those who have been injured and to the relatives of those who have been killed in both accidents, especially as one of them was close to my constituency in Croydon.

## "The Satanic Verses"

4.18 pm

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the escalating international crisis arising from the publication of the book 'The Satanic Verses'."

My application is clearly specific because an international crisis has been provoked by the publication of the book.

The matter is important. Cardinal Hume and the Chief Rabbi this weekend joined the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Foreign Secretary in issuing statements about the international crisis. Representatives of Moslem and non-Moslem organisations overseas, the Archbishop of Canterbury, several bishops and a thousand writers from around the world have also issued statements on this escalating crisis. The media, both newspaper and broadcasting, have been pre-occupied by comments and events concerned with the publication of the book.

Demonstrations have taken place in a number of places, including Blackburn, Oldham, Bradford and London. Over last weekend there were others in Halifax, Nottingham, Sheffield, Derby and Keighley. Overseas there have been a number of protest demonstrations in which, unfortunately, scores of people have died and hundreds have been injured. More demonstrations are planned. More than 50 Members of Parliament, of all political parties, have signed early-day motions noting the offence caused to many Moslems by the publication of "The Satanic Verses".

This matter is urgent. Tomorrow Iran is expected to end all links with Britain. On Sunday the Foreign Ministers of more than 40 Islamic countries meet. They are expected to take decisions that will have important repercussions for the non-Islamic world, especially Britain. I believe that those repercussions will be social, political and commercial.

It is imperative that the House of Commons is allowed to discuss all the issues surrounding the publication of "The Satanic Verses." That would allow all hon. Members to speak on behalf of their constituents, Moslem and non-Moslem, the Government to give the House reports as to what actions they have taken, the House to be told the current views of the Executive on this escalating, international crisis and the Government to receive views and suggestions from hon. Members as to how this dangerous and difficult crisis can be brought to an end.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the escalating international crisis arising from the publication of the book 'The Satanic Verses'".

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to take into account the requirements of the order and announce my decision without giving reasons. I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

## Leicestershire Constabulary

4.23 pm

**Mr. Keith Vaz** (Leicester, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the action of the Home Office in regard to the investigations into the Leicestershire constabulary".

A year or so ago, Colin Pitchfork was jailed for life for the brutal murder of two Leicestershire teenagers. Two weeks ago, an American best-selling author and former policeman, Joseph Wambaugh, published an account of the killings and the police investigation entitled "The Blooding". It was clear from the account in the book and the credits given by the author that persons, possibly police officers, were involved in divulging confidential information to the author. This information was never published by the police, it caused great distress to the parents of one of the children, and it raised crucial questions concerning the conduct of senior police officers.

Three investigations into this case have already started. The first was launched by the complaints department in Leicestershire, and this was superseded by an investigation by Mr. Don Dovaston, the deputy chief constable of Derbyshire. Last Friday it was confirmed that the Police Complaints Authority would supervise the inquiry. Last week the matter was raised by a senior police officer during the annual visit of the inspectorate.

During the past month, the head of the CID, one of the officers named in the book's credits, has been moved from his position, as has his deputy. Both have many decades of service, and were highly regarded by fellow officers. The chief constable has now announced his retirement, the deputy chief constable has asked to leave to become the chief constable of Suffolk, and one assistant chief constable is being questioned about this inquiry. The situation is rapidly becoming farcical, and with constant and bizarre developments it is more akin to a soap opera than to the workings of a respected constabulary of police.

The officers of the Leicestershire police force are among the finest in the country, but morale is low, as has been revealed by letters sent to me from senior officers. It is vital that the public knows the current status of the various investigations and the stages that have been reached. We need an estimate from the Home Secretary as to when these investigations will be concluded. The Home Secretary must give the House an assurance that the results of the investigations will be published. Nothing less will reassure the public and restore morale. It is of the highest importance that confidential information given to police officers in trust should not be given to best-selling authors for material gain. If senior officers were entertained by or entertained Mr. Wambaugh, the public has a right to know, especially at a time when the chief constable has asked for more police officers because of pressure of work.

I ask that leave be given to adjourn the House so that we can discuss fully the recent and serious developments in the investigation of the Leicestershire constabulary.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the action of the Home Office in regard to the investigations into the Leicestershire constabulary".

I listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said about this matter, but I regret that I have to give him the same answer that I gave the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). The matters raised do not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

**Mr. Jim Marshall** (Leicester, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest to the second application under Standing Order No. 20, and I wish to put the record straight about the chief constable of Leicester. The present chief constable is seeking the permission of the police committee, which I understand is meeting today, to move to another job, with the British Transport police. Therefore, it is not strictly correct to say that he is retiring.

## Question Time

**Mr. Richard Holt** (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that last week, possibly on Thursday, you were rudely assailed on many occasions by Opposition Scottish Members during Scottish Question Time because English Members wished to ask questions. Today, six out of the first 11 questions on the Order Paper were tabled by Scottish Members, of whom four did not turn up to ask their questions.

Would it not be in everybody's interest to avoid the unseemly behaviour directed towards you, Mr. Speaker? All the questions tabled by Scottish Members today, as with my question to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, could have been automatically transferred elsewhere—in this case to the Scottish Office, to be answered at Scottish Question Time—so that all of us representing English constituencies could get in more often.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Allow me to deal with this. I do not recall being assailed by any Scottish Member. Scottish Members are among the most courteous of hon. Members.

# Orders of the Day

## Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Mr. Dick Douglas** (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We would be happy—I am sure that I speak for all Scottish Opposition Members—if the House would leave all the proceedings on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill to the individual votes of Scottish Members.

**Mr. Speaker:** I remind the hon. Gentleman that this is a United Kingdom Parliament, and long may it remain so.

4.28 pm

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

In putting forward their proposals on education, the Government start from three premises, all of which, I believe, will be acceptable to both sides of the House.

We start, first, with the premise that the purpose of education is to enable every youngster at school in Scotland to realise his or her full potential. That is the only rationalisation of and justification for an education system.

Secondly, I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House would accept that education does not consist only of what happens within school, and nor does what happens within schools interest only the teaching profession. The involvement of parents and of the wider community in our schools is likely to bring results that will ultimately be to the benefit of the pupils themselves.

Thirdly, I believe that I speak for hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that the debate takes place in the context and against the background that, over the past 10 years, education standards in Scotland have continued to improve, to the benefit of all the pupils in Scotland. It is important—*[Interruption.]* I am surprised that there is some objection to, or protest against, that proposition. I use as evidence for the proposition a recent Labour party document which was produced by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish). A passage on page 2 of the document states:

> "It is important at the outset of this review to reaffirm our belief in the excellent record of Scottish education. Standards are constantly improving."

It is significant that it took the publication of the Bill for the Labour party to admit that over the past 10 years standards of education have been improving. For the previous nine years, Labour Members have been trying to tell us that standards have been deteriorating. All of a sudden, they agree with the Government on the high quality of education. They recognise that under the Government, and with the various reforms of the education system that have taken place, the net result has been constant improvement in the standards of education that are enjoyed by our young people.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): I am interested in the three premises on which the Secretary of State began his remarks. Does he agree that one of the reasons for the

*[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]*

strength of the Scottish education system is its distinctive nature? Is it not, therefore, appropriate that legislation dealing with Scottish education is left to Scottish Members? Does he agree that, on that basis, the Scottish Grand Committee should consider the Bill in Committee?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I agree with the hon. Lady's premise, but not with her conclusion. One of the benefits of a United Kingdom Parliament—I cannot expect the hon. Lady to understand this—is the mutual exchange of ideas. Our English colleagues are learning the advantages of a national curriculum, which we in Scotland have enjoyed for some time, and we should all be free to participate in these debates in this, the Mother of Parliaments.

I suggest that it is common ground that the standards of Scottish education have improved over the past 10 years. A factor to which I must refer was the almost unknown involvement of parents in any significant way in the school system in Scotland in the recent past. In that respect, we were behind the rest of the United Kingdom and western Europe generally. It is common ground now, even if it was not a couple of years ago, that the involvement of parents by giving them practical responsibilities, not merely in an advisory capacity, in the schools which their children attend is beneficial in terms of the education that the children ultimately receive.

The Government took the first steps in that direction when they introduced the parents' charter. The House will recall the great scepticism, indifference and in some respects hostility that was displayed by Opposition Members when it was proposed that parents should have real rights in respect of the schools that their children would attend. It was said that there was little interest in that, and little demand for it. Since the charter has been introduced, however, over 120,000 parents in Scotland have exercised their rights. That has been to the benefit of their youngsters and to the education system as a whole. I do not believe that any political party represented in the House suggests that the charter should be repealed or that parents should not have the rights that the Government gave them, against the advice of Opposition Members.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths** (Edinburgh, South): Does the Secretary of State not realise that one of the reasons why more and more parents have become involved in Scottish schools is the cuts that the Government have imposed on schools and their budgets? That has made it necessary for them to engage in fund raising. It has led also to a greater level of awareness. In my constituency—even when the Conservative party ran the local council—we have lost specialist teachers, such as music and physical education teachers. Teachers left, never to return. It is no wonder that parents have become more involved and that they feel strongly about the education of their children.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman says. He might like to discuss these matters with those who occupy the Opposition Front Bench. The Labour party is on record as saying that over the past 10 years standards have constantly improved. It recognises that they have improved constantly, not occasionally. That is a fact in which we can all take great pride.

The proposals in the Bill cover a wide range of issues. I wish to deal especially with the proposals for self-governing schools. It is right to emphasise that in one profound sense the proposals are different from those for school boards, which the House considered in the previous Session. It was the wish of Parliament that boards should be established in all primary and secondary schools in Scotland. Inevitably and properly, there was enormous interest in what the implications might be. It is significant that over the past year the debate on school boards has been entirely won. Those who share my political philosophy and education philosophy and Opposition Members are now committed to school boards. The Educational Institute of Scotland has said that it intends to work with school boards. Opposition spokesmen are on record in calling on parents to join school boards to help the education system.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): Will the Secretary of State accept that Opposition Members and teachers are recognising the existence of the law and the need to ensure that schools are properly managed? That does not mean that they support school boards. Parents are extremely concerned that they should have to fight other parents rather than entrust their education of the children to professionals.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman may be living with reality, but he will know that every test of opinion in Scotland in recent months has shown a large majority of Scottish parents in favour of school boards and believing that they are a desirable innovation.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I wish to develop my argument.

As I have said, there is an important difference between the school board proposals and the proposals in the Bill. The proposals for self-governing schools are optional. The question whether an individual school will become a self-governing school will be decided by the parents in the locality. It will not be a question for the Government or local authority to determine. In some places, parents will decide that it is appropriate and in others they will not. That is entirely proper.

I shall explain the basic thinking behind the proposition and its relevance to Scottish education. It is a legitimate and proper matter to address. We are all conscious, as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said, of the distinctive nature of the Scottish education system. Those who are familiar with the system know that its roots go back to the involvement of the local community in its local school. That led to a distinctive and traditional type of school in Scotland, which gave literacy to a far wider section of the population than was common elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It established an international reputation for excellence. They were local schools—parish schools. They were schools in the local community.

That structure changed—it was inevitable that it would —for two reasons. It did not change because there was objection to the community being responsible for its local school. It changed because the local community could not generate the resources that are properly expected in the contemporary system to provide the quality of education that is required. Secondly, it changed because parents, equally properly, over a number of years grew to expect national standards for the education that their children would receive. There had to be a basis for being satisfied that the education received was of a national standard.

That gave reassurance to parents and offered the maximum prospects for their youngsters to have access to university or to higher or further education, or to the seeking of employment.

**Mr. Douglas:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I shall develop my argument and give way to the hon. Gentleman in a few minutes.

The considerations to which I have referred led inevitably to education being less controlled by the local community. There is an additional consideration that stems from 1975 and the reform of local government. Education had been the responsibility of local authorities for many years, but the effect of reorganisation of local government was to make education one of the responsibilities of the regional councils. It was inevitable that, for most of Scotland, that meant control——

**Mr. Douglas:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I shall develop my case for a moment, and then I shall give way.

The effect of the reorganisation of local government meant that control over local schools became concentrated in the regional councils, which were often many miles away from local communities. Strathclyde is the most obvious example of that, as its education authority is responsible for the detailed administration of schools as far apart as Campbeltown, Oban, Motherwell, Cumnock and other places.

It is equally true in other regions. We might have to live with that if those factors were inevitable. However, essentially we are suggesting that the Bill provides an opportunity for parents and local communities, if they so desire it, to have much greater control over a school with the resources required in the modern world and a guarantee of continuing national standards. I believe that that is consistent with the Scottish tradition and it enables the Scottish education system to get the best of both worlds if parents so wish it.

**Mr. Douglas:** Without following the Secretary of State's analysis of the scope and nature of control, many hon. Members remember the review of local government and we made points then about the size of Strathclyde. However, that legislation was forced through by the Conservative Government. Is not the Secretary of State missing one important and distinctive Scottish criterion which commands attention in relation to giving opportunities to all on the same basis? Every child should have a similar and equal opportunity to exercise his gifts and so benefit the community. Is that not basically what the Bill transgresses? In one way or another, the Bill is selective and that goes against the inherent character of Scottish education.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I agree with most of the hon. Gentleman's comments, but I can state categorically and without equivocation that the Bill is not designed to reintroduce selectivity; nor is it designed to do anything other than to add to the opportunities available to Scottish youngsters and their parents in the education system.

**Mr. Alistair Darling** (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that as resources will be limited —as they always will be under this Government if they remain in office—the pressure on school boards to ensure that the parents of children they accept are capable of raising money by contributions or through fund raising will be immense? As in private schools at the moment, parents will be invited to raise more of the funds. The Government are encouraging a similar practice in the Health Service. Does the Secretary of State accept that in that way selection will occur? Fees may not be charged, but fund raising will be encouraged. There will be selection by the back door. That is the whole reason for school boards. Surely the Secretary of State should be honest and just tell us that that is what he wants.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am very encouraged by the fact that the hon. Gentleman finds it so difficult to find anything in the Bill to oppose that he erects Aunt Sallys to attack, because he knows that there is nothing in the Bill to encourage a school board of a self-governing school to be any more interested in raising money than any other school in the state system. The hon. Gentleman must know that, because I do him the credit of assuming that he has read the Bill.

**Mr. Donald Dewar** (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State said that the Bill is not designed to encourage selection or encourage the return of selection in our education system. He knows that when an opted-out school considers its fundamental characteristics after a period of years, it clearly has powers to reintroduce selection. Will he assure us that while he is Secretary of State—or if he is not, that he will use his influence on a future Secretary of State to ensure this—the Secretary of State's veto will be used to stop the reintroduction of selection?

**Mr. Rifkind:** That is a very important issue and I am well aware of the allegations which have been made.

Hon. Members want to know whether there are proposals in the Bill which will change the character of schools in the state system. Let us consider the existing position. At the moment any local authority can change the character of all its schools overnight. There is nothing to stop any local authority in Scotland, either because of a change in political control, or simply because it has changed its mind, changing the character of every school in its locality. It does not have to consult the parents, the electorate or the Secretary of State or gain approval or permission from anyone. It is important that I should remind the House that local authorities can change the character for selectivity or for ending co-education in all schools in Scotland, if they wish.

Clearly it cannot be made impossible ever to contemplate any change in a school in the state sector if that is not impossible at the present time, but the Bill introduces infinitely more safeguards than exist at the moment. For the benefit of hon. Members who have not read the Bill, I will explain why that is so.

Any proposal to change the character of self-governing schools requires a ballot of the parents. If there was a proposal to end co-education in a school, it is somewhat improbable to believe that the parents whose children were of the different sex from the character proposed for the school would find that proposition attractive. There must also be consultation with the education authority, the Scottish Office and others involved. The Secretary of State must also give his approval.

Quite properly those are substantial hurdles to changing a school's character. In response to the points raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr.

*[Mr. Rifkind]*

Darling), I am on record saying that I do not envisage it being appropriate in the first few years for a school that has achieved self-governing status to want to change its character in any major or fundamental sense. What happens in the longer term, as with local authority schools, is something that we will have to address in future.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** Will the Secretary of State clarify what he means by a reasonable number of years? Is he setting a time limit? Does he envisage his successor using powers which the right hon. and learned Gentleman may leave behind precisely for that purpose?

**Mr. Rifkind:** At the moment I have no clear knowledge how long my term of office in my present post is likely to last. I should not like to address this matter in terms of whether it will be me or my successor who will have to consider it, but clearly it would be considered by a Conservative Secretary of State, whichever approach was used.

The purpose of the Bill is not to change the character of schools. Its purpose is to allow parents to achieve self-governing status for their schools if they so wish. As local authorities at the moment have a completely untrammelled ability to change a school's character without any external consultation or approval, it would have been quite unreasonable to say that a self-governing school could never, irrespective of the safeguards, contemplate any minor or significant change in the school. The safeguards that we have proposed are far tougher than those which exist at the moment.

**Mr. Harry Ewing** (Falkirk, East): The Secretary of State has been most generous in giving way. However, what is he actually saying? Is he saying that he will give his authority or use his powers to help schools that want to opt out and become self-governing to do that but, if at a later date, possibly very soon thereafter, a school wants to opt back into the state system, he will withhold his authority and not allow schools to opt back in? That seems to be what he has just said.

**Mr. Rifkind:** No, I can reassure the hon. Gentleman. We originally proposed to suggest that, once a school became self-governing, it would not be able to revert to local authority status. However, we said some weeks ago, in the light of various proposals and consultations, that we would not want in all circumstances to rule out a self-governing school opting back in if the local education authority and parents took that view and if it was the common-sense outcome in the circumstances. There is nothing in the Bill to rule that out.

**Mr. Sam Galbraith** (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Why is that not said in the Bill?

**Mr. Rifkind:** That does not need to be said in the Bill, because it was never forbidden by the Bill. If the hon. Gentleman had read the Bill, he would know that.

The second allegation that is occasionally made, particularly by the hon. Member for Fife, Central, is that the Bill is a centralising measure. The hon. Gentleman used the rather quaint expression that the Government propose to "nationalise" schools. I am not sure whether, in using that particular word, he was trying to put my own right hon. and hon. Friends off the proposal or put his own hon. and right hon. Friends on to it.

In considering whether the Bill is a centralising measure, the only question that needs to be addressed is whether parents, teachers, and other representatives of the local community serving on the board of management will have far more or far less control than in a school run by a local education authority. If one addresses oneself to that question, the answer is obvious. The board of management of a self-governing school will have responsibility for staff, for finance, and for a whole range of matters that are currently determined by the local education authority, which may be many miles away.

While the Secretary of State will provide the block finance, he will have nothing like the day-to-day control that an LEA has, because the Bill gives him no such powers. The hon. Member for Fife, Central will realise that when he re-reads the relevant clauses.

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): Why does the Secretary of State believe that a ballot only of parents currently having children at the school is important? Why should there not be included in the ballot parents who expect to send their children to the school in future? Why not a ballot of the whole community? One cannot argue that the community as a whole does not have an interest in the matter simply because some residents have no children or have children who have left school.

**Mr. Rifkind:** There could be certain practical problems in trying to determine those who may have children at the school at some future time. We recognise the interests of the wider community, which is why, in the case of a self-governing school, the parents will not by themselves have an overall majority. That provision reflects the legitimate interests of the wider community. Because the local education authority will no longer have overall responsibility for that school, it is right and proper that that should be the case.

Part I of the Bill deals with self-governing schools. Its first 12 clauses determine how those schools should be managed. Important provisions ensure that the essentials of existing legislation on public schools will continue to apply to a school that becomes self-governing. In addition, each self-governing school will have its own scheme of government that will define its basic characteristics and policy and provide for the composition and proceedings of its board of management. The board will include the school's headteacher, elected members drawn from the teaching staff, parents and members appointed from the local community. The board will include all elected school board members who wish to transfer and serve out their terms of office on the new board of management. However, we have allowed for boards of management to include more appointed members and for them to serve a longer term—partly to strengthen links with the local community and partly because external expertise will be particularly valuable to a body taking on those aspects of running a school.

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): What is the democratic case for co-opted members being elected for a period of five to seven years? Also, what criteria does the Secretary of State apply in allowing for the election of outsiders for

a period of up to seven years, given that the Bill is meant to ensure that the school is an extension of the local community?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Certain schools are denominational, and in our view it is right that the church in question should have representation on the board of management. Also, if one did not include representatives of the wider community, the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) would be a factor, because parents of children currently at the school would have an overall majority. It is important to have wider representation, because longer-term interests may not simply be those of the parents of children currently at the school. That is a point which the Government themselves are making.

**Mr. Henry McLeish** (Fife, Central): Is that so?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman should not sound so surprised at that "extraordinary" revelation.

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** Will the Secretary of State give one or two examples of the "wider community"? What special interest will such representatives have in the Raploch primary school in Stirling, for example?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is easy to identify the likely consistency of the wider community. It might consist of some of the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

**Mr. Ewing:** They are not on the health board.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should consider its composition again before he repeats that statement. As we understand that the hon. Gentleman is now a believer, in some circumstances, in self-governing hospitals, he should not be upset at the prospect of self-governing schools, because the same principles apply.

Wider interests may be represented by a board member who is a trade unionist or a local business man. It will not be the Secretary of State who decides that, but local people on the board itself. If Opposition Members are being so scurrilous, it implies that they do not have confidence in parents and teachers to select members of the local community who have a contribution to make to the board.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett** (Pembroke): Does my right hon. and learned Friend find it surprising that Opposition Members should be so opposed to parents' rights?

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** Where is the hon. Gentleman's constituency?

**Mr. Bennett:** The hon. Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) spoke at Question Time for the English Home Department and Welsh Office last week, so I ask the hon. Gentleman not to give me that nonsense.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is surprising that Opposition Members should be so opposed to parents' rights? Does he agree that they should take a trip to Buckinghamshire, to the manor owned by their hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who will instruct them in the new-found consumerism that is Labour party policy? Does he agree also that putting power in the hands of the parents is the ultimate form of devolution?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is, and the opposition of Labour Members is rather curious.

Once a school becomes self-governing, the education authority will no longer have any responsibility for overseeing its day-to-day running. That duty will fall to its board of management, which will have responsibility for providing education, managing the school's staff and assets, and overseeing its day-to-day running.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** *rose*——

**Mr. Rifkind:** Perhaps I may be allowed to continue for a moment. I have given way several times, and many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. I must show some self-discipline, much though I enjoy the hon. Lady's interventions.

The Bill requires boards of management to promote links with the local community and to encourage wider use of the school's facilities. It places on the board a duty to consult regularly with the parents of children at the school. Boards will be required to run schools in line with the description included in the articles of management. Self-governing schools will, of course, remain in the public sector and could not become fee-paying.

Clauses 13 to 19 set out the procedure to be followed by a school seeking to become self-governing. The schools not eligible to do so include nursery schools, special schools, and schools for which no school board has been established. The Bill provides for the procedure to be initiated in either of two ways—by the school board passing a resolution or by a written request signed by 10 per cent. of the parents. A secret postal ballot of parents of children at the school would have to be held within three months. That ballot will be funded by the Secretary of State and conducted by an independent body that he will appoint. If the majority of parents voting were in favour of self-governing status, proposals would have to be published and submitted to the Secretary of State. The Bill gives outside parties one month to make representations before a final decision is reached. If approval is given to the proposals, the school will become self-governing on a specified date, which is referred to in the Bill as the incorporation date.

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): As the Secretary of State well knows, in many rural areas—not least, the Scottish islands—there may be only one secondary school but a large number of primary schools. What rights, if any, will the parents of children at the feeder primary schools have in a ballot relating to the wish of the secondary school to opt out? Parents of primary schoolchildren may have no choice if the only secondary school to which they can send their children is one that has already opted out of the local authority system.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The electorate will comprise parents of children already at the secondary school. However, I am happy to reassure the hon. Gentleman that access to that school will not be denied to any youngsters living in the locality. The same rights available under the present parents' charter will continue to be available, which is something that the hon. Gentleman should welcome. No doubt those who vote at such an election will take account of that point when considering the proposal before them.

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): As the Secretary of State says, the Bill requires a simple majority of votes cast

*[Mr. John McAllion]*

in the ballot to approve opting out. What percentage of the votes of the entire electorate will be required before he can give his approval?

**Mr. Rifkind:** As the hon. Gentleman says, the ballot does not itself decide the question of opting out; it simply determines whether the process can reach the next stage. As Secretary of State, I would of course take into account the proportion who had voted in a ballot—which I accept is relevant—but I think it right to give most weight to the views of those who have chosen to exercise their vote either for or against the proposal.

Clauses 21 to 23 cover staff matters. The members of teaching and non-teaching staff of a school that becomes self-governing would transfer to the employment of the board of management, and their contracts of employment would also transfer unchanged. Once a school had given notice of its intention to hold a ballot of parents, the education authority could not appoint, transfer or dismiss staff without the consent of the school board.

Clause 24 provides that if an education authority has the duty or power to provide benefits or services for pupils in the area, such as school transport, it is not to treat pupils at self-governing schools any less favourably than those at schools under its management. Clauses 25 to 27 provide for the financing of self-governing schools. Grant will be paid direct to the board of management, and recovered by the Secretary of State from the local authority. We intend it to be in line with what the school could reasonably have expected to receive had it remained under the management of the education authority.

**Mr. Darling:** May I return to the point that I tried to press earlier? What will a board do if it simply cannot make ends meet on the grant that it receives from central Government because the average is not sufficient? Will it raise funds from other sources or will it be required to pay off staff? What will happen?

**Mr. Rifkind:** What will happen will be exactly the same as what happens at present if a school receives less than it would like from the education authority. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that this is an exceptional problem that would be relevant only to self-governing schools does not match the experience of successive schools under successive Governments of varying political complexions.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): The Secretary of State is a lawyer and I am not, and my question is purely interrogatory. He talks about the management of assets and of staff. Are there not likely to be continuing problems? By their very nature, the personnel of some of the governing bodies will change. Parents will go off to take jobs elsewhere, and there will not be continuity. I can imagine hideous legal cases going on for a long time and creating endless problems. As a lawyer, the Secretary of State may say that there is an answer, and I should like to hear it.

**Mr. Rifkind:** There is an answer: it is called by-elections, which happen regularly in local authorities. People change their employment if they are councillors, or they move to another part of the country, and it is necessary to fill vacancies. I have never heard that used as an argument against the whole structure of local democracy, and I do not see it as a fundamental problem.

**Mr. Dalyell:** In a local authority there is some continuity. The new organisations simply will not have that.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman is not addressing the real issue. A large proportion, indeed the majority, of the board of management will be either teachers or co-opted members. Parents will form a minority, albeit a large minority. It is not realistic to suggest that on a given date all the members of a school board will suddenly decide to move their homes or employment.

Clauses 32 to 42 make provision regarding property. The basic intention is for all property rights, liabilites and obligations of an education authority relating to a school to be transferred to the school's board of management when it becomes self-governing. A commissioner for school assets will be appointed to assist the school board and the education authority to determine how property and rights over property are to be apportioned between the education authority and the school when it becomes self-governing.

Another basic provision is that after a school has given notice of its intention to hold a ballot on self-governing status, the education authority should not enter into any transaction involving the assets of the school, used for the purposes of that school, except with the consent of the school board. Nor is it expected to remove any property from the school without the consent of the school board.

I am occasionally asked whether the Government have a target for the number of schools that they wish to achieve self-governing status in Scotland. We have no such target and it would be wrong and foolish to attempt one, because the matter will be determined not by Government but by parents in the individual localities.

We are already able to point to certain significant advantages accruing to parents that have resulted purely from the Bill's publication. Already a number of important spokesmen are giving advice to their local authorities. For instance, councillor Malcolm Green, chairman of the education committee, has said to his colleagues in Strathclyde region:

> "If we want to stop parents in Strathclyde going for self-governing schools, we will have to make sure that our schools are so acceptable to the parents that they will not wish to use the rights in the bill."

On 14 February, Mr. Fred Forrester of the EIS is reported to have said:

> "Some fine tuning of authorities' policies could satisfy some groups of parents and reduce the impetus for opting out. In general there should be the greatest possible sensitivity to local parental opinion, even if this seems perverse when viewed from the education offices or the regional chambers."

Dr. Farquhar Mackintosh, who takes a much more balanced approach to all these matters, has been quoted as saying:

> "If the possibility or threat of opting out helps to make education authorities more sensitive to local needs and more even handed in their dealings with schools that will clearly be a benefit."

Even if the Bill has achieved nothing else, it has converted councillor Malcolm Green and Mr. Forrester of the EIS to the belief that education authorities should be sensitive to the interests of parents. I emphasise the simple point that until now an education authority has been able to say to parents, "Like it or lump it." Parents have had no alternative. Now there will be an alternative, and if the provision of education is made so much better and more

sensitive to parental wishes that the parents' wish to use the powers in the Bill is reduced I shall be entirely happy with such a development.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that the proposals in the Bill will make it almost impossible for a local authority such as Strathclyde to rationalise in the way that he wants? As soon as any school is threatened with the possibility of closure it will be likely to plump for opting out. How does that square with the statement in the Bill that there will be no significant cost? The Secretary of State will have to pick up the cost of the opting-out schools, and Strathclyde will have to mop up the rest.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman should consult the leader of the Democratic group on Strathclyde regional council. Councillor Mason has gone on record as supporting such proposals precisely to ensure that good schools are not closed by an intransigent authority. The hon. Gentleman might like to get his own act together before commenting further.

There will be no question of a school's being given self-governing status if its numbers are so few that it would not be viable. We are concerned with schools that are so popular that they are packed to the gunwales but whose closure has nevertheless been proposed by the education authority for reasons other than educational ones. *[Interruption.]* I am as intrigued as Opposition Members by the movements on my left, but no doubt there will be a rational explanation.

The other clauses are equally important and should, I think, be accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Clauses on further education form part II of the Bill. Clauses 48 to 54 provide for the appointment of new college councils for further education colleges managed by education authorities, which should be in place by April 1990. The Bill provides for a maximum membership of 20, of whom at least half will be nominees of employer organisations, and not more than one fifth will be members or employees of the local authorities. By October 1990 education authorities should have made arrangements to delegate further education functions to college councils and to provide the means for the councils to carry out those functions. The Bill also gives college councils the power to raise funds, accept gifts and retain income.

Clauses 55 to 57 give education authorities the power to conduct commercial activities through further education colleges. Authorities may set up companies to undertake these activities and may make loans to them if required. These powers are among functions that may be delegated to college councils. Education authorities are also to have the power to form companies to take over the management of colleges previously under the management of the authorities.

**Mr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman show his characteristic grace by giving way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I cannot resist such a request.

**Dr. Godman:** Given that there are now no parliamentary restraints on this Government, and, hence, that the Bill will go through all its stages unamended, may I ask the Secretary of State whether "employer organisations", in clause 48(5)(a)(ii), includes the representatives of community businesses, producer co-operatives and worker co-operatives?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his confidence about the smooth passage of the Bill, which, naturally, I hope will be vindicated. But who knows? The hon. Gentleman might just come up with a constructive amendment that we are able to accept. He must not be too surprised if that happens. I will certainly check the point that he has raised, but I expect that all those who are representative of wider community interests will be eligible to be considered for appointments of this kind. I hope that that is the point to which the hon. Gentleman was referring. I will look further into it.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I must move on.

Clause 61 makes provision for the abolition of the Scottish joint negotiating committee on further education, whose remit is to settle pay and conditions of service for teaching staff in colleges of further and higher education. That committee has not worked effectively, and it will be replaced by separate non-statutory arrangements for the two college sectors, which should enable the negotiating machinery to be more responsive to the requirements of both staff and management in the two sectors concerned.

Among the other provisions of the Bill, the establishment of privately sponsored technology academies will be another means of widening the range and diversity of schools available to parents. These academies will provide young people with access to a type of school that will equip them well for adult life and for work in an advanced industrial society. They will also offer an opportunity for raising standards and expectations of pupils, parents and teachers generally. The provision of this new type of school, with the teaching of technology and science a predominant theme, reflects the Government's awareness of the needs of industry and commerce and of the necessity to develop the qualities that employers in these fields seek. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Opposition Members are not suggesting that technology academies are some doctrinal proposal. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Well, those hon. Members might explain that to councillor Charles Gray, the leader of the Labour group on Strathclyde regional council, who tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade his more doctrinaire colleagues that such an academy would be a great asset to the city of Glasgow and to Strathclyde as a whole. I would pay more attention to councillor Gray's views on these matters than to those of some of his more doctrinaire colleagues.

I will happily give way to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) so that he may inform us whether he agrees with councillor Gray, or with the rest of the Labour group in Strathclyde region, on the question of technology academies.

**Mr. Dewar:** It is well known that there is a plan to found one of these technology academies in Glasgow. Can the Secretary of State say whether there are any on the stocks for other areas? For the sake of public knowledge, can he list the principal backers of the Glasgow academy that is planned?

**Mr. Rifkind:** First, I note that the hon. Gentleman has declined to express any personal view on these matters.

**Mr. Dewar:** I shall do so later.

**Mr. Rifkind:** We look forward to that. We will listen very carefully. Indeed, we shall go in for a detailed textual analysis to see whether we can divine the hon. Gentleman's real views on these matters.

As for the location of technology academies, there has been a very generous offer from Lord Forte to contribute towards the first of them. We are currently considering the possible location of such an academy, which might be in the west of Scotland or elsewhere. That is a matter on which I cannot report further at this stage.

When we announced last October our proposals for curriculum and assessment, I referred to the existing powers, which enabled me to prescribe general requirements for education authorities and which could be extended in order to put arrangements for national testing in primary schools on a formal basis. I am now taking the opportunity, in the Bill, to do this. Incidentally, it would appear that the public as a whole in Scotland are behind the Government in their proposals for national testing in primary schools. Some 50 per cent. of parents, when asked last May, said that they were in favour of these proposals. We are very pleased about that.

I have noted with interest also the views of the Opposition spokesman on education, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). It will be interesting if the hon. Member for Garscadden can tell us whether he agrees with the hon. Member for Blackburn, who is the shadow spokesman on education—*[Interruption.]* Yes, in England and Wales, but it would be interesting to know whether these principles apply also in Scotland. On 26 November the hon. Gentleman said:

"The performance of teachers in schools has always been judged and will always be judged, for judgment is inherent in choice. But in the absence of any formal system, schools will be judged by reputation and rumour, by crude examination results, by newspaper stories of prizegivings and sports successes on the one hand or of drug stories or truancy on the other."

He went on to describe a method of scrutinising exam results that could be used. He said that he would want a system

"to judge each individual school's own progress year by year to provide a twin focus by which schools not only compete with other schools but, more importantly, pitch themselves against their own previous performance."

He went on:

"I do want flagship schools"—

I ought to remind the House that these are the words of a Labour spokesman on education celebrating these schools —

"which, with similar resources to others, have achieved great things for their pupils, so that when, in the future, people think of comprehensives they do not think of an impersonal system, but of real schools, of paradigms of excellence, which can provide the best for all."

That, we are told, is the Labour party's policy on education and on testing in England and Wales. Is it the Labour party's policy on education and testing in Scotland? If so, why has it not said so? If not, why not? We wait to hear whether the EIS has given permission for the adoption of such a policy north of the border.

Last month we issued our consultation paper on school teachers' professional development into the 1990s. Like the members of other professions, teachers must constantly refresh and replenish their skills and knowledge. Only through a well-planned and properly managed programme of staff development can they maintain their professional competence and expertise. To be effective, staff development programmes for teachers must start from an accurate identification of their needs, through assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching.

After the most careful consideration, we have decided to seek enabling powers, which, if necessary, can be used to ensure that appraisal within staff development programmes is introduced on a national basis. I hope that progress on appraisal can be achieved voluntarily, but I believe that reserve powers are necessary in case there should be continued resistance to appraisal despite its many benefits, which the more enlightened members of the teaching profession now readily recognise. I welcome in particular the statement of the SSTA, emphasising that, for its part, it has always been in favour of appraisal, and saying that it looks forward to developments in that direction over the next few weeks and months.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** Does the Secretary of State not feel that it would have been better had the consultation process on appraisal taken place without clause 64? Surely this is the reverse of the normal process: consultation and then legislation. Now we are having legislation followed by consultation—indeed, the consultation process will not be completed until the end of June.

**Mr. Rifkind:** As I have just indicated, this is a purely enabling power. I hope that it will not have to be used, as will be the case if the response of the teaching profession as a whole follows that of the SSTA. I hope that the EIS will also give the proposal very serious consideration, because it is genuinely in the best interests of individual teachers that there should be a proper appraisal system. If that can be confirmed, a voluntary scheme will be available.

The Bill clarifies the power of education authorities to send children to special schools outwith Scotland and to pay the necessary fees and expenses. It is common for them to do that now, where the needs of a child are most appropriately catered for at a school not in Scotland that specialises in that child's particular learning difficulty. The practice represents a useful widening of educational choice for some of our most unfortunate youngsters. Unfortunately, a recent court case suggested that authorities may not have the requisite powers under the Act to place children in schools in other parts of the United Kingdom. We are now putting the position beyond doubt.

**Mr. Douglas:** Will that power include further education? Is such a provision embraced within the clause?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I do not know the answer to that question, but my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) will respond to it when he replies.

Clause 66 brings about the repeal of section 88 of the 1980 Act, which provided a form of procedure for the dismissal of teachers. The additional protection that that provision affords teachers against dismissal has been overtaken by the safeguard contained in the general employment protection legislation. This proposal is therefore appropriate.

Paragraph 1 of schedule 12 strengthens the management of the four ancient universities. At present, the courts of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews universities are chaired by the university rector who is

elected by the students. The courts of these universities recently considered whether that arrangement is still appropriate, given their responsibilities for the financial management of the universities. Three of the four courts concluded that it was not and they asked the Government to bring forward the proposals that are contained in this part of the Bill. Consequently, if the Bill is enacted, the chairman will be elected by the court from among the lay members. The rector would remain eligible for election, so long as he or she was not——

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): I think that the Secretary of State means schedule 10, not schedule 12. Schedule 10 is entitled "Minor and Consequential Amendments." Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us, by means of that careful textual analysis for which he is renowned, which substantive clause in the Bill provides the basis for which paragraph 1 of schedule 10 is a consequence? Does the Secretary of State agree that it is not a minor amendment to remove from the students of Scottish universities a right that they have held for many centuries and that they have traditionally discharged with great responsibility?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. and learned Gentleman says that students have traditionally exercised that right with great responsibility. That has been true on many occasions. However, this is not a Government proposal. We have responded to a request from three of the four universities. The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that in certain cases the rector has been overseas and has been unable physically to carry out that responsibility. On other occasions, rectors have not been interested in doing so. That led to the universities' proposal. However, I emphasise that the rector will still be eligible to be elected to chair the court. It will be for the court to decide who the chairman should be. I should have thought that a member of the Social and Liberal Democrats would be only too happy to endorse a democratic way of deciding who the chairman of the university court should be instead of its being determined on the court's behalf by another body.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Given the tenor of the other proposals, would it not have been appropriate to put such an important proposal as displacing the rector as chairman of the courts of the older universities to a ballot of the students in those universities?

**Mr. Rifkind:** That is entirely a matter for the universities. No doubt they will hear about the hon. Gentleman's interesting proposal.

The debate takes place against a wider educational debate. For some time we have been critical of the Opposition because of their unwillingness or inability to put forward an alternative educational philosophy. Recently I thought that that was no longer going to be a criticism that we could validly make. On behalf of his party, the hon. Member for Fife, Central produced a document that purports to be the Labour party's alternative policy.

**Mr. McLeish:** It is a discussion document.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am told that it is a discussion document, so presumably it has something to discuss and represents what may be the Labour party's policy.

As the hon. Member for Fife, Central would expect, my hon. Friends and I have studied the document with great care and attention. It is a weighty document—21 pages. I thought that it would contain a mountain of new ideas, initiatives, policies and proposals. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) obviously expected that to be the case, but clearly he has not read it. If he chooses to read it, he will find that, of the 21 pages, a mere three and a half are about what the Labour party describes as its policy, while 17 pages contain an attempt to criticise the Government's policy. If we have to listen to the criticism that the Goverment's proposals are not consistent with the best traditions of Scottish education, I must point out that the evidence supplied by Opposition Members points in the opposite direction. At page 17 the hon. Member for Fife, Central says:

"equality of opportunity lies at the heart of the Scottish education tradition."

The Conservative party strongly believes in equality of opportunity.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mr. Rifkind:** No.

Although Opposition Members may not realise it, they do not believe in equality of opportunity. I have no better authority for saying that than the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). On 31 July 1983 the right hon. Gentleman, when talking about the Labour party, said:

"We are not the party of equality of opportunity. That is a view of society of the Conservative Party."

That is an interesting statement. The Labour party says in that document, quite rightly, that equality of opportunity is at the heart of what the Scottish educational tradition is all about, but the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook says that Socialists do not believe in equality of opportunity; that is Tory policy and Tory philosophy.

That explains the final statement in the hon. Member for Fife, Central's policy document. I shall quote his words because they will be his epitaph. At page 17, on behalf of the Labour party, he says:

"we have failed to properly develop the desires of parents to be more involved in their children's education; and we have failed to embrace the real and changing needs of education into a radical and imaginative Agenda."

The Opposition have failed. We do not intend to do so.

5.27 pm

**Mr. Donald Dewar** (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State plays with consummate skill, which comes from long practice, the role of a reasonable man struggling with an unreasonable brief. His problems have never been deeper than they are today. He complains bitterly that the Labour party's document deals at some length with the case for opting out. He may have read the 21 pages of text but he clearly did not read the title, which is

"Opting out—the Government's case examined."

Not surprisingly, he spent some time establishing to my satisfaction, as well as to the satisfaction of my hon. Friends, that there is no case for the Government's proposals. If the Secretary of State is a little worried about the fact that the Labour party is showing signs of developing self knowledge and a critical faculty, I suggest to him that that kind of humility is something that he should consider importing into Conservative thinking. It would do a great deal of good.

*[Mr. Donald Dewar]*

This is a dishonest Bill. Even its title is dishonest. All the talk about self-governing schools is spurious window-dressing. I am sorry that even the draftsmen are being dragged into the Government's propaganda war. The Bill adds to the confusion, because this is an inexact new category. On this occasion I should have preferred the Government to take a leaf out of the Department of Education and Science's book and talk about grant-maintained schools. That term would at least have had the virtue of being understandable, and I shall continue to use it.

The core of the Bill is opting out. The first contention is that no one in Scotland, wants it—not even the parents in whose name it has been introduced. I notice that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), whose words I always follow with interest, told a rather sceptical Scottish Question Time on 1 March that

"the Hungarians expressed considerable admiration for the emphasis that we place on increasing competition in our education system".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 270.]

I am prepared to believe that one has to travel as far as Hungary to find support for the Bill, but I find it difficult to believe that a man is sitting on a Budapest bus, lost in envy and admiration for the activities of the hon. Member for Stirling. There must be some mistake.

Local government is almost united in its opposition. The teaching profession will have none of the new proposals. I know that there is a tendency for the Minister to treat one with contempt and express some hatred for the other but those are significant opinions and should not be swept aside, particularly when very strong reservations have been expressed by bodies in Scotland on whom the Minister has relied for his rather thin support in the past. For example, I have a press release from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council. There are disputes about how representative that body is, but it has been prayed in aid by the Minister in the past. It states:

"the successful establishment of School Boards will be jeopardised by the undue haste with which the Government is pursuing these proposals."

The council goes on to say that it believes that

"comprehensive education might well be compromised by those proposals and that it would be more honest to have an open and informed debate about its successes and failures rather than allowing it to be incidentally eroded as a consequence of this proposed legislation."

The Scottish Consumer Council, which on some occasions has taken the Minister's side, refers to the Bill as "ill-timed" and states that its proposals

"do not offer parents a significant extension of choice".

The kindest thing that I can say is that the Bill has very little support. It is significant and regrettable that almost all the research that the Minister has mounted in conjunction with the proposals has examined parental and public attitudes to the present system. He has made no attempt whatsoever to canvass the views of the wider Scottish public—parents, teachers or anyone else—about the proposed measures. According to the MVA consultancy study, £121,715 of public money has been spent, I suspect as a trawl in the hope that it will produce critical material that the Minister can use in a totally negative way to attack the present position. It is the brunt of the bunker mentality which has marked Scottish Office debate for a considerable time.

The signs have been bad from the beginning. There was the bizarre episode of Paisley grammar school with the Prime Minister telling the Scottish Office its business, and no nonsense from the Secretary of State for Scotland. We received a fairly detailed account of that from a number of sources, including the roving journalist who acted as go-between. There were also the activities of the Minister, before electoral chance promoted him to office. I remind the House that if one looks back to the proceedings of the House on 21 October 1986 considering the Education Bill *(Lords)* which applied only to England and Wales, a young, keen Turk of the Right, the hon. Member for Stirling with the experience of a number of years at Westminster city council, proposed opting-out clauses almost exactly parallel to what he is now trying to foist on to the people of Scotland. He argued specifically that they would

"bring tremendous support and morale among the teaching profession"—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 1040.]

and were what parents wanted. If those were the grounds on which the Minister introduced such a measure in England, the same test should be applied to his proposals for Scotland, but if they were, they would bite the dust immediately. The arrogance with which the measure is being pursued is alarming. It has been put forward as a matter of faith and dogma, and is not based on the existing Scottish education system or the wishes of people involved in the education system.

An interesting article appeared in the *Financial Times* on 23 February under the heading:

"Radical waves stir new hopes for beleaguered Scots Tories."

That is a snappy populist heading if ever there was one. But the article contained a direct quote from the Minister, the hon. Member for Stirling, who said:

"With the position we're in, with socialist policies entrenched in local government and the media, I can't afford to take prisoners."

Sometimes paranoia is associated with a Rambo complex, but it is peculiarly inappropriate. The Minister does not challenge those words, but dealing with Scottish education in terms of taking no prisoners is a somewhat unfortunate approach.

I am glad that the Secretary of State made the point that standards were not dropping. My honest impression is that the Minister responsible for education takes a very different view and argues, perhaps more by innuendo than anything else, that there is an undermining of confidence in Scottish education, declining standards, slipshod teachers and inadequate pupils. I do not believe that that is the case, but there is always a temptation for him to say that because it is the only way in which he can justify the present proposals.

I do not think that it is enough for me to argue simply that the Bill is an alien proposition, although that is true. Our objections are root and branch and can be put briefly. Opting out will fragment the school system and make it harder to provide educational opportunity across the social scale and across the range of ability. There is no demand, but a determined Government can create a false demand in certain circumstances.

We all know that certain schools are threatened with closure. It is a very real threat; indeed, the Minister is constantly urging local authorities to think in terms of rationalising school capacity to meet falling rolls. The Minister will say that the Bill contains protection and that

under clause 13, if a school is scheduled for closure, it cannot opt out. That is similar to section 52(8) of the English legislation, the Education Reform Act 1988, which states:

"A county or voluntary school is not eligible for grant-maintained status . . . if proposals by the local education authority to cease to maintain the school have been published"

under certain statutory enactments.

It appears that the same protection is being offered in Scotland, but I am sure that the Minister has examined the English experience which demonstrates that that protection is a total illusion. At the last count available to me, there had been 37 ballots in England and Wales by schools wishing to opt out. Of those, 27 were in favour of opting out and 10 were against. Of the 27 schools which voted for opting out, two thirds were threatened with closure. That is one reason which will create similar problems in Scotland if those unfortunate proposals reach the statute book.

I shall quote a source to which the Minister might pay some attention, the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate "Standards in Education 1987-1988" produced by the Department of Education and Science. It states:

"Plans to reorganise secondary schools, in order to provide more economically and rationally for 16 to 19 year olds, appear to have been slowed by uncertainty over the effects of recent legislation, especially that relating to grant-maintained schools."

It is put pretty cautiously, but I find it extraordinary and significant that there should be such explicit criticism of the machinery which has been introduced in England, and which we are now threatened with in Scotland, from such a responsible body of educational opinion as Her Majesty's inspectorate. The fact that it has come to that conclusion ought to make the Secretary of State, if he is prepared to be fair, stop and think again.

We shall look closely at clause 13 to establish when the gate comes down on opting out. Is it when there is a draft plan? Is it when there is public discussion of a possible closure? Is it when a recommendation is made to the education authority? Is it when a final decision is made? I fear that, in Scotland, as in England, unless we are careful —there is no adequate protection in the Bill at the moment —the most common reason for opting out will be the threat of rationalising school accommodation. That is not a good basis on which any school should set out on this experiment.

Schools which take this road will be those that are confident of their survival—perhaps falsely confident. They are the ones that think that they will get additional cachet—the smack of independence without the financial risk. The Secretary of State said that that is an opportunity that does not exist under the present system. I take his point, but it depends on how one looks at these matters. I feel that there will be snob appeal and that schools will try to distance themselves from the common run. I put it as bluntly as that because we have to face up to it. They believe that they can attract funds and travellers, bussed or driven, from afar. The arguments will be social as well as educational, and they will be divisive.

There is the problem of rural areas. The Secretary of State may say that, if a school is the only secondary school in the area, and its opting out would leave a massive hole in provision, that may be a factor that he will take into account when deciding whether to approve opting out. That does not seem to be a big contribution to good educational order or parental satisfaction. The trouble with this exercise is that, if we begin to eat into the universality of provision, we will have a less efficient school system—even arguing the educational case in Conservative terms.

Ministers tell us that costs have to be spread and overheads more efficiently shared. If the Government have their way, we shall be contemplating an educational landscape littered with free-standing schools which contribute little and represent disunity where there ought to be unity. That is not a sensible use of resources. Nobody who has read the arguments advanced by the Secretary of State and his colleagues on these matters would have any doubt about that.

The Secretary of State is to pay the schools, negotiate per capita funding, talk through their financial situation and satisfy their needs, but it is the local education authority that will have to pay because the money will come directly from its budget. That is an unhappy state of affairs. The more generously the grant-maintained sector is funded, the worse off mainstream provision will be. We are entitled to put up a serious warning about that.

Teachers who have spoken to me are worried about their promotion prospects and career structures. They can dodge backwards and forwards between the maintained and the education authority sectors, but they envisage the danger of being locked into one school and the problems that may result from that. We want to consider that carefully in Committee.

We are also worried about the position of auxiliary staff as they will have less protection than teachers under the new set up. That is unsatisfactory, even in the guise of a democratic exercise in parental power. There are points to be made in Committee about the interests of the community and of primary parents, and the odd fact that, by the time a school has opted out, some of the parents who voted in favour will no longer have an interest as their children will have left, and other parents, whose children will enter the school in the year of opting out, will have had no vote. That is one of the many inconsistencies that are built into the Bill.

There is a problem about changing a school's fundamental characteristics. I take the Secretary of State's point that his intention is that, initially, when the ballot shows a majority in favour of opting out, the school's fundamental characteristics will not be altered. I am prepared to accept that he, at least, means what he says about that, but after the first few years—I think that was his phrase—a further ballot can be held and there could then be a change in a school's fundamental characteristics; in the uniform, religion or—a key issue—the means of entry.

I believe that selection is ultimately incompatible with parental choice and that, in his heart of hearts, the Secretary of State knows it. The Secretary of State managed to give the impression that he opposes the introduction of selection in schools that decide to opt out, but he would not be drawn on that matter. I recognise that his tenure of office may be short for all manner of reasons which we do not need to go into and which are irrelevant at the moment, but it would be interesting if he could make it clear that he, a politician who represents a Scottish constituency, would oppose the reintroduction of selection via the back door as a result of the opting out process. Will he give such an assurance?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I can happily give that assurance. I have no intention of endorsing a proposal that would so change the character of a state school as to return it to the selective system that existed some years ago. That is not the purpose of these proposals.

**Mr. Dewar:** This has been an afternoon of debating points, but debating points can become important ones. I entirely accept that the purpose of the Bill is not necessarily to reintroduce selection. The practical consequences, however, may be that we shall introduce them, at least in some parts of the education system. I do not think for a moment that we can contemplate that prospect with equanimity, and the best way to get rid of that danger is to get rid of the Bill and the scheme.

**Mr. Douglas:** Will my hon. Friend note that the Secretary of State used very few words to answer his question? The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he does not envisage altering the present means of selection, but the Bill introduces novel means of selection. That is what many of us are afraid of—we fear that the Bill is a precursor to a new form of selectivity.

**Mr. Dewar:** However straightforward the Secretary of State is being—I still think that his position is a little obscure—he is putting in train something which is extremely difficult to control, although the consequences are easy to foresee. I do not get any satisfaction from contemplating that approaching danger.

I feel that I ought to respond to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's challenge. I have read the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), to which he referred. My hon. Friend did indeed make the points which the Secretary of State quoted, but he was saying—I should have thought that the Secretary of State would welcome it—that we believe that it is possible to have excellence in the comprehensive system. I entirely agree. Comprehensive education is not, as is sometimes suggested by idealogues, grey and uniform education which allows no room for excitement, for variation or for catering to the needs of individual children. Of course one wants to encourage excellence within comprehensive education, but one will not achieve that by introducing selection and social and educational division.

I shall quote again from the same speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn. He said that policies

> "for City Technology Colleges, and for opted out-schools are designed systematically to sabotage the central value of the comprehensive school—the idea that each child is of equal value, of equal worth."

I approve of that sentiment as well.

**Mr. Rifkind:** As the hon. Gentleman approves of the sentiment, which referred to city technology colleges, am I to assume that that is his answer to my earlier question about whether he agrees with councillor Charles Gray about the attraction of a technology academy in Glasgow?

**Mr. Dewar:** I was not at the debate to which the Secretary of State refers with such pleasure. If he wants to take that as an answer he may, but I was going to answer fully later on. I am happy to give him that reply as an advance taste of my later answer.

The introduction of opting out is wholly wrong-headed and has no part to play in the Scottish education system. When we come to consider the discontinuance—an especially unpleasant new Scottish Office word—of the opted-out schools, there is clearly an implication that they may move from that into the fully-fledged private sector. When one considers what the Scottish people want, one should look at the market system and the Secretary of State may have done that.

My attention was drawn the other day to a case reported on 23 December 1988 in *The Times Educational Supplement* for Scotland, which concerned a redundancy at Westbourne school, for girls. The unfortunate absence of any consultation with the threatened member of staff resulted in an award for unfair dismissal. I draw to the House's attention that Professor Curtis, the chairman of governors of Westbourne school explained that the school

> "faced a crisis as falling rolls reduced demand for single-sex private education. The combined primary/secondary school has fewer than 300 pupils."

I mention that because, of the 300 pupils, 71 are paid for by the taxpayer under the assisted places scheme at a cost of about £151,000. That school would fail wholly if it were not for that subsidy because of the lack of public demand for its services. That is interesting in view of the debate about the worth of public sector provision, universal education and the advantages it brings. If we move away from that, people will find to their cost that we betray an important educational trust.

The Bill is not merely bad, but goes beyond that. It is a breach of faith and concerns a matter of honour, if I can say that without sounding too pretentious. I remember, as will many of my colleagues, when we were discussing the ceiling proposals on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. There was consultation with educational and public opinion and there was an almost universal no from every conceivable interested body and thousands of individuals as well. The Government agreed to abandon the ceiling proposals on that basis. I took that Government action at face value, so I take it amiss when, only a few months later, we find ourselves considering an educational leap in the dark that goes massively beyond those ceiling proposals. It is a form of sharp practice—which is as near as I can go in the House, although in private conversation I would go a great deal further—in the light of the assurance given when the ceiling proposals were not included in the School Boards (Scotland) Bill, to unveil his horror show now. The Bill is extreme, objectionable and, above all, friendless. The Bill also introduces a false prospectus, given those earlier matters.

Even on the Conservative Benches—I do not want to put the spotlight on any hon. Members—there are hon. Members who have been quoted publicly as having fundamental doubts about the proposals. I do not know what their attitude will be as the Bill progresses, but I must say to the Secretary of State—I do not want to overdramatise—if there are moves to exclude such hon. Members from the Committee, we shall see that as an outrage. We expect available Scottish Tories to serve. It is bad enough to face the prospect of a Committee where the Government majority is maintained by hon. Members whose interest in Scottish education is, to say the least, only as a comparative study. It would be monstrous for hon. Members to be excluded or for a coalition of Scottish Members of all parties, including Conservatives, to be considering essential safeguards and to be overwhelmed by the votes of troops gathered by the parliamentary press gang. I hope that the Government will pay attention to that.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Dewar:** No, as I want to get on.

As the Secretary of State will have noticed, I do not like the Bill. I do not want to spend a great deal of time going through the rest of it in detail because I recognise that I have already spoken for some time, although not as long as the Secretary of State. Let me hasten to assure him that I do not believe that the technology academies—although non-selective in statutory terms, they will make selection according to attitude and motivaton—represent educational progress in Scotland. We shall oppose in Committee the rigid testing in primary schools. It is educationally distracting and has almost no educational support.

I am not happy about the proposals for colleges of further education with boards of a minimum of 50 per cent. drawn from local employers. One of the great fallacies and a rather insulting assumption is that a horde of under-employed industrialists in Scotland nothing better to do than sit on boards of further education colleges, the Scottish enterprise boards and the crimebusters panels. Most industrialists I know have their hands full trying to maximise the return on their capital and trying to obtain orders to keep their work force in being. I take no delight in the idea of a further education plc, with all the fears that that will bring for the teaching of special subjects that are not commercially attractive.

Even the ancient office of rector of our universities is to be cut back at the behest, so rumour has it, of principal McNicol of Aberdeen university. I warn the Secretary of State that I—and, I suspect, many of my colleagues—took a close interest in that office when I was a student at the university of Glasgow. I should want a more substantial argument than the weak assurance that there have been approaches from certain universities. There would be. It does not seem to make the case for change very adequately.

The Bill is arrogant, ill judged and insensitive. That is the heart of the matter. The cause is the capitulation of the Secretary of State. Once again, he has fallen meekly into line, although there is always a mystery whether he is behind his hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr Forsyth) or the Department of Education and Science.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Both.

**Mr. Dewar:** The Secretary of State proudly says both. In that case, if they go different ways in future, we shall see a nasty case of split personality. Whether the Secretary of State has fallen into line behind one or the other, the effect is unpleasant. Almost certainly the Prime Minister has a great deal to do with the present atmosphere.

The Secretary of State may laugh, but some of us remember the correspondence in the *Glasgow Herald* and the leaks that emerged at the time of the case of Paisley grammar school. Perhaps the Prime Minister has found time on occasions to look at Scottish education. If we are to use the royal "we", which is so much in vogue in Downing street these days, I only wish that we would turn our attention to education in Scotland and recognise the damage that has been done.

The Bill is a caricature of Government action. There has been no consultation, no preparation, no sympathy or feeling for the problems in Scottish schools. The result will be uncertainty, a return of privilege and a course of reckless prejudice. The Bill may be reasonably presented, but ultimately it will be damaging to pupils and staff and the communities that the schools serve. We will protest tonight in the Lobby but I have to say to the Secretary of State that it will not be a formal parliamentary minute of dissent. We will protest with a degree of anger that is unusual in this place because I genuinely believe that there is no case for what is being proposed and no one in Scotland wants it.

6 pm

**Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith** (Kincardine and Deeside): I felt when the debate opened that we were perhaps about to break new ground with the new-found agreement between both Front Bench spokesmen on the quality of our education in Scotland. To that extent, the debate has made some progress in at least producing a degree of unity. It is good to begin discussions on the Bill in that context.

I intend to confine my remarks to self-governing schools. Having listened to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, I am more bewildered than I was to begin with about why we should make these changes now. I understand what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the size of regional authorities and trying to make education more personal and closer in its administration. If that is what we are tilting towards, perhaps we should look at the future of our regional authorities. I know that that matter has been previously discussed because I was a member of the Committee on the Bill dealing with that issue. If that is the problem, we do not necessarily need a Bill such as this.

I must emphasise that the only letters I have received in support of the Bill have been from parents whose schools have been threatened with closure. I understand their fears and worries. However, surely there are other means of dealing with problems of threatened closure if there is a legitimate case.

As my right hon. and learned Friend said, I do not think that the measure will necessarily change the character of schools that choose to opt out. However, that is a matter of opinion. My right hon. and learned Friend has to address himself more to the fact that, even if it does not change the character of schools, it will change the structure of Scottish education as we have known it for many years. I do not think that that change will necessarily be for the best.

In practical terms, I am worried about the timing of the proposal. Even if one supported the merits of the Bill, this is not an appropriate time for its introduction. We have seen schools in Scotland pass through a period of considerable difficulty. We had the industrial dispute over teachers' salaries. I keep in touch with the schools in my constituency and that dispute disrupted the schools and caused divisions—I will not go into the reasons now—between staff and parents and staff and pupils to a degree that I have never seen in all the time I have been involved in public life. We are just beginning to get over that and return to greater unity in our schools. Parents are working with teachers and there are better relationships between staff and pupils. We need a period of peace in order to get over that unrest.

In recent years we have seen an enormous amount of good innovation that has helped to restore some of the high standards in our schools and the respect in which Scottish education was held generations ago. In many ways we in Scotland have been pioneers in some of the new measures. For example, we were pioneers in relation to the curriculum, the new examinations system and, more

*[Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith]*

recently, the school boards. However, as politicians we have to be careful. We have to assimilate change. Often we find it difficult to cope with change and we should have more concern for those at the sharp end of education who will have to apply the changes in the classroom. I have many friends, and an even wider range of acquaintances, among teachers. There is enormous demand on their time in coping with changes to the curriculum and examinations. They may have to attend in-service training and be involved in the extra administration necessary to make the system work. All new systems need dedication and time if they are to work properly. We need time to recover from the disputes in our schools and to consolidate and ensure the success of recent changes. Therefore, this is not the time for a new measure.

I support strongly the principle of school boards and I welcome them. I will continue to do what I can to support them. When school boards were introduced last year, we saw in many areas of Scotland—this is one of the reasons why I supported them—the first major involvement of parents in schools. In my area many of us did not see the need for school boards because our school councils were relatively effective. However, I supported the principle because I realised that other areas of Scotland, for various reasons, were not benefiting from the extra and required involvement of parents in schools. If that did not happen voluntarily, I thought it necessary to see that the benefit was extended to other areas.

I support that and believe that it is good. I want to see greater parental involvement in schools. Surely in education we want to get under our belts and see working the changes that have only recently been enacted. That is another reason why the timing of this Bill is inappropriate. There is much more chance of seeing the school boards working efficiently if they are given time to get under way before additional changes are superimposed on our school system.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) mentioned the Scottish Parent Teacher Council and the Scottish Consumer Council. I agree with them. I want to see evolution in our education system. I want to see changes assimilated and working before moving on to the next stage. Alas, that is not happening in regard to this legislation.

I am not persuaded that this measure is appropriate for Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend briefly described the history of Scottish education. For want of a better phrase, we have a two-tier system in Scotland—a public sector and a private sector. They work relatively well together. However, my right hon. and learned Friend is creating a third tier—a second tier within the public sector. Ultimately that could be divisive. In Scotland over the years we have had a much more universal system of education than the rest of the United Kingdom. In my part of Scotland the burgh school has been the tradition of education.

The introduction of comprehensive education caused a hot political debate, but that was never so in my constituency. Because of our traditions, we already had a universal comprehensive system. Those who did not want to send their children to schools in that system had an opportunity to send them to schools in the private system. They fairly and properly exercised their choice. Therefore —I say this particularly for my part of Scotland—this measure has the seeds of division. It may divide the structure of education in Scotland which has proved itself over the years and which is highly acceptable to parents in my part of Scotland.

Another aspect worries me. On this fundamental ground, I might be persuaded in relation to the structure of the Bill, but many of its implications have not been worked out. Simply to pluck schools out of the local authority sector is bound to create imbalance within it. With time, we might further examine the matter and perhaps conclude that it is not too dangerous and could be tolerated, but we have not had time to do that. We are not yet clear about the effects on costs and the running of schools in the local authority sector and of schools that have opted out. How will common services be apportioned? How will we accommodate special teachers such as remedial teachers or music teachers? Obviously there is not a full-time demand for such teachers in certain schools. Many practical problems are revealed.

I am worried also about the status of teachers. It was said that teachers will be free to move from the opted-out sector into the local authority sector, and vice versa. Will it be as easy as that? If local authorities resent schools opting out, for purposes of promotion or other reasons, will teachers from opted-out schools be welcomed back? What about those teachers who find themselves in the opted-out sector when they may not have wished for it?

Most fundamentally of all on the practical side, I am deeply worried about the position of a primary school feeding into a secondary school that may choose to opt out. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) pointed out, it will be a real problem, particularly in rural areas. Under the Bill, parents will have no say in what happens to a secondary school. Many of their children will possibly enter a school as it becomes an opted-out school. That could be divisive in the present structure of education.

As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, sadly, there has not been adequate consultation on the Bill. Although I have some fundamental objections—I hope that I am not an unreasonable person—I should have felt much happier about the Bill if there had been adequate consultation. My right hon. and learned Friend introduced his School Boards (Scotland) Bill in August 1988. I was much against some of the extreme elements of his proposals, but I can have no complaint about the adequacy of the consultation procedure. If my memory is right, consultation continued until November, and we saw the Bill in January or February. We were all encouraged, and we gave my right hon. and learned Friend credit because he reacted to consultation. Many people, even those who did not like the ultimate proposals, could not complain that there was not adequate consultation.

The consultation paper on this Bill was introduced on 6 December, and a 70-clause Bill was produced at the beginning of February. I have been involved in three Government Departments and I do not know of one which could produce a Bill of that size having published a consultation paper just two months previously.

My next point is purely party political. I am saddened by what my right hon. and learned Friend is doing. The idea of opting out was launched on a surprised country during the middle of the 1987 general election campaign. I remember being totally surprised by the idea, and my right hon. and learned Friend probably was, too. I

remember asking, "Does this apply to Scotland?" We were immediately reassured that in no way would it apply to Scotland, and that it was to meet special situations in England and Wales.

**Mr. Rifkind:** My right hon. Friend is mistaken. During the election campaign we made it quite clear that the first priority in Scotland would be to establish school boards. I remember quite explicitly saying that that was the first step and that only thereafter would we consider self-governing schools opting out.

**Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** It is a pity that my right hon. Friend did not speak to me personally during the general election campaign. Fighting as a candidate in my part of Scotland, when I consulted on the matter I was quite clearly told that it did not apply to Scotland. I do not want to make a great thing of it. Of course policy moves on and new ideas arise.

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** No, I will not give way. I want to conclude my remarks in a minute.

If something was to be introduced within two years of a new Parliament, one would expect mention of it in the manifesto. This matter was not included in our manifesto. The advice I received was to say to my constituents that it was not expected within the foreseeable future. Within two years is the foreseeable future, and I regret that the legislation has been introduced in this way.

I remind my right hon. and learned Friend of an important Conservative dictum which perhaps our party does not remember enough today: "When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change." This change to self-governing schools is not necessary. For that reason, I regret that I cannot support my right hon. and learned Friend tonight.

6.15 pm

**Mr. William McKelvey** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): This is the first opportunity that I have had to wear my new Gregorys. For the purpose of reading, they are excellent, but they serve the secondary purpose that I cannot see the countenances of Conservative Members.

I listened intently to the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), as did all hon. Members. We regard his remarks as not only reasonable but intelligent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) clearly said, the core of the Bill is simply to allow schools to opt out. It has nothing to do with parental choice and will merely concentrate education in the hands of the Government, to be controlled by that undemocratic, centralist organisation.

The proposals are a foil to remove the current system of local democratic control by elected representatives of the community. There will be no choice for rural communities. Furthermore, proposals to allow opted-out schools to change their characteristics are an open invitation to return to academic selection and privilege. The two parts of the Bill clearly refer to that point. Schools selecting pupils is the direct opposite of parents and pupils selecting schools.

The Bill represents a serious erosion of choice for parents of pupils whose academic performance has been low. Moreover, it is a threat to the parents of academic achievers. Creaming off high fliers will leave local authority schools geared to low achievers, not the current broad base. High achievers will not be truly served in local authority schools. Naturally, the response to that scenario —it is the Government's aim—would be to send a high achiever to an opted-out, selective school. The physical limitations of such schools will not allow all children to attend, and borderline cases will have no chance at all.

Research shows that the ending of selection in Scottish schools brought significant improvements in performance by all children, not just low achievers. It should surely be the aim of Government, Parliament, industry and the community that all children achieve their potential. That is the guiding principle. These proposals can only harm education in general and take us back to the bad old days of secondary modern sink schools for the majority, and selective academies for the minority of high fliers from privileged homes and backgrounds.

The ultimate ability to select is not the only effect of the opting-out proposals. Education authorities will be left with a duty to provide for pupils who are rejected by opted-out schools, but their resources will be severely curtailed. The direct financing of opting-out schools by the Goverment will decrease the money available to local education authorities, as costs for central services fall upon fewer and fewer schools. Unit costs for buying services and equipment will rise dramatically.

Thus, pupils in local authority schools will not only be even more poorly equipped with text books, science materials, new technology and even pencils, but the increased unit costs and reduction in central service financing threatens the vital psychological and other advisory services. So the very children who are likely to need such services will be robbed of them by the Government proposals.

Is this any way to upgrade education? Of course not. I do not believe that the proposals will even upgrade education for a minority. The experience south of the border shows that the schools likely to opt out will be those that will not be considered viable by local education authorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden gave figures that clearly showed that out of the 37 schools opting out, only nine were legitimately seeking to do so. The majority were either against it or were forced into doing it because they were being threatened.

No provision has been made for schools to opt back into local education authorities when it becomes obvious that they are not viable, or when they run into financial difficulty. The Secretary of State for Scotland said that he would not put any barriers in the way of such a provision, but he was not forthcoming enough to say that he would actually introduce legislation to ensure that it was included. Again, we are left with a mysterious area of which many of us are suspicious.

The proposals show a distinct irresponsibility by the Government and complete dishonesty about the reason for them. To give the reason of parental or pupil choice is highly misleading. The balloting proposals make this clear. A majority of current parents will be allowed to make the choice—usually at a time when their backs are against the wall due to falling rolls or threatened reorganisation or closure. Prospective parents and the communities serving the school will not be consulted. More important is the Government's dishonesty in not declaring their aims,

*[Mr. William McKelvey]*

which have nothing to do with extending choice and everything to do with the Government taking central control of Scottish education.

Direct funding of schools follows the pattern of legislation enacted to remove democratic control from local authorities. Local authorities which provide education in such circumstances will be forced either to increase the poll tax charge to pay for the increased costs of education or dramatically to reduce the service.

For me and for most of the Scottish people, the Bill is nothing more than a blatant attempt to anglicise the Scottish education system. At Scottish Question Time the surrogate Secretary of State said that he had discussed the matter in Hungary and had the support of his Hungarian comrades. I doubt whether that is the case. Perhaps they were nodding in agreement because they were excellent hosts and did not wish to upset him. If our Hungarian comrades had studied his proposals, they would come to the same conclusion as their comrades in Haringey—which is much closer than Hungary. Perhaps the Minister should hear what those in Haringey have to say about the provisions on opting out.

The Scottish people have much more with which to concern themselves than the dangerous nonsense contained in the legislation. The people in Scotland to whom I have talked have a real and honest yearning for relief from the Thatcherite policies which are being thrust on them by Conservative apparatchiks.

The people of Scotland are more concerned about social justice than complete independence. Quite frankly, they would prefer a return to the democratic structure which they held in such high esteem to waving a flag on a Scottish gunboat. We need a directly elected Scottish assembly to assign this kind of dangerous nonsense to the dustbin where it belongs.

6.26 pm

**Mr. Allan Stewart** (Eastwood): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) on his new Dennis Taylor lookalike appearance. It was perhaps unfortunate that he had clearly written his speech before listening to the Secretary of State and did not revise it in the light of what he said. The Secretary of State answered during his speech the hon. Gentleman's criticism about selection.

I am not sure who first enunciated the principle, "My country, right or wrong". This afternoon we heard the amendment of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to that principle—"My local authority, right or wrong". That is the nub of the debate.

Are there certain circumstances—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) in a moment. Are there certain circumstances in which it is right to give parents the opportunity to use a school outside local authority control?

The view of the Opposition that the local authority is always right was aptly shown during last year's debate on Strathclyde's rationalisation and closure proposals. Strathclyde was right to attempt that exercise, but, as I recall, the hon. Member for Garscadden supported every proposal put forward by Strathclyde regional council.

The hon. Member for Garscadden took a delegation to see the convenor, Charles Gray, and, as I understand it, simply ended up with him—*[Interruption.]* I apologise; Charles Gray, the leader of the council——

**Mr. Bob McTaggart** (Glasgow, Central): The godfather.

**Mr. Stewart:** That is the hon. Gentleman's term, not mine. As I understand it, the meeting ended with the hon. Member for Garscadden leading his colleagues in a rousing chorus of "Charlie is my darling".

There was certainly no criticism at any point of the aspects of these proposals which converted me to the principle of self-governing schools. I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) that the aspects, principles and questions brought up by Strathclyde's rationalisation proposals are for me what have changed since the last general election.

The approach taken by the Labour party has continued with the new document produced by the hon. Member for Fife, Central to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred and is in marked contrast to many of the principles put forward by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). That was true, even in the Committee that examined the Schools Boards (Scotland) Bill last year. When the hon. Member for Blackburn produced his proposals for "Parents in partnership", they were discussed in Committee and it immediately become obvious that the only Committee Member to have read them was the Minister. The then Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), said that the Opposition would study the documents.

It is clear that moves towards increased parental involvement in education and towards testing, to which the hon. Member for Blackburn has reacted positively, have simply stopped at the border.

We have had examples of yuppie Socialism from the Labour Scottish spokesmen. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) is not here—he produced proposals on health and talked about Tory concepts such as more information and choice for patients—*[Interruption.]* These principles have not been followed by the hon. Member for Fife, Central perhaps because he used to represent Windygates and Kennoway. Possibly there are no yuppies there.

The opposition to these proposals is based on two incompatible propositions. First, it is alleged that there is no evidence that parents want schools to be able to opt out of education authority control—so says COSLA. Secondly, it is alleged that the proposals will create extensive damage to the structure and ethos of Scottish school education. Both propositions cannot be correct: if there is no demand there will be no change. The Bill will merely be on the statute book and will not be used——

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** How many letters has the hon. Gentleman received specifically asking that the Government bring in these policies?

**Mr. Stewart:** From memory, about 1,500. I have been photographed with piles of them in the Glasgow *Evening Times*.

I want to give an example of why self-governing schools are important. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred

to single sex schools in the private sector; my example will come from the public sector. On 17 April last year there was an interview on Radio Clyde involving councillor Malcolm Green, the chairman of Strathclyde education committee, and councillor Peter Edmondson, the Conservative councillor for Eastwood, North. In answer to a question from a Mr. Keegan of Baillieston, councillor Malcolm Green made it absolutely clear that the Labour group had taken a policy decision to abolish single-sex Catholic schools. He added that he was opposed to that decision. The proposals to close Our Lady and St. Francis and Notre Dame in Glasgow—other schools were involved, too—were not a rationalisation of school provision; they derived from a decision in principle to deprive minorities of parents of a form of education to which they attached considerable value.

Moslem as well as Catholic parents attach importance to this form of education. The interviewer on the programme I have mentioned said:

"But ethnic minorities simply do not want their daughters to go to a co-educational school."

Dr. Green replied:

"That was the very point that I made to the education committee. I am afraid this appears to have been ignored or dismissed as being a marginal issue."

I believe that self-governing schools could have a role in these circumstances. There are minorities who genuinely want a form of education that the education authority, for reasons of principle, does not want to supply.

I regret that Opposition Members sneered at this case when it was raised in Committee. When I asked him about Notre Dame, the hon. Member for Fife, Central replied contemptuously:

"I have not been to Paris recently".—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 3 May 1988; c. 169.]

That sort of sneering at a form of education that is valued by minorities is beneath contempt.

I welcome the Bill's proposals on special educational needs, which have not yet been mentioned——

**Mr. Norman Buchan** (Paisley, South): I am sorry that I was not here at the beginning of the hon. Gentleman's speech. If I had seen his name go up on the television screen I would have been in like a shot. Is he saying that the Bill is necessary to provide secondary education for minority groups of any religion—Protestant, Catholic, Baptist, Jewish or Moslem, male and female? If so, on behalf of which group were his efforts in the case of Paisley grammar school bent?

**Mr. Stewart:** The point I am making is that self-governing schools would give parents a chance to continue a form of education that they wanted when an education authority had ruled that out on grounds of principle. That is unrelated to the issue of Paisley grammar school, although, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, I was strongly in favour of continuing it. It was a school to which many of the hon. Gentleman's constituents and mine went. Many of the letters about which I told the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) just now came from Paisley.

**Mr. Buchan** *rose*——

**Mr. Stewart:** I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman, who was not here for the beginning of my speech.

Technology academies are another part of the Bill. I respect councillor Charles Gray's honourable position on this subject. It is extremely unfortunate that the regional council appears bent on ensuring that it does not receive the £1·5 million that Lord Forte is prepared to put up. No doubt others elsewhere in Scotland would welcome such extra resources.

An issue that is not mentioned in the Bill is the compulsory membership of the National Union of Students. I see that Opposition Members are wearing badges declaring, "I am opting in." I take it that that is a reference to the need to reform the membership structure of the National Union of Students. If they consult early-day motion 306, which is to do with opting in, they will see what I mean. I hope that I shall have an opportunity under the long title of the Bill to raise this matter in Committee.

My right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend have already won much of the argument. Not only has there been an EIS U-turn on school boards—a recognition of reality which I warmly welcome—but we have heard councillor Green and others talking about the need for local authorities to be more responsive to the sensitivities of parents. An example from my constituency is relevant here. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his co-operation and understanding of the eventual decision taken to provide an extension to Neilston primary school —an idea that was bitterly attacked by Labour Members during the Committee stage of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. It is widely believed that my hon. Friend's television broadcast, in which he mentioned the possibility of Neilston opting out, resulted in a focusing of minds within Strathclyde regional council. I do not know whether that is true. I welcome Strathclyde's decision, but the importance of self-governing schools applies not only to schools who adopt that stance. The option provides an important safeguard that parents can take up.

Opposition Members will oppose these changes as they oppose all changes that lead to more involvement by and say for individuals. My right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues are winning the battle. I warmly welcome the Bill and wish it well in its progress to the statute book.

6.39 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): The contrast between the speech by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and that by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) could not be wider. The right hon. Member demonstrated a genuine understanding of the division that this kind of legislation can create coming so hard on the heels of the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988. The hon. Member for Eastwood should not confuse acceptance of the law with endorsement and support for the thinking behind it. Many people are still less than convinced that the parental majority on school boards is entirely the right way forward in terms of improving parental consultation. That was not suggested in the Conservative party manifesto any more than was opting out as suggested in the Bill. I shall return to that.

The first thing that the House must accept is the ideological thrust of the Bill. It was cheeky of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is sitting alongside the Secretary of State, to acknowledge that he was pulling the strings. We all know that that is the case, but he might

*[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]*

have had the grace to allow the Secretary of State at least the illusion that he is the motivater, supporter and promoter of the Bill.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Forsyth):** For the sake of accuracy in the record, I said nothing. My right hon. and learned Friend made a joking remark in response to what was obviously a joke by an Opposition Member. Perhaps the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) could explain why he responded in the way that he did to my right hon. and learned Friend when he spoke about our suggestion that the leader of the Democrats in Strathclyde was opposed to opting out. I have here a letter which he sent to me on 4 July 1988 and it pleads with me to intervene in respect of Our Lady and St. Francis school. He said:

> "The Order declared their willingness to gift their part of the property to the Region if the Region agreed to the school's continuation. It would be worth asking the Order if they would transfer their part of the property on the same terms to a company formed to run the school."

He goes on to argue that it is essential that we deliver the promises that we have made in respect of schools in the area and allow the school to be run as a company. Does the hon. Gentleman repudiate the policy put forward at that time by the leader of the Democrats on Strathclyde council?

**Mr. Bruce:** I seek your protection, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has chosen to intervene and make a speech and I have only just started to speak. It will obviously make my speech longer if I have to deal with points raised by the Minister.

The leader of the Democrats on Strathclyde regional council is an able and effective councillor who fights hard for his community. He does that within the framework of what he thinks is achievable. He knows the ideology of the Minister and he is squeezed between that and the monopoly position of the Labour party in Strathclyde region. He seeks a compromise to protect a good school and I commend him for that. However, that does not justify the Bill.

If the genuine point at issue is that Conservative Members are interested in ensuring that good schools continue, this is not the way to go about it. That can be done in many ways within the framework of existing legislation rather than creating a divisive, elitist two-tier system. That is the ideological thrust that the hon. Member for Stirling has put into the Bill. I repeat that the hon. Gentleman and not the Secretary of State was the architect of the Bill. I do not think that anyone believes differently.

The hon. Member for Stirling is so obsessed with his single-minded crusade to impose Thatcherism on Scotland that he is prepared to undermine a valuable and distinctive public service. To do that he uses the ethic of the market by saying that the structure of the future should be demand driven. He sees the ideology of Marxism in every public service and his response is to bring us his philosophy of Marks and Spencer, consumer-led, demand-led education. That is wholly inappropriate. The hon. Gentleman's Christian name may be Michael, but his conduct in running education in Scotland is anything but saintly.

I am worried about the way in which the Bill has been introduced. The Conservative party has brought before the House a totally dishonest representation of the policies that it presented to the people of Scotland. The Government have no right to say otherwise. The right hon. Member for Kircardine and Deeside knows perfectly well that the issue was raised in my constituency and in other areas. When I raised it directly with the Secretary of State he made it absolutely clear that there was no intention whatever to introduce opting-out. Now the Bill is before us and the Secretary of State is utterly unconvincing in his attempts to suggest that that was not the case. Even if he does not show respect to me, he might show some to his right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside who is, after all, telling the truth as he knows it.

This issue was raised at the last general election. It was put before the people and was decisively and comprehensively rejected. That possibly explains why my majority went up from 850 to 9,500. That is the kind of public consultation that has been put to the test, and it is a pity that the hon. Member for Stirling is frightened to have consultation on this matter. Perhaps he is frightened because he knows how little support he has. He is not even able to say whether he can provide a speaker for the conference to be held in Aberdeen a week on Saturday to discuss this very issue. That is extremely regrettable.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *rose*——

**Mr. Bruce:** I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene because he abused my allowance last time.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. We are providing a speaker for the conference about which he has spoken.

**Mr. Bruce:** I am grateful to hear that. The Secretary of State will know that as of the day before yesterday the organisers of the conference were unable to secure such an answer. That is a helpful and welcome intervention.

The status quo in education is never an option. Education must always move with the times. It must always be ready to change and to adopt new ideas. We support and welcome that. Some of the changes that have been imposed on education have not led to improvements and have not always achieved the kind of improvements that those who advocated the changes wanted. When it took place, the forced and rapid comprehensivisation lowered standards in many cases, and nobody can support measures that are likely to lower standards or create divisions. I fear that that is likely to happen as a result of the Bill.

We have had a discussion about standards in Scottish schools. There are some serious shortcomings in Scottish education and the educational attainment of many of our young people is inadequate. One of the reasons for the introduction of standard grade was to give a wider range of opportunities and a greater measure of attainment. That was a welcome change. The participation in further education by children from poorer families and from deprived areas is still low. That is especially true of girls from such backgrounds. I should like the Minister to point to a clause in the Bill that addresses that problem. The Bill will make that problem significantly worse. It will create a widening division between the elitist schools that have

opted out because they have parents of drive and resource and schools that are under-resourced and left to fend for themselves with inadequate support.

The Secretary of State and the Minister should confront the issue of just how divisive it will be simply to go through the process of testing whether a school is to opt out. My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) quoted a specific example of what might happen if Kirkwall grammar school were to opt out. I can point to rural schools in my constituency in which I know there are people who are likely to make use of this legislation. No doubt when the Minister finds out about those schools he will be happy to rush in and fan the flames. Many people are concerned that an articulate, elitist group of people will want to take over a country school that serves a wide rural area and turn it into the kind of school that they think will meet their own children's needs, even though children in the wider community may have different needs. The problem is that people in the wider community are often less involved and less articulate. Some people may be just as articulate, but, as hard working and busy people, have reasonably assumed that their children will get a decent education as a result of the taxes that those parents have paid, without having to run the schools themselves. The Minister has not considered the kind of people who will wish to lead the move to opting out. If the vote is decided on a 51-49 per cent. result of those who turn out, the Minister should be aware how divisive that will be, and how it will affect for almost ever after a community that had been united in its support of its school.

Some points in the Bill highlight some of the problems and anomalies. Clause 3(1)(c) specifically denies an opted-out school board a parental majority, but many people wonder why that should be, given the force with which the Minister told us that a parental majority is a sine qua non of establishing a viable school board. That principle seems not to apply to the board of an opted-out school, which is inconsistent to say the least.

Clause 11 shows another way in which an opted-out school could be divisive. It allows an opted-out school, which will take with it the assets that have been paid for by the taxpayer, to charge for the use of those assets by the community, as a fund-raising exercise. That is an absurdly divisive and unjust proposal. If the Minister can tell me that that is not the case, I should welcome him doing so. Under clause 11, although schools will not be able to charge fees, they can charge for ancillary services such as sports, and can insist that children wear expensive school uniforms, which would start to create selectivity. Fund raising through such charges can also be divisive.

The Secretary of State's assurance that the Bill is not the precursor to selection is worthless. He gave us assurances that there would be no proposals for schools to opt out, and that he was in favour of increasing school councils—he said nothing of abolishing them in favour of school boards. I must not trespass beyond the rules of the House, although I am sorely tempted to do so, but the Secretary of State's assurances are not worth the air that he wastes in giving them.

The testing provision in the Bill provides the ideal basis for selection at a later date because schools will be able to say that they will accept children who have passed certain acceptable standards at primary 4 and primary 7 as the basis for entering. That will also cause concern among teachers. There will not be a huge queue of teachers wishing to teach primary 4 and primary 7, given the intense pressure that they will come under while these changes take place.

Special schools have expressed concern about the results of the Bill. Small special schools are having considerable difficulty in getting enough people to enable them to establish a board. As a consequence of that, a small school may be taken over by a large neighbour, which may subsequently opt out, leaving it exposed. The Bill does not give adequate assurance that that cannot or will not happen.

Some hon. Members may be surprised to hear that I welcome clause 65. The Minister will not be surprised, because we have discussed this clause, which will benefit parents of children with special needs. It will help to ensure that such children get access to what parents believe is the most appropriate form of education. That may mean that parents, for example, those in the Central region, whose children qualify might be able to go to the Mary Hare school for the deaf, where the children will receive the best possible education.

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** That is an unfair comment. I know the case about which the hon. Gentleman is talking and Central region's point is that it could provide the same kind of education for that child as it is claimed could be provided at the Mary Hare school. Why should a local education authority denude its schools to feed other schools? The hon. Gentleman should not have made that remark.

**Mr. Bruce:** I do not wish to be drawn too far down that road. The hon. Gentleman and I differ on this matter, as we are entitled to.

**Mr. Ewing:** The hon. Gentleman does not know the case.

**Mr. Bruce:** I do know the case, in considerable detail as it happens. I also know several other cases; and if it is any consolation to the hon. Gentleman, I have taken issue with members of my party who take the same view as him. As I have a deaf child, I may have a different perception from that of the hon. Gentleman. I believe that that level of choice is both necessary and desirable. Being deaf is a big enough handicap without being denied access to what is seen, by the parent and the child, to be the best available education.

The parts of the Bill dealing with further education are indicative of the market-driven approach. They create a basis from which further education colleges can be taken over by the business community. Those who work in further education colleges feel that ideas that they have, and module education on which they have worked and which they have developed, may be sold at a profit to private training agencies. They have every reason to resent that.

Schedule 10, labelled "Minor and Consequential Amendments", and referred to by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), concerns university rectorships. As a former rector of the university of Dundee, I regret this part of the Bill. That university does not have the advantages of the four ancient universities. Those who have the advantage, as an ancient right, of electing a rector as a representative of the students to chair the university court should not have it taken away

*[Mr. Bruce]*

from them by this legislation, and especially not have it taken away on the instigation of the principal of another university.

More trouble has been caused at universities by principals taking the chair than by rectors taking the chair, and that is particularly true at Aberdeen university. The students' right to have a rector elected as chair of the court should not be denied. A simple modification of the Bill would allow for the election of the chair of the court when there is an absentee rector. I would support that reasonable proposal. What is being proposed is highly motivated, but unjustified and unnecessary. It is a pity that the Secretary of State, having intervened in Scottish universities to this level, could not have done so in other ways to try to ensure a more democratic structure in the overall management of universities. Students have little voice in that management as it is, and he is weakening what they have.

This is particularly evil, wicked and malignly motivated legislation. Given the Government's situation in Scotland, and the fact that at the one test of their support, at the last general election, they denied any intention of introducing such a Bill, and given that at that election their support was halved, it is despicable to insist that the Bill is imposed on the people of Scotland, who have adamantly rejected such a Bill. Their reaction to the Bill is evidence that they want their own Parliament and their own domestic policies. It would not get through its First Reading, never mind a Second Reading, in such a forum. I urge Tory Members who oppose it to join us in the Lobby, because that is the only opposition that the Government will recognise.

6.58 pm

**Sir Hector Monro** (Dumfries): With my past involvement in education I welcome education debates. It is rather sad, however, that we have before us a Bill which provides for opting out. It is rare for me to disagree with party policy, though I did so last year when the Government introduced what is now the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, and it is not so many years ago that I shared a disagreement with my party over devolution with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), who is now the Secretary of State for Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend knows that I would fail to support him only if I had a strong feeling of conscience.

I felt during the last general election that the major piece of education legislation ahead of us was the introduction of school boards. I am glad that the original plan was modified following consultation, and that the plan, as modified, eventually became warmly acceptable. I am pleased, too, that the Dumfries and Galloway pilot scheme has been so successful. I know that those who are involved in it welcome the support of Ministers for their initiatives in that direction. It has been a much more expensive policy than my ministerial colleagues were prepared to accept when the School Boards (Scotland) Bill was being considered in Committee. I forecast a cost of about £600,000 for Dumfries and Galloway, and that is what it has turned out to be.

I am extremely pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has set his sights on improving the quality of education. A major plank in that policy has been the involvement of parents and the introduction of parental choice. Parents are interested particularly in good examination results, order and discipline, choice of subjects, better buildings and an opportunity for their children to develop character. All these issues are being looked after ably by the policies of my right hon. and learned Friend.

As my right hon. and learned Friend rightly said when he opened the debate, we are proud of our education in Scotland and proud of its breadth. Five highers in Scotland constitute a much better qualification than three A-levels in England. In addition, there is the extra year at universities in Scotland. All that is good for Scotland, and it is only right that we are proud of the quality of education that we provide.

In saying how pleased I am with the current developments, I recall where we were 15 to 20 years ago, when we were fighting for money to provide roofs over heads. That was a common expression at the time. We were trying to increase the supply of teachers, almost at any cost. All that belongs to the past and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State can take credit for the major achievement that he recorded in solving the problem of teachers' salaries and the introduction of the new curriculum more recently.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said, there is so much going on that education is suffering from indigestion. It is calling out for time to put into practice the new policies and legislation, but we are now embarking on another major change for which there is no enthusiasm among our people. It is certainly not an election promise. When the matter was raised during the general election, I was on to Central Office in Scotland as quick as a knife to find out what it was all about. I was assured that what I had heard did not apply to Scotland. I conveyed that assurance to my local press and it was widely reported in the local newspapers. That is one of the reasons why I feel that I could not let down my constituents by supporting the Bill.

One of my many concerns is about timing. The opting-out proposals in part I would come into effect on Royal Assent. Give or take a month or two, that could be July or October. By then we shall hardly have implemented the school boards legislation. That will come into force only in the autumn. In theory, we could set up a board of management to opt out before a school board had been established. I find that an astonishing procedure. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Under-Secretary of State, to consider a two-year moratorium so that school boards can at least consider all the issues before opting out becomes a possibility.

We have a good structure of education in Scotland. At a time when quality is improving we do not want to embark on an issue that could cause a great deal of confrontation. It is not the moment to take that course. We need more time to consolidate our policies. Now is not the time to introduce an additional policy that might cause a great deal of harm. The National Consumer Council states in a well-argued document that it feels that time is required before the new policy is introduced. The pace of change is extremely important, as is the priority of each individual part of our overall policy.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not said how many schools he thinks will opt out. I

appreciate that it is a difficult figure to assess. There are about 2,800 schools in Scotland. If about 10 per cent. decided to opt out, the 300 schools would cause a great deal of chaos within the school structure. My right hon. and learned Friend and everyone else accepts that there is opposition within local authorities and among teachers. The differing attitudes of education authorities should be emphasised, whether we talk of authorities in the north-east or the south-west. Some authorities are strongly Socialist, some are independent and others are of a mixed variety. The generality feel that the Bill will not assist them in providing quality education. It has been said already that we shall set parent against parent over a highly confrontational issue. We may end up politicising school boards, with one group of parents being against another and with teachers being against parents. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will bear in mind what the National Consumer Council had to say about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was probably right when he said that he had received 1,500 letters in support of opting out. He should have highlighted, however, that that was very much relative to Paisley. I have had only two letters in support, and both have come from Paisley. We can read into a statistic almost anything that we want.

I am concerned that opting out will become important in dodging the school closure issue. I know that there are safeguards in the Bill that theoretically should stop that, but I do not think that they will do so in practice. I have always been disappointed that in 1980 the then Secretary of State for Scotland relinquished his veto on school closures. The Secretary of State now has an involvement only with denominational schools and remote, rural schools. When he had the veto he could take a broad view.

School closures are becoming more frequent because of the decline in the number of pupils, which means that opting out will become extremely prominent. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to the 37 schools that have voted on opting out in England. I understand that only 10 voted on self-management and that 27 voted to opt out because they faced closure. I believe that opting out will become a prominent issue when the Bill comes into effect in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend will be left in a strange position. He will appreciate the need for rationalisation as a result of falling school rolls and the need for closures, but he will have to accept votes in favour of opting out. He will have to pay the cost of running such a school within the state system. During my time in Parliament I have always argued against rural school closures. I have sought always to prevent them. I do not want to see any more closures for whatever reason.

We must also consider the structure. We all accept that there are many common services including meals, guidance, careers, psychology, in-service training, sport and recreation and so on. It will be very difficult to resolve many of the anomalies which will arise between schools which are trying to use the same facilities, even if the opting out school has to pay the education authority for the services that it wants to purchase. If we were considering a school or authority that had opted out willingly, so be it. However, I do not think that that will ever happen. The education authority will feel resentment and there will be no co-operation even if safeguards are written into the Bill. The structure of education in the state system will be weakened.

I am also worried about the teachers. At the very moment that parents invoke opting out, the teachers' position will be frozen. A teacher will not be able to move in or out of that position and that situation might last for six months or a year. That is unfair and must be considered very carefully in Committee.

I am also concerned about a teacher's career. I cannot see that it will be easy for a teacher in an opted-out school, whether he wanted to be part of that school or not, to receive promotion—for example, a head teachership—in the state sector. I know that such schools are broadly in the state sector, but I believe there will be divisions between schools that have opted out and those that have not.

We must accept what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said, that all the mounting controversy is about permissive legislation, even though he has taken power for himself through legislation no fewer than 28 times. I am glad that he has accepted the point that there is a right to opt in. I cannot see a warm welcome for a school wishing to opt in, though the major change in Dumfries and Galloway has involved the opting-in of St. Joseph's college, a very fine Roman Catholic school, which is now in the state sector in Dumfries and has a very high quality of education.

It is very sad that we must face this confrontation when it is not really necessary and when there is so much good happening that can be continued by my right hon. and learned Friend's administrative action. Parts II and III of the Bill contain good points about technology, further education, testing in primary schools, teacher appraisal and performance and assessment. The heart of the Bill is perfectly acceptable to me. However, in total I am most disappointed that the Bill concentrates on opting out and on things which I believe should not matter in Scottish education today. We should not be creating divisiveness. We should be aiming for harmony, quality, discipline and achievement.

7.13 pm

**Mr. Harry Ewing** (Falkirk, East): If the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) does not mind, I will refer to his speech in a moment. I do not want him to think that I am ignoring him.

I want first to refer to the case raised by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). That was one of my constituency cases and the hon. Gentleman gave me no notice that he would raise it today. If he has been dealing with that case, he has no business doing so, because that would be a serious breach of the conventions of the House. If the hon. Gentleman wants to argue that I have been dealing with the case but not to the satisfaction of the parents concerned, that is a matter between my constituents and me. If my constituents so desire, they can campaign against me publicly and record their displeasure about my handling of the case in the ballot box.

I want to put the record straight about the case. The hon. Member for Gordon was less than full in his recording of the facts. Central region, as the Minister responsible for education at the Scottish Office will know, has excellent facilities at Bantaskine primary school, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), for educating profoundly deaf children. The child concerned went through the primary

*[Mr. Harry Ewing]*

sector and did brilliantly at the Central region's education facility at Bantaskine school. Only when he became eligible for secondary education did a dispute arise.

The child's parents, rightly from their point of view because they have a right to think that they know what is best for their child, wanted the child to go to Mary Hare school for the profoundly deaf. Central region, from its point of view, decided that, having educated that child to a very high standard during the child's primary education, it had the facilities to complete the child's secondary education. That is what the dispute was about.

I take strong exception to the throwaway remarks made by the hon. Member for Gordon. I am prepared to leave it at that. I would not have mentioned those points if the case had not been referred to today. I have spoken without the permission of the parents concerned, and I have not identified them or the child. I just wanted to set the record straight.

The hon. Member for Dumfries and the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) expressed their opposition to the Bill. That is not surprising. They are both right because, after all the changes in education over the past 10 or 15 years, the education system needs a rest. For various reasons, the standard grades have not yet been fully implemented in the Scottish education system. Not only will this legislation be implemented in addition to the legislation on school boards before that legislation is properly introduced; we will also implement the school boards legislation and this legislation before the standard grades are properly implemented throughout the secondary school system in Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member are right to express concern about what is happening in Scottish education and at the turmoil and upset which the Bill will cause.

In a debate on the Government's failure to set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, I said that one of the problems in Scottish politics and in Scottish society today is the way in which opposition to anything which the Government think up is completely ignored. I have not complained, and I do not complain tonight, that the Labour party is being ignored. Nor do I complain that the Democrats, the Scottish National party or anyone else will be ignored. However, the fate of the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside and the hon. Member for Dumfries is that they will be ignored.

When the Secretary of State for Scotland sits down—as I am sure he does from time to time—and ponders what is causing the tensions in Scottish politics and society, he should ponder long and hard about the way in which he simply ignores the expression of opposition to anything that he introduces.

I do not believe for a minute—and of course the Secretary of State will deny this—that the Secretary of State believes in this legislation. Had he believed in it, as the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside and the hon. Member for Dumfries said, it would have been an issue at the last general election. I am prepared to accept their word for it—I did not notice any arguments about it at the time—that they received an assurance from the Scottish Conservative Central Office that this proposal was not on the drawing board for the lifetime of this Parliament. It is the Secretary of State who brought it forward.

I do not regard the Bill as being particularly anti-teacher or against everything that teachers stand for. However, I do regard the Bill as being anti-education. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) gave the other "anti" game away. I refer to the Bill's anti-local government provisions. In England, the Greater London council and the metropolitan county authorities were abolished because they were giving the Government far too much trouble. They were simply legislated out of existence. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside was far more honest and forthright when he stated that, if the problem is local government, something should be done about local government. No one will convince me that the Central region, part of which I represent, is anything but a viable and well-run region. There may be points for debate, in which I should be pleased to join, but the hon. Member for Eastwood gave the game away.

In a peroration that the Secretary of State started but did not finish, he was on the point of attacking regional authorities in Scotland, but he allowed himself to be diverted and did not complete that peroration. The Bill is both anti-local government and anti-education.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that my position in relation to Strathclyde regional council's reorganisation was not only to say that it was right in principle to try what it did, but to argue publicly for increased resources for Strathclyde to help in that process. It is one aspect of that process that I oppose, but I have supported the general principle and many of the proposals.

**Mr. Ewing:** People talk about supporting general principles, but I prefer to hear them talking about supporting detailed proposals. I do not wish to become involved in the issue of Paisley grammar school, because I am not fully acquainted with the circumstances and with the situation that prevailed in that case. However, from all accounts, the role played by the hon. Member for Eastwood was, to put it mildly, less than honourable.

**Mr. Stewart** *rose*——

**Mr. Ewing:** Perhaps I can introduce a note of light-heartedness. It interested me that, during his speech, the hon. Member for Eastwood tried to convince the House of what had persuaded him to support the Bill. In truth, the hon. Gentleman would never dream of opposing anything put forward by his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The hon. Gentleman made up his mind to support the Bill as soon as it was published.

**Mr. Stewart:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the reverse is the case? Last year I tabled an amendment in the School Boards (Scotland) Bill Committee concerning what I then called grant-maintained schools that the Government did not accept. I am delighted that the Government now accept the kind of principles that I proposed last year.

**Mr. Ewing:** They say that confession is good for the soul, and now we discover the real culprit.

The Bill's detailed proposals are dangerous because of the divisions that they will create in the Scottish education

system. As was said by the hon. Member for Dumfries, the changes in relation to school boards are due to be implemented on 1 October. On top of that, schools will be permitted to opt out. In his opening speech, the Secretary of State omitted to describe the way in which the governing bodies of opted-out schools are to be established, but clauses 3 and 4 describe in detail the way in which that is to be done.

Of the three sectors comprising the governing bodies, that comprising teachers will remain of exactly the same size as when the school was in the state sector. The sector comprising parents will also remain exactly the same. But the sector comprising representatives appointed from what the Secretary of State described as the wider community but failed to define is to be increased in size. Two thirds of the board will remain the same, but the independently appointed sector will increase.

Incidentally, nothing in the Bill states that those appointed will have to serve for a term of from five to seven years. My understanding is that that provision appears in briefing material circulated by the office of the Minister responsible for education and science in New St. Andrews, South. Nothing in the Bill gives any indication of the term of office. It is interesting that the size of the independent sector on the boards of opted-out schools, as opposed to those remaining in the state sector, is to be increased.

From where are those people to come? What is the definition of the "wider community"? I can speak only for my own constituency, which, in Grangemouth, embraces Scotland's most highly industrialised region. I mean to cast no aspersions when I say that I do not know of a single manager in any of the industries in Grangemouth who lives in Grangemouth. I go further. I do not know any who live in my constituency. That may be a reflection on me, but I shall not take it personally.

Are those people to be appointed to the board of Grangemouth high school? Are they to be appointed to the board of Bowhouse primary school? They have no children at those schools. Their only interest in Grangemouth is in managing the industries there, yet the independent representatives must come either from that sector or from a new sector that the Conservative party in Scotland is using extensively—chambers of commerce. My experience is such that I would not allow them to run a Sunday school picnic, let alone a primary or secondary school.

**Mr. Stewart** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Ewing:** The hon. Member for Eastwood is entitled to his opinion. Perhaps his experience is more encouraging than mine.

In Central region there are a number of five-year and six-year comprehensive schools. The Secretary of State cannot possibly say what will be the effect on the education provision in Central region if one of those five-year or six-year schools opts out. I represent a collection of villages as well as a fairly large urban area. What will happen to the children living in village communities if schools opt out? We all know what will happen—education will be divided and ruined.

**Mr. Dalyell:** My hon. Friend will know what I mean if I ask him why "Black Bitches" in Linlithgow should have their education run by people who work in Grangemouth. There is another side to the coin.

**Mr. Ewing:** My hon. Friend emphasises my comment, although he does so from his point of view, and I was doing so from the point of view of my constituency. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is exactly what would happen.

I turn to the question of schools becoming selective. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked the Secretary of State for an assurance that there would be no selection, and although his question may have been couched in lawyer's language, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's reply was couched in even deeper legal language. Clause 16 cannot be read without clause 28, which states explicitly that to change the character of a school—including its method of admitting pupils—it is necessary only to put together a scheme and submit it to the Secretary of State, who will either accept or reject it. If the Secretary of State has no intention of accepting any of the proposals, they should not be in the Bill in the first place. The only reason for them to be there is that the Secretary of State is minded to accept them.

We should not be surprised at that. My hon. Friends will remember that, in the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh, the Under-Secretary made it clear that he preferred to make educational choices with his cheque book. We are moving towards a system of cheque-book education: that is the danger posed by the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden made a plea that Conservative Members opposed to the Bill should not be excused from membership of the Standing Committee. It would be bad enough if they were excused from serving on the Committee, but it would be appalling if Government Whips kept them out deliberately. If the motion tonight were to be decided purely by Scottish Members, and if all 72 of them were here, we should know the result of the vote before the tellers went in: 64, including two Conservatives, would vote against the Bill, and there would be only eight Tories in favour. That is the measure of support for the Bill, and that is why it should be thrown in the dustbin.

7.31 pm

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn** (Perth and Kinross): I congratulate the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) on his speech. I always enjoy listening to what he says, and he said it tonight with reason and moderation. Nevertheless, I did not think that what he said was very sensible. That is the hon. Gentleman's objection to what is called "testing".

It has always been a boast—or a concept—that Scottish education is somehow better than any equivalent. That bracard has frequently caused a good deal of embarrassment. There have been times, however, when Scottish education has been particularly excellent. My constituency contains a small library, the first lending library not set up by a local authority but by the local laird. It is called the Inverpeffray library. The borrowing book shows that local shepherds and craftsmen in the 18th century borrowed the most sophisticated books. They were essentially self-educated, under the aegis of either the minister or their —as it then was—private school. At its best, in all its ages, the parts of Scottish education that have been most successful have been the self-governing parts, and that important characteristic should not be forgotten.

Some hon. Members on both sides of the House were at self-governing schools throughout their education. A

*[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]*

manifest characteristic of such schools was that those who ran them were intensely interested in ensuring that the education of those who went to them—whether they were primary, secondary or nursery schools—was the best that could be provided. Plenty of schools in my constituency are self-governing, and it is wonderful to visit them and to see the enthusiasm of those who run them, those who teach in them and those who learn.

This week I went to a PTA meeting at a school in my constituency which at present is not self-governing. The rector said that he desperately wanted me to visit the school, but that for that to happen he would have to obtain the permission of the officials and the education committee in Dundee. In the name of what principle should education be run on such a basis? The Bill's aim is —rightly—to escape from such an abominable concept.

The example of Strathclyde is the most absurd of all. What possible business can some officials in the middle of Glasgow have to be running—or permitting decisions in the running of—a primary school in Tyndrum? Let me take the example of Central region, given by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East. One could stand in the middle of the village of Doune after regionalisation and see the little yellow vans going backwards and forwards with circulars and officialdom and all that goes with it. I do not think that that is a good way in which to run education. Schools should be institutions run by the enthusiasm of those who work there, those whose children go there and the local community in general. They ought to be self-governing. It is an entirely Socialist precept that we should all be run by a distant bureaucracy.

Why should schools not look after themselves? What is wrong with that principle? If the principle that now applies to schools applied to shops—on the basis that there was only one village shop in Bridge of Garn, or Kinross, or Abernethy, and that there could be no choice—it could be said that all restaurants must be British and run by the Ministry of Food. It is the same jealous, rotten concept.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Did the hon. and learned Gentleman get his clothes at the village shop?

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** No, but if the hon. Gentleman had his way I would be compelled to get my demob suit from the local Co-op. The hon. Gentleman's question suggests that he is jealous. He loathes choice and individuality. We do not agree, which is why we like the idea of self-governing schools. I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got his clothes or his taste or his lunacy, but I know where he got his education—and by God, it was at a self-governing school. It was not even in Scotland. He may think that it was a village shop, but, by God, it turned out some things that I would never be able to buy in a village shop.

Let us be clear: if we are to continue the historical boast that Scottish education is the best, it has got to be the best. We must not continue to describe it as the best simply because it was once the best—when schools were self-governing, and education was central to family and church thinking. Scottish education should be the best because those who run the schools still have that enthusiasm and do not regard them as a fiefdom of the Department of Education. That is of very great importance.

Before regionalisation, before reorganisation, when I represented a much larger part of rural Perthshire, the difference, in terms of excellence, between schools from Aberfeldy to Aberfoyle was very clear. The degree of excellence depended on the extent to which a school was essentially a self-governing institution rather than simply an object of officials of the regional authority. The difference was huge and was easy to notice as one went from one end of the constituency to the other.

I welcome the principles of the Bill. I welcome the principle of self-governing colleges of excellence. We made a terrible mistake in turning Strathclyde and Heriot-Watt into universities. Anyone who talks about snobbism should realise that that was the crown of snobbism. Here we had colleges of excellence, world renowned in particular disciplines, and we diluted them for the sake of the absurd concept that everybody should be allowed to go to a university. The colleges of excellence that this Bill introduces in order to provide special training are most important to Scottish education. A graduate of Heriot-Watt, when asked, "Where were you trained as an engineer?", used to be able to say, "I went to the Heriot-Watt". Now he says, "I got an engineering degree at Heriot-Watt university", and that does not have the same magic, the same validity.

Let us get back to the great qualities that the peculiar characteristics, the self-governing, self-generating, excellence of Scottish education produced.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** The hon. and learned Member rejected a self-governing Scotland.

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** The hon. Lady says that I rejected a self-governing Scotland. A " self-governing et cetera. Scotland" might be a better description. The claim of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) is that it would give Scotland more say over its own affairs. Assuming that to be true—and I do not accept that it is —why does not the hon. Lady agree that the people of Scotland should have more say in the running of the schools in which their children are educated? I am very suspicious of those——

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): Does my hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that this Bill gives the people of Scotland the choice? Those people have the choice also whether to be self-governing. Thus far they have not expressed that desire.

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** This Bill does indeed give the people more choice, and I believe that that choice will be exercised in favour of more excellence. That choice, together with the individual educational institutions that were self-governing and those that still are, is the foundation of the reputation of our education. I congratulate the Minister on the Bill.

7.45 pm

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): Let us make no mistake: the proposals in this Bill are inspired more by a particular philosophy than by any real desire to improve the quality of education in Scotland. There has been no genuine attempt at consensus regarding a progressive improvement in education. As *The Scotsman* says, this is "not a challenging leap into the unknown, but a huge step back into the known, and unhappy past."

In 1989 we find ourselves in the situation in which the Conservatives are the ideological party. When formulating their policy, they are unwilling to consult interested bodies or to take account of the views of others.

Before this debate I received several items of correspondence from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, from Strathclyde School Parents Federation, from the Scottish Consumer Council, and from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, every one of which is critical of the undue haste with which the Bill is being introduced. We have other recent examples of the Government's approach. When the Government were looking at the National Health Service, one body that they did not consult was the British Medical Association. When they put forward their proposals on Scottish enterprise the SDA had already commissioned a study from Conran Roche, but they ignored that.

This is all the more shameful since the Secretary of State, in his address today, was lucid and erudite. But, sad to say, the Prime Minister has eliminated any alternative social policy emanating from her Cabinet. We have no alternative to Thatcherite tunnel vision, and Scottish education is in danger of feeling the full ideological impact of that detrimental approach. There is nobody here to stand up for Scotland's needs. During the course of this debate we have found out that 40 per cent. of Scottish Tory Back Benchers are already against this proposal. It just needs one waverer—perhaps the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn)—to create a Tory Back-Bench majority against this proposal.

In determining to characterise the state system as a failure, as undisciplined, as a system with which parents have manifested dissatisfaction, the Government have ignored all the available evidence. Every opinion poll over the past nine years has shown a high level of parent support for comprehensive education, and satisfaction with the performance of comprehensive schools. The parents have seen that, with comprehensive education, standards have risen, and children from all social classes have improved—not least, working-class children. Yet, with their proposals for school boards and for opting out, the Government are pretending that they are responding to parental demand. The proposals purport to be an exercise in the extension of democracy and in the decentralisation of power.

What the Government are hoping to do is to utilise the genuine desire of parents to become more involved in the education of their children in order to undermine the role of the local authorities. The Secretary of State is on record as having said in this House that only if there were evidence of real and substantial demand would he introduce this Bill. I challenge the Government to tell us exactly where the evidence of real and substantial demand is. Our proposition, right from the time the school boards legislation was going through its Committee stage, was that the Government would invent demand—and invent demand is what they have done—to destabilise the education system.

Some schools—perhaps those with modern buildings and better resources—will anticipate the financial rewards of following the Government's path and will possibly opt out. The evidence from England is that opting out appeals to schools that are threatened with closure because of falling roll numbers. But it has to be said that, even if the uptake is small, this Bill's effect on the state system will be considerable because once opting out is a possibility for a school it opens the way for an increasing number of activities which require subsidy from parents. There is little doubt that in the longer term selection will be available.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** To answer directly the hon. Gentleman's point about evidence of demand, did he see the MORI poll, reported in *The Scotsman* last summer, which showed that about one third of parents believe that it is right that they should be given the opportunity to opt out of the local authority system?

**Mr. McFall:** Yes, I saw that report. However, when the Minister put forward the school boards proposal he received 7,600 replies against his proposals. That was tangible evidence of parental feeling. When I look at grass roots responses, I find that there has been a total rejection of the Government's view.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The hon. Gentleman has not answered my point about the opinion poll. The purpose of the consultation exercise was not to measure demand. If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the school boards, I wonder whether he saw the System 3 poll that the Scottish Office commissioned. It showed a 2:1 majority in favour of school boards and a very high level of awareness—at 64 per cent.—of their functions. Why is the hon. Gentleman so selective about the evidence that he puts forward?

**Mr. McFall:** The Minister has been selective in the opinion poll polls that he used. What about the opinion regarding devolution for Scotland? The Minister does not really want to consult Scottish parents. To cite opinion polls is insufficient when we are considering the real needs of Scottish education.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** Does the hon. Gentleman support Strathclyde regional council's decision on principle against Catholic single-sex schools?

**Mr. McFall:** The hon. Gentleman has been involved all along in diversionary tactics. He is trying to divert me from the real point. He is very good at that, but I shall ignore his attempt.

Selection will undoubtedly be introduced if schools are allowed to opt out. Last Friday evening I was debating the education proposals in Lenzie—not a hotbed or bedrock of Socialism—with the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland, Mr. Hirst, who was a Member of Parliament. When we were questioned about selectivity, the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland said that he hoped that selectivity would not be introduced. He believes that selectivity is invidious. Clause 16, in conjunction with clause 28, makes selectivity much more of an option. It does not remove that possibility. Selectivity will therefore return. The re-emergence of the old, discredited selectivity is envisaged by the Government. Baroness Hooper, a former Under-Secretary of State for Education in the other place, has stated that if, as a consequence of the Government's proposals, we end up with a segregated system, "so be it."

The Government intend to establish a national curriculum and to introduce testing for primary 4 and primary 7. The only consequence of that will be a narrowing of the state education role. The Government believe that that will equip the workers of the future with marketable skills. Their proposals will result in a narrowing of the curriculum. They are antagonistic

*[Mr. McFall]*

towards any other system. They are certainly antagonistic towards the concept of the 1968 Plowden report that put the individual child at the centre of educational provision.

The Government say that insufficient time is given to the core skills, but that runs contrary to the evidence of Her Majesty's inspectorate, which is asking for a broader view of the curriculum. The Government say that in primary 6 and primary 7, pupils should be tested with much more rigour. The Government want to fire pupils with the competitive spirit, but in doing so they are flying in the face of all the evidence that has been laid before them.

As for the national tests, the Government refer to age-related criteria. The Cockcroft report was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education and Science. The report suggested that there may be as much as a seven-year spread within the mathematical attainments of 11-year-olds. The national tests that the Government intend to introduce are bound to be arbitrary and unrelated to the needs of the individual child. To have any diagnostic value, assessment must determine how much learning has taken place. That must therefore be at the end of a teaching unit, not at the end of a stage in a pupil's school career. The Government's timetable rules out the possibility of devising any of the sophisticated forms of assessment that would be required to test the full range of a pupil's abilities.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science commissioned a report from the Centre for Educational Studies, King's College, London. The report said that it would take nine years before assessment procedures could be put in place. The Government's readiness to disregard the report's conclusions illustrates the degree of their ideological commitment and the political nature of their assessment proposals.

The Government's plans for assessments are motivated by a crude management philosophy and by a desire to control teachers whom they hold responsible for the increasing ills of society. The Government say that teachers have failed to inculcate attitudes in pupils that they believe are desirable—a proper appreciation of market disciplines. The establishment of national standards would result in the establishment of league tables of school performance which would be based on assessment results. The net effect would be to put pressure on teachers to teach to the test, which would result in a further narrowing of the educational focus.

How well thought out are the proposals? I received this morning a document from the Scottish Council for Research in Education. It considered the Government's assessment proposals, the curriculum, tests, the use of test results, report cards and evaluation. The Government say that attainment targets and objective criteria in primary education are to be identified. The Scottish Council for Research in Education asked:

"Will those areas of English and Mathematics for which there are no 'objective criteria' be taught and tested?"

It goes on to say:

"Curriculum objectives for the primary school may be readily selected. The identification of 'targets' or 'objective criteria', however, has proved elusive for many important areas of learning. In addition, wide variation of attainment within each age group suggests that if stage-related targets were identified they would carry the risks of lack of challenge for some pupils and sense of failure for others."

That is where the Government's assessment proposals are leading us.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. My memory may be defective, because I have read a number of reports commissioned by various impartial sources from the Scottish Council for Research in Education, but my recollection is that the report begins by pointing out that because the council does not have the details of the Government's proposals it is not in a position to make an assessment of their efficacy. Is that not right?

**Mr. McFall:** The Scottish Council for Research in Education looked into the history of assessment and saw nothing in the Government's proposals that would assist in the assessment of individual children.

How will nationally standardised tests be constructed to reveal how a child's progress measures up nationally and at the same time to identify what specific help or challenge he or she needs? The answer to that question is that a test that serves both purposes is an attractive prospect but that efforts to achieve such a test in the past have been unsuccessful. The Government's assessment proposals have not been tested. There is no precedent for them. That is what worries politicians, teachers and educationists.

When he put forward his school boards proposals, the Minister obviously did not listen to his alma mater. When I visited the Scottish Office and looked at the responses to the questions that had been asked about school boards, I found that they were against his proposals. Perhaps the Minister will listen to what is said by the Central region in which his constituency lies. It undertook a case study at McLaren high school in Callander regarding opting out. Using McLaren high school as a model, it found that there would be waste involved in the establishment of grant-maintained schools, since these establishments will not be in a position to get the same value for money as schools which are part of the local authority provision. A per capita share of central spending cannot compensate for the reduction in spending power which would result from a loss of access to the economies of scale.

To compensate for the loss of purchasing power which will result from the decision to opt out, schools will have to look to areas of their school provision that they feel can be cut back. McLaren high currently makes provision to meet a minority demand for Gaelic. That is expensive in terms of overall staffing provision. The opted-out school would have to decide whether it wished to continue that specialist provision, and the decision is likely to be based on economic considerations rather than educational or cultural needs, the interests of the pupils, or even parental choice. Music is a feature of the curriculum at McLaren high and that is made possible because the authority provides 10 visiting music teachers. That facility would be withdrawn if the school opted out and the school would be withdrawn if it opted out and the school would beunable to replace those staff, consequently disadvantaging pupils. The school would also have to decide whether to replace the school librarians and technicians if the school opted out.

An important consideration is the provision for special needs, which was raised with me at the meeting at Lenzie on Friday evening. That is another decision to be made

when schools opt out. McLaren high received a very high commendation by HMI in respect of support to a pupil with physical disabilities.

McLaren high has been allocated a special lift which connects the floors of the main building, a lift within the new library, ramps at various points in the school and an adaptation of a toilet. A further toilet incorporating a shower is currently being planned. The quality of inter-professional co-operation between the special duty attendant, the school nurse, subject staff, medical services and so on is very high. Close liaison is also maintained with the pupil's family. All concerned must draw satisfaction from the fact that the pupil participates in the entire curriculum, enjoys a good relationship with her peers and involves herself in sponsored swims to raise money for others similarly disabled.

Will such provisions still be high on the agenda, as it was for Central region, when schools opt out? The critics of the Bill say no, and nobody other than Ministers say yes.

The greatest dangers that would be faced by opted-out schools would be isolation. They would be cut off from the support offered by the directorate, advisers, development officers and the many committees and working parties within a local education authority which help to develop and advance policy, deepen the knowledge and hone the expertise of practitioners. Opted-out schools could not possibly hope to have the same access to the regional in-service training, computer centres and teacher resource centres that the local authority schools enjoy. All that would seriously impair a school's ability to respond to curricula change and could lead to a narrowing of the curriculum on offer to the pupils.

When the Minister puts out his videos and his high tech promotion, he should consider the grass roots aspect and give parents the opportunity to discuss the full meaning of opting out, taking into consideration categories such as special needs.

I conclude by referring to the meeting in Lenzie and to the remarks of the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland. I gave him notice that I would raise the issue. I was asked to outline the advantages of school boards and he was asked to outline their disadvantages. Obviously that was a hard question for me to answer and my reply was not very bold, but Mr. Hirst gave the disadvantages. In reply to a question about unrepresentative parents on a board, he replied that he accepted that in the meantime those unrepresentative parents will do damage, but the situation will correct itself at the ballot box. However, within the Government's timetable, within three of four years the decisions taken by parents, individuals and other co-opted members of the school board could destroy a school and could destroy the relationship between the school and the local authority. The vice-chairman of the Conservative party said that the problem would be solved by reverting to the ballot box, but that will be far too late because under his proposals the prevailing school system could be changed out of all recognition within two or three years.

I ask the Minister to ponder deeply on those words which were the response of the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland to a genuine concern on the part of parents in Scotland. It sums up our worries and concerns about what will be nothing other than the destruction of Scottish education if the Bill is passed.

8.5 pm

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) began by suggesting that 40 per cent. of Conservative Back Benchers were not in favour of the Bill. That certainly appears to be the case from the speeches that we have heard. I find it interesting that at least 40 per cent. of Labour Members representing Scottish constituencies have not even bothered to turn up. He asked when the Government or their supporters had consulted parents. I have news for him—I consult parents in my constituency all the time. I must say that there have been objections to schools boards and to self-governing schools. Almost all those objections have come from teachers and not from parents. Of course we understand the fears and concerns of teachers, and I will address that matter later in my speech.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton spoke about unrepresentative parents. One can only assume that we have unrepresentative councillors because they are elected on a similar basis; people put themselves forward for election and get elected. That suggests that the electoral system is flawed. That may well be the case, and it may well be that the wrong people are elected. There are those who hold views on who are elected and who are not, but it all depends on their position at any given time.

I found the speech of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) interesting, and I am so pleased that he is in his place. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) called it a moderate speech. It may have been a moderate speech, but, if I recollect it correctly, the hon. Member for Falkirk, East spoke about principles and detail. Is it not interesting that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East is on record as saying that he is in favour of opting out when it suits him in his constituency?

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** We shall have a debate on the matter tomorrow morning and I hope that the hon. Gentleman is as diligent in his attendance tomorrow morning as he is today. I shall take his point on board and deal with it to his disadvantage and certainly to the disadvantage of the Minister, who offered me his dead body in exchange for the closure of the Falkirk infirmary.

**Mr. Walker:** The hon. Gentleman should have let me finish my point. The Bill gives people the choice. I read in the newspapers that he would make use of the choice that will become available to him to allow a hospital in his constituency to opt out because he would rather it opted out and that he would bury his principles if it were to the advantage of the people in his constituency for his hospital to opt out. I am not arguing against that; I am merely trying to put it on record. But that is exactly what the Bill does for parents and others in respect of schools in the parts of the country where they live. It gives them the very choice that he wished to exercise.

I shall conclude my comments on the hon. Gentleman's speech by agreeing with him. I agree with him that the Bill is not an anti-teacher Bill. It is anything but that. I would go further and say that good teachers have nothing to fear from the Bill. The hon. Member spoke about the turmoil and upset in Scotland. He would not expect me to agree with him on that. My view is that that turmoil and upset are a direct result of the Labour party's attitude since 1983 when it tried to pretend to the Scottish people that it had a mandate to govern Scotland and was going to do so.

*[Mr. Walker]*

Labour Members went even further in 1987 when some of them did it in their own different ways by breaking the rules—even the rules of the House. The turmoil and upset are the result of what they have done. There is nothing worse than making promises that cannot be delivered. That also causes turmoil and upset.

The hon. Member also mentioned the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. He knows that I have a deep interest in the business of that Committee, past, present and some time in the future, I hope. It was never the Government's fault that the Committee was not set up. If ever arms were twisted, mine were. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I and other Conservative Back Benchers made sure that the Committee was not set up. It could not be set up without us. We had our reasons for doing that. I have put mine on the record, and I do not deviate from them.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said in their interesting speeches that they think that the pace of change is too fast. Others may share that view. I think that this is the right time to make the change. There are two areas where I disagree with my right hon. Friend. During the 1987 general election campaign I made clear what I expected a returned Conservative Government to do with regard to school boards and what is commonly known as opting out. There was no doubt about the matter in Tayside, North. Secondly, I disagree with my right hon. Friend when he says that Scottish education is sound because we have a state sector, and that those who wish to exercise choice can do so by sending their children to fee-paying schools. He was supported in that view by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries. It is a funny kind of choice that is determined by the size of a cheque book.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is not in his place. I make no criticism of that.

**Mr. Ewing:** The hon. Gentleman was quite happy to talk about the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) without saying that he is absent from the Chamber.

**Mr. Walker:** I am not being critical. I would not want to say anything about the hon. Member in his absence at which he might take offence. We all have to go out to eat, for example. I have never criticised hon. Members for leaving the Chamber.

I tried to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Garscadden but he would not accept an intervention, which I thought rather bad considering the number of interventions that my right hon. and learned Friend took when he introduced the Bill. He hoped that there would be no Conservative Members on the Standing Committee, or that there would be only Conservative Members with no experience or knowledge of Scottish schools.

I hope that there will be no Labour Members on the Committee who were educated in private schools, or who send their children to private schools. I say that because a lot of barbs come from Opposition Members on this issue. I do not criticise people for sending their children to private schools—I defend their right to do so—but I find it offensive when Opposition Members accuse us of not understanding.

**Mr. Ewing:** My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will defend himself, but that is not what he said. He said in simple language that it would be a scandal if the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) were deliberately kept off the Committee simply because they disagree with the Government.

**Mr. Walker:** When the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard*, he will find that the hon. Member for Garscadden did say that, but he went on to say what I said he said.

I welcome the provisions that establish self-governing schools. They represent an opportunity for choice for many people. The Government are right to increase the number of appointed and co-opted members to the board, and to include the head teacher as a full member of it if schools decide to exercise their choice to opt out.

The Government are also wise to allow non-elected members to serve longer periods, thus assisting continuity of management policies and to maintain the long-term interests of the school. I hope that few, if any, schools will exercise the choice, but I welcome that choice. There are many good schools in my part of the world, but many of them are starved of essential resources because the local authority is a long way away. It has failed to deal with the 40 per cent. overcapacity in schools in Dundee. The result is that resources essential for Highland rural schools are sometimes slow getting there.

I welcome the checks and balances in the form of a ballot of parents, consultations with local education authorities and the requirement to seek the approval of the Secretary of State. Each stage must be gone through before a self-governing school can introduce any form of selection of pupils. It is important to note that because there is a feeling among teachers and others that the Bill is a veiled attempt to introduce selection by the back door. I believe that the checks and balances will ensure that that does not happen.

I understand that education authorities already have the power to introduce selection. They need only consult parents before making a change. They do not need to refer their proposals to the Secretary of State. The Bill proposes a big improvement.

I welcome the assurance that a simple majority of parents will not necessarily be decisive, and that such a decision only allows the proposal to go to the Secretary of State, who will take account of the size of the majority and the percentage turnout. I want that assurance on the record, because it is important. We do not want the Bill to be regarded as a vehicle for things that will not be beneficial. If the majority of parents want change, and that is shown clearly in a ballot, there should be change.

Such powers and choices will put pressure on education authorities to be much more sympathetic to the needs of, for example, rural and denominational schools.

**Mr. McLeish:** Why has not the Secretary of State included the same balloting provisions as apply in England, whereby in the first ballot there is some regard to the turnout?

**Mr. Walker:** I am happy with what we are doing in Scotland. I always thought that we Scots argued to do things differently because we like to do things differently —our education system is different. It would be nonsense for us to explain why we are not doing things identically.

There has been a lot of misinformation about the Bill. There has been misinformation about specialist services, such as child guidance, school hostels, school transport and recording of special educational needs. I am glad that such services will remain and that education authorities will continue to be responsible for their maintenance if a school decides to become self-governing.

There has been misinformation about self-governing schools. I would like my hon. Friend the Minister to confirm that the board will have the same powers as other employers.

There has been misinformation about funding. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the funding of self-governing schools will be comparable with what a school would have received if it had remained under local authority control? I represent a massive rural constituency, where local schools are an essential part of the community, so I am delighted that my schools and parents will have a choice, which will be exercised only if parents feel that the local authority is no longer in tune with the wishes and perceived needs of the community schools.

I want to place on record my pleasure at the number of parents who have intimated to me their wish to stand for election to the local school boards in my constituency. I have been holding public meetings throughout the constituency and I have been delighted at the response. Many hon. Members have been fortunate enough to enjoy the opportunity of choice both in their own education and the education of their children. The Bill gives the opportunity of choice to all parents in Scotland. They need not exercise that choice, but at least all of them will have the opportunity to exercise that choice. At present, it is the exclusive preserve of a few. I find it interesting that some hon. Members who are opposed to the Bill have already made a choice in their own and their children's education, and I find it fascinating that they are prepared to oppose the Bill.

I shall now deal with the proposals for colleges for further education. Few would argue that such colleges should not be close to industry in the local community and understand its needs. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East mentioned the problems of Falkirk. Sadly, it is often true that the mandarins of industry live a long way away from where they work. I accept that as a truism. In a lovely country such as ours, with its beautiful wide open spaces, people have the right to choose to live in a rural area and to commute to work. It is wise to have at least half of the college council members drawn from employers in the local area because they understand the areas of work for which the youngsters are being trained.

I believe that it is sensible that only one fifth of members should be drawn from the local authority and the remainder from other interested groups. I assume that that means that some of them will represent professional bodies, and I hope that there will also be representatives from organised labour, in whatever form. I am pleased to note that college councils will select staff, although the selection of the principal will continue to be the responsibility of the local authority and the principal will be an ex officio member of the college council. All those provisions are good, and I hope that they will receive support from all parties.

There may be some doubts about giving future Secretaries of State the power to make regulations about the testing of primary schoolchildren. On balance, I am in favour, but it is an area in which mischievous information may give many parents cause for deep concern.

I am pleased that the Bill contains enabling proposals about the appraisal of teachers. A high calibre, high quality teaching staff is vital to the well-being of present and future generations of schoolchildren. Most teachers to whom I have spoken seemed to take a fairly positive approach. The proposals will be extremely helpful and will provide the opportunity for teachers to add to and update their skills. There is no profession in which people do not have to do that regularly.

I welcome the introduction of technology academies. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross mentioned various academic institutions in the past. I remember that when I was a young boy I was told by many people that the only escape route in Scotland was through education. In Dundee there were some very good education institutions. There were schools of excellence there and the Dundee technical college was recognised as a place of academic excellence in technology. I was a student there and I have no regrets about the fact that I attended that college because it was beneficial to me. I hope that those who attend the technology academies will experience the same pleasure as I had in what the college gave me.

I hope that Tayside region—and this is an important point which I have raised already with the convener of education there—will take a positive stand on the technology academies and will accept the offer that may come to it to have a technology college on Tayside. I would expect it to be placed in Dundee where we have surplus school accommodation that could be used for such an academy.

We have had some interesting comments about university rectors. I am not qualified to comment on whether university rectors should automatically be the chairmen of the university courts, but it seems that the position has come about as a result of an approach by the universities themselves. One or two people have made observations about that time, but I have made it clear that I have no direct knowledge of the running of universities and I cannot tell whether that change will be beneficial. However, I am prepared to listen to the comments in the debate and to those hon. Members who have direct knowledge of universities. In principle, I probably support the change, but I would need to be given certain assurances about what lies behind the Government's thinking and why the provision has been included before I could say that I supported the proposal.

We have heard much about what the Bill is supposed to contain. I believe that it contains no draconian measures unless parents choose to exercise their rights. Choice is a principle that all Members should approve. The Bill will give parents a choice and I welcome the opportunities for the schools in my constituency. Some of those schools have long and distinguished records and are good community schools. I welcome the thought that in the future, if necessary, they can exercise choice. By the very fact that choice exists local authoritities will, I hope, be more responsive to the needs of local schools and communities.

8.26 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and his hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) made great play of the word "choice". I must remind them that at the general election the Scottish people made their choice through the democratic processes open to them.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** People in Scotland exercised the choice of electing hon. Members to this unitary Parliament and the results were clear. That was their choice and the Bill seeks to provide choice about how schools will be run in the future.

**Mrs. Ewing:** The hon. Gentleman always resorts to hiding behind the cloak of the unitary Parliament. Clearly, the people of Scotland elected 62 Members of Parliament who believed in some form of self-government for Scotland. Their opinions may be of various shades, but the people of Scotland voted for Members who wanted to see a change in the system of government within Scotland. It is clear that the people of Scotland did not choose a Conservative Government or the policies that are being implemented. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross spoke jocularly about a self-governing Scotland. Scottish Conservative Members should realise that in a self-governing Scotland people would have real choice about the way in which their education system was run —and about any other aspect of life that affected them directly.

The Secretary of State started with three basic premises and he seemed to bring an element of unity into the House. He then departed from that and began reading from a brief prepared, no doubt, by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. He read it unconvincingly and seemed to reflect the reasonable doubts that many of his hon. Friends have shown in the debate. What worries the Secretary of State, as it worries many other hon. Members, is that it has not yet been demonstrated to us that there is a clear demand for the policies in the Bill. When challenged by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary responded by quoting the single shred of evidence he has been able to produce—one MORI opinion poll showing that about one third of people think that the policies might be a good idea. It was not specifically about this legislation but on the general philosophy. That is one of the poorest excuses I have ever heard propounded for introducing legislation.

I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) in his place. He tried to suggest to me earlier that he thought I was having a bad day. He has misunderstood some of the questions that have been asked by my hon. Friends and the importance of the answers that were forthcoming. I asked the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) how many letters he has received expressing demand for this legislation. He replied glibly that he had received 1,500. Those of us who understand Scottish politics—I appreciate that it is difficult to understand it when the Scottish Whip represents an English seat—know that the letters referred to one area and one issue. It is interesting that the only letter that I have received asking for such legislation also came from Paisley. It was from the parents of a child in Neilston school; the school which was the loser in the debate about Paisley grammar. That is a straw in the wind. It is clear that the proposals will be used not for philosophical or ideological reasons but by people who see, under a rationalisation process, their local school being threatened.

I should be interested to know how many letters the Secretary of State and his Ministers have tucked away in their files in the Scottish Office suggesting that the people of Scotland are screaming for legislation such as this. The Secretary of State tells us happily that he never receives letters about constitutional change and that therefore there is no demand. I suspect that we could quote more effective opinion polls and point to many more letters about constitutional change than the Secretary of State could produce on this issue.

I receive many letters about education. They are generally about the fabric of buildings, the need for adequate resources and about facilities for the children. It is not adequate for the hon. Member for Tayside, North to suggest that somehow the starvation of resources is the fault of the local authorities. We all know that the money comes from the rate support grant, which has been cut back further and further by the Government, squeezing resources for education and making life difficult. He suggested that a school that wants additional resources should consider opting out because, through a special grant or a capital grant, it may be possible for the Secretary of State to help it out. The Bill does not address the main issues involved in education in Scotland or the difficulties we face.

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** Is it not important to point out to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the House that any resources received by an opted-out school are taken from the resources that would have been allocated to the regional authorities to administer the state sector schools? It is as simple as that.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Yes, and it also represents the thin end of the wedge for a two-tier system of education, something which we would all resist.

I resent the implication that because we oppose the Bill we cannot accept criticism about our education system in Scotland. Opposition Members are not saying that everything is perfect and nor are the teachers' unions or anybody involved in education. We are willing to look at the criticisms, but we feel that they are not being addressed effectively by the Government. I would be more convinced of the Government's aims if some of the important issues were addressed in the Bill.

Conservative Members seem to have great difficulty making up their minds about what they mean by education. I have always understood that education should be child-centred. The Bill is proposing that education should become management-centred. Essentially, the same debate will occur in the Scottish Grand Committee tomorrow when we talk about how we manage our National Health Service. Nobody doubts that management has a role within education. I have worked on the administrative side of education as well as in teaching. I recognise the importance of management, but it should not be the driving force for our education system. If management becomes the driving force, it will be for only political reasons. That worries me deeply. There are strong political reasons why the Government wish to see changes in management to remove more powers from the local authorities and so on. It is political manipulation.

I wish to re-emphasise the point already made about the timing of the legislation. Education, particularly in our schools in Scotland, needs stability and consolidation. The schools do not need more upheaval or uncertainty. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross spoke about the need to have schools in which the staff were enthused, the communities involved, and so on. The continuing changes and upheavals that have been enacted by the Government have lowered the morale of teachers. Despite that, as the Secretary of State admitted, they are still managing to do a great job and standards are rising.

Managerial upheaval such as this will bring more uncertainty and will do nothing to help teachers' morale. The Government should put the Bill away and forget about it. It is clear that the majority of Scottish Members do not want it. We have not heard a chorus of enthusiasm from Scotland. The Bill is not wanted, so let us put it on the shelf for a few years and see what happens. Let us leave our schools to consolidate and cope with the changes that have already been enacted.

I can reassure the Minister that I have read the Bill a couple of times. It is purgatory to have to plough through the Bill twice. No doubt, in Committee I will be able to raise many of the points that I have underlined and put exclamation marks beside. I wish to raise several issues and I hope that the Minister will comment when he winds up.

Essentially, the further education sector is being handed over to sectoral interests. I saw training courses in some of our further education colleges before returning to the House in 1987. It was clear then that the colleges were being encouraged to take on more youngsters from youth training programmes than youngsters looking for courses leading to professional qualifications. I am thinking about nursery nurses and people involved in social work training. The college fees extracted for such courses are not particularly high and, therefore, do not attract a great deal of money into the FE sector, so it was more attractive for principals to bring in youngsters on courses involving much higher fees and on which they would receive a good turnover of capital. I am not saying that those youngsters should have been denied those opportunities, but I have always had reservations about such schemes because they were not really offering training.

There is an attempt now to remove the idea of education from our FE colleges and to talk only about interests relating to the workplace. I thought that we had moved away from the Robbins concept that education is merely about training for employment. We believe—certainly my party does—that education is about much more than that. It is about encouraging people to recognise their talents and abilities, ensuring that they are stretched as far as possible and that they are equipped for life in its many facets. I am deeply concerned that the handing over of our further education college councils in the way suggested in the Bill will move us further away from the idea that education should be a rounded process.

Clause 22 seems to suggest the possibility of the ending of the requirement to register with the General Teaching Council before being employed in Scottish schools; there are references made to exceptions which may be prescribed. That is worrying for those of us who have been glad to see a fully qualified and registered profession operating in Scottish schools. I would not want us to return to having non-qualified teachers in our schools or a system of licensed teachers as is often the case south of the border. I should like some clarification on that point.

**Mr. Andrew Welsh** (Angus, East): Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that a Conservative Member is so interested in the subject that he is dealing with his correspondence? He is practising for the Committee stage, which will no doubt be packed with Conservative English Members with no interest in, and even less understanding of, Scottish education.

**Mrs. Ewing:** I noticed the arrival of the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn). No doubt he is practising for the Committee stage.

Clause 63 refers to national testing. *[Interruption.]* My teacher's training comes in most effectively. Normally, if a teacher stops speaking, the class immediately becomes quiet. I am most grateful to Conservative Members for having effectively observed that principle.

I am worried about national testing, mainly because of my training in remedial education. I will not rehearse all the arguments. However, continuous assessment is the best way of identifying children's learning needs. The concept of a test which is suddenly brought in at the end of a certain stage in primary school seems to be a move from continuous assessment and the classroom teacher's right to define learning needs. If we really are concerned about standards and how most effectively to meet children's learning needs, we should look at more opportunities to enable our teachers to undertake additional in-service training to keep them constantly updated on new ideas that emerge rather than introduce national testing.

Many hon. Members have referred to clause 65. No one disputes the basic principles in the clause. None of us expects that every area will be able to provide schools for children with specialised needs and specific handicaps. We recognise that there must be a centralisation of resources. I should like to be assured that the Scottish Office will not use clause 65 as an excuse for not providing facilities for those children. All hon. Members recognise the need to centralise resources, but it must not be an excuse for not providing what is needed for handicapped children in Scotland. We recognise that families should be close at hand for such children, because they need the warmth and love of their family surroundings perhaps more than anybody else does.

The Bill is based on a centralising philosophy. A rough count demonstrates that 66 new powers are being ascribed to the Secretary of State for Scotland, and that is without including the various procedural powers in the schedules. Scottish Members do not like the philosophy on which the legislation is founded. We do not like its proposals. The Bill is alien to our idea of an education system in Scotland. On that basis, we will reject it. No doubt, many other hon. Members, whether or not they are signing their mail, will trot through the Aye Lobby at 10 o'clock and ensure that Scottish Members are outvoted.

There have been broad hints in the press that five or seven English Back-Bench Conservative Members will be put on the Committee to ensure that the Government have their majority. I have sat through the debate, as have many other hon. Members, and I have carefully watched to see which English Members would listen to the debate, and show their interest and involvement in the subject. I congratulate the hon. Members for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine). They have sat faithfully and loyally throughout the debate, and I am sure that they intend to speak. If English hon. Members are selected to serve on the Committee, we

*[Mrs. Ewing]*

would have expected to see more of them attending today. I exempt the Government Front Bench; I am talking about Back-Bench Members.

Scottish National Members believe that the Bill should be dealt with by a Committee of Scottish Members. The facility exists for the Bill to be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee and dealt with by Scottish hon. Members who, after all, were elected by the Scottish people and are seen as the protectors of the Scottish education system. As hon. Members have admitted, Scottish education is distinctive and different. Therefore, we cannot expect people to understand it unless they are involved in it.

The Bill says that simple majorities are enough to start the ball rolling for a school to opt out. A simple majority of votes cast at the last election demands that the Bill be dealt with by Scottish Members. I trust that the Minister will at least comment on how he envisages the Committee stage will be dealt with. We cannot win the vote tonight, but we are determined to win in Committee.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** Order. The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at about 10 past 9. Four hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye. They have been present throughout the debate. I hope that they will divide the available time between them.

8.45 pm

**Mr. Gerald Howarth** (Cannock and Burntwood): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who made an interesting speech. However, it was spoilt by the intervention of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), who has a singularly inappropriate name for a Scottish Nationalist. It was also singularly inappropriate of him to refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), who had a most distinguished career in the Department of Education and Science. He was responsible for introducing some enlightened reforms in the education system in England and Wales. Nevertheless, I thank the hon. Lady for her kind remarks about my attendance during the debate. I do not think that I have missed one word.

**Mr. Andrew Welsh:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Howarth:** I have been asked to be brief. The hon. Gentleman has intervened before. It was not an appropriate intervention, and I shall not allow him the opportunity of making another.

At a conference in Bournemouth, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who, needless to say, is not present, suggested that the Conservative party has run out of steam. This Bill demonstrates that that is far from true. We have certainly not run out of steam in Scotland, in particular.

This is the latest of several measures. We have seen the sale of National Bus Company subsidiaries, privatisation of the electricity industry in Scotland, and the school boards legislation which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, and we now have this Bill to give a much bigger say to parents. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members might like to know that I wrote my speech myself.

The School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988 met opposition because it attacked vested interests by giving greater power to parents and reducing the power of local authorities. This Bill takes that process a stage further. The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) is reported in the *Glasgow Herald* of 15 December as saying that Scottish education is too valuable to be left to a politician who is as zealous and ideologically motivated as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. A great many things are too important to leave to politicians, which is precisely why this measure is being introduced and why we are seeking to reduce further the role of the state.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) referred to a visit that he wished to make to a school in his constituency. He required the permission of the local education authority before he could make the visit. Similarly, I visited a school in my constituency. When I turned up with a local reporter who wished to take a photograph of my attendance at the scene, he was told by the headmaster that there were to be no photographs; it had not been cleared with the local authority.

The idea that at the moment schools operate in an atmosphre of political neutrality is a load of nonsense. Schools, both north and south of the border, are very much politicised because local education authorities are accountable to locally elected politicians. The Bill gives parents further powers, in addition to those they received under the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988. They are given power to order their own affairs and to decide what is in the best interests of their children.

However, the important point is that the opportunity to be self-governing will not be mandatory. My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who both have Scottish constituencies, have declared their uneasiness about the Bill and about the pace of change.

Opposition Members have also made the point that this Bill, coming so soon after other changes to the Scottish education system, would impose too great a burden. It is vital to recognise that this measure permits and in no way imposes mandatory opting out on the school boards.

The Bill gives further choice to school boards and parents to say which alternative they wish to adopt. In so doing, it further enhances the choice available to parents. It shows that the principal purpose behind Government reforms is not to bolster the rich and defend the privileged but to give those at present trapped in the education system the opportunity to decide for themselves and to run their own show—a worthwhile step to take.

There have been complaints in the past that Parliament has imposed legislation on the Scottish people first and then introduced it in England and Wales. This case is different—an experiment has already started in England and Wales. We have experience of opting out, and since that opportunity was given to parents throughout England and Wales no fewer than 37 schools have voted. Twenty eight schools voted to opt out—13 of them were in six Conservative-controlled authorities, which demonstrates that the Bill is not simply a measure to allow parents opposed to Labour authorities to escape from them: it is designed to increase parental choice. That is why I welcome the fact that parents in Conservative-controlled authorities have decided to exercise their right and try something else. So far, two opt-out schools have received

approval from the Secretary of State—Skegness grammar school and Audenshaw boys' comprehensive school—despite massive campaigning by some local authorities to intimidate parents into resisting opting out.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will ensure that the Bill contains provisions to protect parents who are subject to undue influence from local authorities—anxious not to lose part of their fiefdom—so that they will be able to make a rational decision, free from intimidation.

I believe that parents are clear about the responsibilities that they are assuming and are prepared to shoulder them—as has already been made clear by some who are involved in the process.

The headmaster of Skegness grammar school said—*[Interruption.]* These are important considerations because they give—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has not been in the Chamber as long as I have. I am——

**Mr. Jim Sillars** (Glasgow, Govan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to be talking about an English education authority on a Scottish education Bill? I understand that, on Second Reading, a wide latitude is given to speakers, but the speech of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) is well outwith the proper scope——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I understand the drift of the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I have heard nothing out of order.

**Mr. Howarth:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to continue.

It is pertinent to the debate to know what is happening in schools in which opting out is being considered. The headmaster of Skegness grammar school has said:

> "We shall consider the insurance, payroll and finance services offered by the council. But, if the banks or someone else can provide them more cheaply and efficiently, we will choose them."

Parents will be well aware of the responsibilities which they will have to shoulder. I recognise that those responsibilities will, in some respects, be quite onerous, but I am quite sure that parents will take that into account when exercising their judgment on these matters.

In conclusion—I know that time is short and that other hon. Members wish to speak—I believe that Scottish Office Ministers have made a significant impact on the Scottish economy and on Scottish social policy. As has already been said, the fact that, even in advance of the Bill's publication, the Educational Institute of Scotland has pointed out the need to be sensitive to parental wishes shows that the Ministers are having an effect.

In contrast to the positive and innovative policies of Ministers, the Opposition—whether the Scottish National party or the Labour party—are in total disarray. As has been clearly pointed out, first the Opposition were opposed to school boards, now they encourage parents to join them so that they can resist opting out. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) even got the title of the document wrong. In fact, it is called "Opting Out and Labour's Alternative Agenda". Labour's alternative agenda took up only two and a half pages of that 21-page document which states that the policy is "a" way forward—not, note, "the" way forward but "a" way forward. It is such a major policy document that it carries a health warning stating that the ideas contained in it do not represent a blueprint. In other words, they are not worth the paper they are written on.

The Bill is a sensible measure, based on experience. It will do excellent work for Scottish education, and will be endorsed by the Scottish people.

8.57 pm

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): The ignorance of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) about Scottish education was matched only by his selfishness: he used up 13 minutes of the remaining 25 minutes which should have been shared between four hon. Members. I shall try to confine my remarks to five minutes, as he should have done.

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)—long gone now, but not forgotten—said that Ministers had won the argument over the Bill. But it was obvious from the speeches made by his hon. Friends that they had not even won the argument among their Back Benchers or in their party; neither have they won it in Scotland, where the Bill is deeply resented and where it will be bitterly opposed when it comes to be implemented.

It would be fatuous to search for any sort of democratic mandate that might justify the extreme proposals in the Bill. As always with specifically Scottish Bills, there is no such mandate. So much was made clear by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who pointed out that the Bill's proposals did not even appear in the Conservative party's Scottish election manifesto in 1987—no more than the poll tax appeared in the previous election's manifesto. That did not prevent the last Tory Government from goose-stepping the poll tax through Parliament in opposition to the wishes of the Scottish people. So we should not be surprised.

Perhaps we have entirely missed the point. Perhaps the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), sees Scotland as a school writ large. On such an analogy, the Scottish Office becomes the school board, and Scottish Tory supporters represent—albeit just—more than 10 per cent. of those eligible to vote for the school board. In line with clause 13 the Government have successfully passed a resolution through the school board and received the support of at least 10 per cent. of those eligible to vote for it in support of the resolution. Now they should put the proposals to the test of the ballot box among those eligible to vote, but that is where the analogy breaks down.

The Minister and his lackies are, to borrow a phrase from the Prime Minister, frit to put the question to the test of the ballot box in Scotland because they know that the answer will be an overwhelming no. That is why they have distorted and restricted the democratic process surrounding the Bill by insisting on ballots at individual schools. They know that they will lose the vast majority of those ballots, but that does not concern them. In the few places in which Ministers' appeals to self-interest and selfishness strike a chord in the Tory heartland the Government may be able to get away with this and begin to build a directly maintained school sector which is separate, privileged, elitist and entirely cut off from the rest of the comprehensive sector and Scottish school education. The overall loser would be Scottish education.

*[Mr. John McAllion]*

Scottish education has been almost wholly organised on the comprehensive principle, experience of which has been almost completely positive. I say almost, because the Under-Secretary was a product of comprehensive education in Scotland—the one black mark against it. Apart from that, it has been an outstanding success. More students than ever are sitting certificate examinations, in which more than ever are achieving higher grades. All the research shows that that is so.

So on strictly educational grounds there is no justification for the organisational turmoil into which the Bill will throw Scottish education. Not only opposition political parties, teachers, unions, and parents say that: the Minister's predecessor, Mr. John MacKay, said so. At a meeting with teachers' unions before the last general election he stressed that Scottish education needed a period of stability and time in which fully to introduce the new standard grade courses into Scottish schools—the stability and time in which to work out the primary curriculum and in which to ensure that the modular approach favoured by the 16-plus action plan could and would work. According to the previous Tory Scottish Education Minister, Scottish schools needed a period of relative calm in which to get on with the real job of improving the quality of education that is delivered at the chalk-face. It did not need and could not afford the time-consuming and resource-wasting organisational upheavals that make sense only in the fevered imaginations of ideologues like the Under-Secretary.

I want to say a great deal more, but I shall cut short my speech to allow other hon. Members to speak. I warn the Government that the Bill will be fought every inch of the way by Opposition Members in Committee.

9.3 pm

**Mr. Michael Irvine** (Ipswich): Scotland has a proud and distinctive educational history and tradition. One of its particular merits is that over the years Scotland can justly claim to have allowed the less well off access to high-quality education. I am grateful for that, because my forebears benefited from it. It is important to consider the Bill in that light.

There is much to be proud of in Scottish educational tradition and history. We are deciding now whether the Bill is the best way of making a good educational system better. I submit most emphatically that it is. If there is an aspect of Scottish education that has justly been open to criticism in recent years it has been the lack of parental involvement. Steps have already been taken to correct that, but the Bill goes a good deal further. It brings parental choice into the heart of the Scottish education debate, and the parents of Scottish children will be grateful for that.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) gave the main reasons for the Opposition voting against the Bill. Their main reason—the first argument, as he put it—was that no one wanted it. Several times he described the Bill as objectionable and friendless and said that it had little support in Scotland. If that is so, why was the hon. Gentleman in such a state about it? Why are Opposition Members so overwrought and anxious about the Bill? It is because it gives a choice to the Scottish people, to Scottish parents of Scottish children, and if they do not want to exercise their right on the opt-out provisions there is no compulsion on them to do so. It will be for parents to decide.

I suspect that much of the anxiety, passion and wrath in the Opposition stems from the fear that is deep in the heart of Opposition Members that the Bill will prove rather popular with Scottish parents. That is because the Bill's provisions pose a challenge to the monopoly of local authorities. The Opposition have powerful allies on Scotland's local authorities. I am sure that if a local authority is doing well by its schools and parents are satisfied with the standard of education that their children are receiving, they will not exercise the choice that the Bill gives to them. Rather, they will stay with that local authority.

If a local authority is letting parents down and a school is not being properly run, parents will at last have the right to say, "No, we may not be well enough off to send our children to an independent school but we have had enough of this. We shall opt out." That is a massive advance. Not only will the Bill improve the choice that is available to Scottish parents, but it will put Scottish local authorities on their toes. It will make them much better prepared to take note of the wishes of the parents. At the moment the only sanction available to parents is the right to complain. The Bill will give them an opportunity to opt out and that will put pressure on Scottish local authorities to deliver better-quality education.

9.7 pm

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): In bringing forward the Bill the Government had an opportunity to do something for further education in Scotland. In a few weeks time the Chancellor will have a great deal of money to dispose of and in that context the Government could have talked about more resources for further education. Various Governments have a history of not resourcing further education in the way that should be resourced. Further education has to cover abilities ranging from university preparation to basic literacy and numeracy. It takes in high flyers and those who have never left the ground. In view of that, it is appalling that it is left to do the best that it can with such poor resources.

I worked for nine years in a college in which the roof constantly leaked every winter, but the local authority, Strathclyde regional council, had enough money only to carry out minimum repairs and never enough to put on a new roof. A college of commerce that runs on paper had to cut its paper budget. I do not blame Strathclyde regional council for those things. I blame the Government who consistently over 10 years have refused adequately to fund Strathclyde council for the work that it has to do. The Government are short sighted because they are not only failing to cater for the needs of students but they are not properly addressing themselves to the needs of the country and the hopes for regenerating industry. They are treating students in further education in a miserable fashion.

Under the Bill, employers will fill 50 per cent. or more of the college council places. I have not yet heard an explanation from the Government as to why they think that this is appropriate. There is a history of poor attendance by employers on college councils, and I do not particularly blame them for that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out, they have their businesses to run and profits to make,

and attendance on a local college council cannot be high on the list of priorities for many of them. Nor is it part of our argument that all employers take an unhelpful or unprogressive attitude. I know of employers in Glasgow whose work on the area manpower board has been constructive, and who have taken a great interest in proper training and in health and safety.

However, employers have their own view and they have their business interests to protect and foster, as we know from the history of employers' reaction to education and training. We have no reason to suppose that they are any different today. It is in the employers' interest that most employees should be well-trained and obedient hewers of wood and drawers of water. Employers do not want an educated work force that is encouraged to develop independent thought so that people think for themselves and possibly question not only the employers' decisions but the decisions that affect them in society at large and in Parliament.

Despite all that, Scottish colleges will have imposed on them a system in which employers will have massive influence, not only because of their numbers on the college boards, but because they will contribute gifts of money, take part in fund raising or produce investments. Inevitably, those who bring in the money will have more influence than the individual with one vote. What impact will all this have on fees for those who want, for example, to take an evening course to educate themselves further or for the whole range of people who are trying to get a second chance, which is part of what further education is all about? What will happen when colleges have to make their own way and raise money wherever they can? If money is short, I suspect that the answer will be similar to that given by the Secretary of State when we were talking about schools running out of money. When asked what would happen when schools run short of money, he gave the offhand reply "Much the same as what happens now." At the moment, colleges and schools get a fair share of the resources available, but in future they will have to struggle for whatever cash they can lay their hands on, and resources will not be available.

Some years ago, I worked at Falkirk college of technology. I congratulate it on its excellent work—as it celebrates its 25th anniversary this week. Hon. Members on this side of the House will want to join me in congratulating it. When I worked there, the then college council at one time wanted to cut the provision of classes in the ordinary grades and highers. Many of my colleagues said that as the college council had decided on that course, there was nothing to be done about it. However, we fortunately had an active Educational Institute of Scotland branch, and with our friends in other education unions we appealed to Central regional council, to Michael Kelly, who was a long-standing chairman of the education committee. We explained to him why it was so important for the people of Falkirk to have that second chance opportunity to achieve ordinary grades and highers. To its credit, Central regional council overturned the decision of the college council, and gave the people of Falkirk those opportunities. When colleges reach their own decisions without any further reference to anybody else, people will be deprived of that second chance.

Clause 61 deals with the abolition of the negotiating machinery. Both sides would agree that that machinery has not been satisfactory, but the Government's proposal for an alternative is extremely unsatisfactory. Under the clause, where

> "any group of teaching staff employed in or in connection with the provision of further education in Scotland and those employing them agree, whether expressly or impliedly, to an alteration of the remuneration payable to, or the terms and conditions of employment of, that group of teaching staff",

such a change can be implemented.

That is arrant nonsense. I hope that the Minister will respond to this issue when he replies. Are we to understand that if a group of Professional Association of Teachers members decide to accept a pay offer or a change in conditions, the offer or the change will be imposed on the rest of their colleagues? If in the course of negotiations on a new pay round a group of teachers at a college feel that they may as well give up the struggle because they are not getting anywhere and opt for accepting a low offer, that offer will take effect and will be imposed on the rest of their colleagues. The Bill does not make the position clear and I hope that the Minister will clarify the issue. I want to know what he anticipates the outcome will be. I suspect that we are on a road that will lead to staff being paid less well and to worse conditions of service. They will face a much more difficult negotiating position.

The non-teaching staff has not been mentioned. What will become of the office workers, cleaners and janitors who service the colleges? Will any change be made to their negotiating machinery? So much in the Bill will be the subject of future regulations. It would seem that other developments are in the pipeline. I want to know more about the Government's intentions.

I have waited in my place all afternoon and evening for a chance to participate in the debate. I thank the Opposition and Government Whips for allowing me a short time to make my contribution to the Bill's Second Reading. I say that with all respect to you, Mr. Speaker. I did not sit in my place thinking that if I were fortunate enough to catch your eye I would be able to change the minds and attitudes of Conservative Members. We all know what a foolish hope that would be. None of our amendments is ever accepted in Committee. That is certainly true of social security and employment legislation, and the same can be said of any other measure that is considered in Committee.

The Government have not accepted an Opposition amendment for as long as most of us can remember. My colleagues and I are not making speeches this evening because we think that we shall be able to change the opinions of Conservative Members. They will not listen to rational arguments. We want to be able to tell the people of Scotland that we are sticking up for them and doing the best job that we can. It is extremely important to get that message across to them.

I hope that the people of Scotland understand that once again they are having imposed upon them ideas on education and on how to run schools and colleges that are anathema to them. At 10 o'clock, however, the bunch sitting on the Government Benches and their right hon. and hon. Friends will troop through the Lobby in support of the Government. Most of them will not have heard a word of the debate, they could not name a single college in Scotland, yet they are intent on voting for the Bill's Second Reading and its subsequent passage through the House.

9.17 pm

**Mr. Henry McLeish** (Fife, Central): I am pleased to speak from the Opposition Dispatch Box for the first time. I am even more delighted to know that a document produced by the Labour party on education has been widely read by Conservative Members. It is rare that they want to pick up any document that the Labour party produces. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will refer again to the excellent document that has been produced by my colleagues.

Few hon. Members will have been impressed by the unconvincing words, the empty assurances and the Government's politically convenient conversion to parental choice that have characterised the debate. As my hon. Friends have identified clearly in their contributions, the Bill remains politically dishonest and is educationally divisive. It poses a real threat to the ethos, structure and achievements of Scottish education. In a nutshell, the Bill is unnecessary, unwanted and unworkable.

The Scots feel strongly about education. It has a special place in the hearts and minds of the Scottish people. It is a tragedy that a system that has been built up painstakingly over the past 30 years, and which has involved so many people, is about to be destroyed by a Government who do not care and who have only a casual regard for a distinctive and successful part of Scotland's heritage. It has a part which was even mentioned by the Secretary of State in a recent speech in Aberdeenshire. Speaking to a chamber of commerce on 15 April 1988, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

> "What was important to Unionists and remains so is the preservation and enrichment of traditional Scottish institutions."

He went on:

> "Thus as Unionists, . . . we attach importance . . . to our distinctive educational tradition".

It has not been evident this evening that the Secretary of State has remembered those words.

It is also important to point out that 119 years ago tomorrow the Bill that became the Education (Scotland) Act 1872 received its Second Reading. That Bill introduced compulsory schooling to Scotland. Despite two world wars, despite school boards, which were scrapped, and despite the current Scottish Office Minister responsible for education holding that post for the past 18 months, Scottish education remains in the forefront of everything that is positive and innovatory in education in Europe.

Even by the Government's appalling standards of hypocrisy, insensitivity and malice, this Bill plumbs new depths. The overwhelming majority of Scots consider the Bill to be educational vandalism of a high order. As we heard earlier from two distinguished and respected Conservative Back Benchers, the Bill is part of an alarming sell-out which has betrayed the trust of Conservative Members and the trust of the Scottish people. It is crucial that when the Minister replies he tells us why opting out plays such an important role in the Bill. Forty-seven of the 72 clauses involve opting out. I will give the Minister an opportunity to intervene now to tell us who wants opting out. Will the Minister tell us which groups and organisations in Scotland are clamouring to have opting out included in this menu for schools? Not surprisingly there is little activity on the Government Front Bench.

I can tell the House which important organisations are the inspiration for this divisive measure. These are not normal bodies within the democratic process. They include the Institute of Directors, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust, the Adam Smith Institute and the Centre for Policy Studies. That is a host of bodies accountable to no one except the raving Right of the Conservative party who used to be involved in fringe politics at university, but who now occupy centre stage at the Scottish Office.

It is important for me to highlight why there is such bitter anger in Scotland about the Bill and about opting out in particular. The source of the anger can be traced back to a comment made by the Prime Minister on 9 April 1988 on BBC Radio Scotland. When asked whether she would confirm that opting out of local authority control would go ahead in Scotland, she said:

> "No I cannot confirm that it will definitely go ahead. The first thing we had to do was to see that every school has a school board. Then we have to take further soundings to see if sufficient people would like to have opting out as an option. No one is compelling anyone to do anything."

That sounds to me like an assurance that school boards would be introduced and be up and running before opinion was tested in Scotland. That is the point of regret expressed by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). They are dismayed and disgusted by the double dealing by Ministers in the Scottish Office. That is on record to prove to the Scottish Office and the Scottish people that this is a shabby piece of legislation.

I can understand why the Government are running away from consultation. Opting out was never in the Conservative party manifesto and it has never been the subject of consultation. After the school boards consultation fiasco in which 96 per cent. of Scots rejected ceiling powers, it is no wonder that Scottish Office Ministers have run away from consultation. Although Ministers and the Conservative party have some friends, that friendship has been shaken by the Government's double dealing on this issue. The Scottish Consumer Council supported school boards, but in a press release it now comments:

> "Proposals to allow schools to 'opt out' of education authority control are ill-timed and do not offer parents a significant extension of choice."

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The hon. Gentleman cites the submission of the Scottish Consumer Council to support his argument that people in Scotland do not want ceiling powers. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has read the council's full submission. If he does so, he will find that the council asks the Government to introduce ceiling powers for school boards. What is the hon. Gentleman's position? He cannot cite one part of the council's evidence with which he agrees and ignore those parts with which he disagrees.

**Mr. McLeish:** I was making the point that an organisation that trusted the Government in respect of school boards now feels betrayed because it now feels used. School boards were never a vehicle for parental involvement but were a stepping stone to opting out, and that is what hurt the council. Even the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, which supported Ministers in the Scottish Office over school boards, stated in a press release dated 15 February:

"We believe that the successful establishment of School Boards will be jeopardised by the undue haste with which the Government is pursuing these proposals."

What a difference there is between the slipshod and second-rate performances of Scottish Office Ministers and the performance of a real Tory statesman such as Rab Butler, who introduced the important Education Act 1944 into England and Wales. In a debate on that legislation on 19 January 1944, Mr. Butler said:

"I now commend the Bill to the House as one which is warmly welcomed by the many active partners in the education service. It is they, as a team, who have helped to fashion it during the last two years. We have now come to Parliament and the Government look for the help of Parliament and the wisdom of hon. Members."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1944; Vol. 396, c. 208.]

How different that is from the tawdry behaviour of the present ministerial team. Rab Butler spoke of two years spent on the Education Act 1944, but the Bill before the House was conceived in two months.

When Rab Butler spoke of a team, he did not mean the Adam Smith Institute or any of the other hangers-on that now subscribe to the development of Government policy. In 1944, Mr. Butler was able to say that the whole House welcomed the legislation. How different that is from tonight, when such a sensitive issue is being dealt with in a cavalier fashion and, quite rightly, receives no support from the Opposition Benches. Clearly, there is no accounting for the decline in political standards in some political parties over a long period.

Under the guise of opting out, there will be a move towards centralised political control of education and not parental choice. We shall also see the introduction of selection, not improving standards. Under the guise of testing, national testing will be introduced. There will be nominative testing—setting child against child, teacher against teacher, class against class and school against school. Instead, there should be diagnostic testing, locally conceived and locally delivered, that centres on the child and relates his or her potential to his or her attainment. That is the proper way to progress. Instead, we know that testing is being introduced because it is an essential step towards selection. Unless one has a league table, one cannot select.

Under the guise of teacher appraisal and the scrapping of section 88, there will be further attacks made on teachers rather than proper staff development. Under the guise of technology academies, there will be pandering to some of the educational illiterates who advise the Government on industrial matters. Technology academies are merely a Trojan horse, used to increase selection and to ensure that the comprehensive system is further undermined.

Taken together, the measures in the Bill will tear the heart out of Scottish education—and regardless of the crocodile tears and of the faint expression of understanding and knowledge from English Conservatives this evening, the Bill's powerful set of political reforms is designed to do just that.

Striking at the heart of our schools is the creation of a three-tier structure of educational provision. First, independent schools cater for 32,000 out of Scotland's 800,000 children—a rich preserve for the privileged. Next we shall have grant-maintained schools and then LEA schools. The strategy is so uniquely objectionable that it is —if hon. Members will excuse the expression—in a class of its own. We are offering a school menu of declining educational standards, restricted parental choice and the introduction, through clauses 16 and 28, of selective education based on academic criteria. What is worse, it is underlined by a highly centralised form of political control from the Scottish Office.

There is another interesting feature of the Government's concern for Scottish education. The Conservative manifesto of 1987 talked of

"Raising Standards in our Schools".

It claimed:

"This Government has provided more resources for pupils than ever before."

It said that the ratio of teachers to pupils was at its best ever, and that Scottish schools were among the world leaders in the use of computers.

Why, then, have we had cuts in real terms of 14 per cent., or £300 million, in the proportion of funds provided by the Government for local education authorities in the last decade? Why is it that between 1982 and 1987 we have seen cuts in capital expenditure for buildings of 44 per cent., or £35 million? Why, after a decade in which school rolls have dropped dramatically, have we seen barely an improvement in the pupil-teacher ratios? In primary schools they have fallen only from 14·4 to 12·9 to one, despite there being 83,000 fewer children. In secondary schools they have fallen only from 20·3 to 20·2 to one, despite 120,000 children leaving school.

Why has the number of full-time equivalents in nursery places increased by only 3,100 in a decade—to 20,600—when another 120,000 Scots aged three and four have required places? Why, in view of that catalogue of cuts, is £7 million being spent in 1989 on assisted places schemes in Scotland? It is a financial and political disgrace that public money should be used to prop up private schools. Why does that miserable catalogue also include a loss of 8,750 teachers between 1979 and 1987? That is why pupil-teacher ratios have not improved. At a time of falling school rolls we should have been retaining teachers to improve the ratio, but the Government have shown that they want none of that.

Let us look at one of the tests that the Government always use to prove that they are doing well by Scottish education: textbooks and equipment. Over the past decade, provision in primary education has slumped—in real terms—from £5,300,000 to £5 million, and in secondary education it has fallen from £6·9 million to £5·9 million.

That is only a portion of what I could have read out to illustrate 10 years of Tory neglect. The Under-Secretary may be laughing to the Secretary of State, but people in Scotland demand to know why standards have not improved. Opposition Members have no reason to apologise for the success of Scottish education, despite such a catalogue of deliberate neglect. Yes, there are weaknesses that need to be tackled and improvements and innovations that we all want to see. Parents and children have legitimate aspirations that must be satisfied. The plain truth is, however, that it is not the Scottish education system but the Government who have failed our children and their parents.

The Bill talks about opting out. The first point that it makes is about expanding choice. I want the Minister to tell us how choice can be expanded when one group of parents, at one time, on a single ballot and on a simple majority, with no regard to turnout, can take a school out of the state sector. What choice is that for the 800,000

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children in Scottish education? What is worse is that parents whose children are going from feeder primary schools to comprehensive schools will not have a vote but parents of children in their final two years at school will, although they will not be around when the school opts out. In any catchment area, parents of potential pupils will have no particular say in the matter. A once-and-for-all decision, a one-way ticket to ministerial mercy, is not real choice for the vast majority of Scottish parents or Scottish children.

There is another important question. What will happen to Scottish children with special needs? Can the Minister give us a guarantee that when clauses 16 and 18 become operative children with special learning difficulties and children with other special needs will be able to go to the school of first choice in their catchment area?

But, more important, can the Minister, unlike the Secretary of State earlier today, give an unequivocal guarantee that clause 28 will not be used to bring in selection? The nub of this Bill is selection. We challenge the Minister to reassure the House and Scottish parents that selection will not be used as a means of excluding those parents. This is not real choice. Real choice is about real options. This is a major restriction of choice. We should be investing in failure, not in the kind of hypocrisy that this Bill represents.

Let me make a final point about choice. There is choice in the system at present. The Minister will always talk about the 100,000 children taking advantage, over a period of seven years, of the parents' charter to seek a school elsewhere. He does not tell us, of course, that 6·5 million children will go to Scottish schools over that period. We find that 0·02 per cent. actually have been refused the place of their choice. That is a pretty formidable record by any standard.

The second main claim that has been used in putting the Bill before the House is that opting out will improve standards. Hon. Members have referred to the work being done by the Centre for Educational Sociology in Edinburgh, which shows that comprehensive education has not only worked, but has actually equalised attainment between social classes, and increased overall attainment. It is important also to consider outputs. The Government talk about processes. What about outputs? Has the Minister read the comments of the Scottish Examination Board on the results for 1987? The board says:

"Candidates' performance in 1987 was, on the whole, maintained at the pleasing level achieved in the previous year."

It refers glowingly to accounting and mathematics. Has the Minister read his own figures from the Scottish Education Department? Between 1979 and 1987 there was a 40 per cent. reduction in the number of children leaving school without qualifications, and a 38 per cent. increase in the number of children leaving with more than five highers.

More important, the Bill will do nothing to improve the chronic under-resourcing of our education system; it will do nothing to tackle the £300 million worth of outstanding repairs, modernisation and building; it will do nothing to develop a coherent, imaginative and flexible system of real parental involvement; it will do nothing to improve nursery education for the under-fives to bring us into line with our European partners; it will do nothing to encourage more young people to stay on at school after 16; it will do nothing to prevent taxpayers' money from propping up private education while the state sector is starved of resources. The debate has proved that the Government have a bankrupt policy towards education. We know that education is not safe in Conservative hands. The Government are indifferent, complacent and arrogant. Indeed, the Bill is the perfect example of how out of touch they really are.

We accept that there are always problems to be tackled in any education system. However, Labour believes that key principles, such as equal opportunity and equal access, should be the foundations. We believe that self-confidence, self-discipline and self-worth should be the qualities that children take away from the education system. We believe that those should be linked to educational attainment. But, most important of all—and the Minister should listen to these words—education should be regardless of geography, regardless of income, regardless of social class, race or religion.

We believe that educaton is a right, not a privilege. Education is the most productive investment in people, in communities and in the economy; it is not a drain on the taxpayer. Education should be shared generously, not rationed. Education should be universal and free at the point of need. It should not be based on selection, or on the market, or on privilege. For all those reasons, we shall fight the Bill in the House and in Scotland and we shall vote against it.

9.39 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth):** I take this opportunity to welcome the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) to the Dispatch Box. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman says that I might live to regret it. His remark, which I hope *Hansard* will record, that

"We should be investing in failure"

may live to haunt him for some time to come. Having listened to his speech, I understand why that might be the conclusion he would reach at the end of his argument.

I noted that the hon. Gentleman said that the Scottish education tradition had been painstakingly built up over the past 30 years. Many hon. Members have benefited from Scottish education, and they believe that it took rather longer than that.

The hon. Gentleman described the Bill as a piece of educational vandalism. If it is a piece of educational vandalism, he has put parents in the role of lager louts. None of the self-governing status provisions in the Bill will be achieved without taking into account the wishes of the parents in the schools concerned. Opposition Members have consistently failed to recognise that this legislation —unlike the school boards legislation—is permissive.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the cuts that had been made by Labour-controlled local authorities, in the main, which decided on alternative priorities. He did not mention that expenditure per pupil in Scotland has risen by nearly 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979, that pupil ratios are far better, that expenditure on books and equipment has risen by 20 per cent. in real terms and that provision for local authority current expenditure next year is set to rise by 7 per cent. on the current year. I accept that the last Labour Government did not do as well—not out

of malice because of their views on education but simply because of their lack of competence in running the economy and creating the necessary wealth.

**Mr. McLeish:** Will the Minister address the central point? If a primary and secondary education system has lost 200,000 children in a decade, why has not the pupil-teacher ratio improved?

**Mr. Forsyth:** If the hon. Gentleman looks into that question, he will find that the pupil-teacher ratio has improved. When the hon. Gentleman and his friends in the Educational Institute of Scotland get together and discuss the creation of more generous terms and conditions for teachers, they will find the answer to that question. I make no bones about that.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the self-governing schools being taken out of the state sector. They will not be taken out of the state sector. They will continue to be funded by the state. They will be run by boards of management.

Another point that has not been made in the debate and that Opposition Members do not appear to have taken on board is that the Secretary of State for Scotland will provide funding on the same basis as would have been provided by the local authority. It will not be for the Secretary of State to decide the level of funding. Schools that become self-governing in local authority areas where there are high levels of expenditure will benefit proportionately more.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether I could guarantee that children from a neighbouring area to the catchment area of a particular school—I remind him that we do not have catchment areas in Scotland—would be guaranteed a place in a self-governing school or in any other school. I am happy to give him that guarantee, but that is no thanks to him and his party. The Opposition opposed us when we introduced the parents charter in 1980 that gave to parents the right to send their children to the school of their choice. The hon. Gentleman has been at great pains in the press and elsewhere to rubbish the fact that more than 20,000 parents every year are able to exercise that choice. He has argued that, compared with the total number of parents, that number is insignificant. Once again he has misunderstood the importance of a small number of parents being able to exercise choice and discrimination within the system.

I do not make a general practice of reading the *Observer Scotland* at the weekend, but I saw something this weekend which I feel I should quote because it is relevant to the debate. It says:

> "It is rarely sensible for a Labour spokesman to question standards of teaching; it is unwise to suggest evaluation procedures which parents can actually understand; it is anathema to advocate new ways of funding education, heresy to urge greater autonomy for individual schools, and unthinkable even to whisper that bad teachers must be weeded out with all speed.
>
> The result is an alarming lack of new thinking."

I could not have put it better myself as a summary of the speeches by Opposition Members throughout the debate. That piece was written by a man called Ian Bell, and, judging from what he said about me, he is not a Government supporter. However, I felt almost certain that he must have read the hon. Gentleman's 21-page document outlining the Labour party's proposals.

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** As the Minister has referred to what the writer of that article said about him, will he read it out to the House? None of us had the privilege of civil servants drawing that article to our attention.

**Mr. Forsyth:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find in the Library a copy of Sunday's edition of the *Observer Scotland* and he will be able to read its delights for himself. I shall not take up the time of the House on it now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) drew attention to the conversion of the Labour party to school boards. I welcome that. We were very surprised to be told in November that the Labour party was very much committed to school boards, when Opposition Members had used the arguments that they used tonight against self-governing schools—saying that they were irrelevant and were not wanted in Scotland. It was not until Boxing day that we discovered why the Labour party was suddenly forced to a conversion on school boards.

On Boxing day the Educational Institute of Scotland decided to issue a press release announcing to an unsuspecting world dealing with the aftermath of their Christmas dinners that the EIS had changed its policy and was now in favour of school boards. We learnt subsequently that it had changed its policy in November and the Labour party quickly came into line. Throughout the debate we have witnessed a party which has no idea and no policy and waits to hear what the major teaching union has to say before it can work out its own position.

I was fascinated by the views of the hon. Member for Fife, Central on testing. He told us that our views on testing were inappropriate and not necessary for Scotland. I remind the House that we propose to introduce testing in primary 4 and primary 7 in English and mathematics. The hon. Gentleman is a former leader of Fife council and very proud of the record of Fife region, so hon. Members can imagine my surprise when I discovered that the education authority in Fife has testing in primary 1, primary 3, primary 5 and primary 7.

**Mr. McLeish:** It is widely known in the best circles of Scottish education that Fife became involved in diagnostic testing. It is sick and tired of the Government's attempt to force down its throat nominative testing which bears no relationship to IQ, potential or social background, but is a recipe for league tables and selection. Yes, Fife has diagnostic testing. Why does not the Minister allow the teaching unions, the local authorities and parents to devise testing procedures which are in the interests of children and not in the interests of political policies?

**Mr. Forsyth:** Who would have thought that that was a clear statement of Labour party policy in Fife? I shall return to that in a moment.

Imagine my surprise to find that the Labour party in Central region split. The hon. Gentleman obviously does not know that it split over a proposal by Mrs. Margaret Connarty, who is described in *The Scotsman* on 2 March as

> "the teachers' representative on the education committee"

and a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland. She proposed to get rid of the diagnostic testing which the hon. Gentleman has just told us he favours and the Labour group split both ways and was only saved by other

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opposition members. A certain councillor Corrie McChord—one of the six angry Labour members who voted for her motion—is on record as saying:

"We have already been contacted by the group whips, and it looks as if we could be subject to group discipline. I am being told by the Scottish executive, the regional party, and my constituency party, to oppose testing. Yet this happens. It's crazy."

What is the Labour party's policy on testing? Is it in favour of some types of testing, or is it opposed to all types of testing? Why is it that Fife has successfully carried out testing proposals which the hon. Gentleman knows are so much in line with our policies? There is no question of people being put in league tables. We made that clear in our original consultative document. If the hon. Gentleman is defending what happens in Fife, he is supporting what the Government are proposing.

**Mr. McLeish:** The Minister is not listening. Does he know the difference between normative and diagnostic testing? Does he know the difference between policies aimed at children and those aimed at league tables? Fife has an excellent system. The Minister's proposals will lead to league tables and selection in the opted-out sector. They are not about children. Tell the House.

**Mr. Forsyth:** I do not know how to cope with hon. Members who will not accept assurances given in consultative papers which say that there will be no league tables and that the results will be kept confidential.

The hon. Gentleman is, however, right about one thing; there is a difference between the sort of testing which is being carried out in Fife and that which we propose. There is only one difference. It is not that there will be league tables—the information will be kept private. We propose that parents should also get to know about their children's performance. In Fife, information is not passed on to parents. Therein lies the difference between us and Opposition Members, who do not believe that parents are entitled to be involved in schools or to have information. They think that it should be left to the professionals. They are entitled to put that that point of view, but they will get short shrift.

**Dr. Lewis Moonie** (Kirkcaldy): I am sure that the Minister would not wish to mislead the House. Will he kindly withdraw his remark about Fife? I assure him that Fife regional council's teachers discuss the results of tests with parents. I know because my children have been through its schools. As he believes that diagnostic and normative testing are the same, will he give us any evidence that suggests that that is so?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I am relying on Her Majesty's inspectorate for my information, but I am told that none of the information is made directly available to parents.

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): Withdraw!

**Mr. Forsyth:** There is nothing to withdraw. The information is not available as we propose.

**Mr. Dewar:** If the Minister is so worried about parents being consulted, why does he not consult them about his opting-out proposals and rely on their judgment? I find it astonishing that, in this comparitively lengthy speech, he has not yet turned his attention to a defence for his principal and most controversial proposal—opting out. He has succeeded only in chasing red herrings, and conducting what sounds a little like a personal vendetta against various people in his part of Scotland. Would he like to defend what the Government are about?

**Mr. Forsyth:** I am responding to the arguments that have been made in the debate. The fact that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have not made a single argument against the proposals for self-governing schools but produced a series of scare stories about selection and other matters is a problem for him. The hon. Gentleman asks me to respond to the arguments, and I shall respond to the arguments that have been made. His first argument was that the name was wrong——

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) made it clear that the Minister has misled the House. I am not saying that he did it deliberately. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy, I have two children who have gone through the Fife education system. We get results from teachers at every stage. It is not on for the Minister to make a statement and then to refuse to withdraw it. He has impugned the reputation of Fife regional council and the teachers in Fife. He should withdraw what he said, if he has any decency at all.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. That is not a matter of order. The Minister must take responsibility for what he says.

**Mr. Forsyth:** Hon. Gentlemen cannot complain that they do not receive answers to points of substance if they raise such points of order. I am glad that I have the hon. Gentleman's support in the view that it would be impugning the integrity of an education authority if one were to suggest that it was not providing information to parents about their children's performance in the way that the Government are planning.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) began his argument against the Bill by saying that the phrase "self-governing schools" was wrong. He suggested that we should use the term "grant-aided schools". [HON. MEMBERS: "Grant-maintained schools".] I should say "grant-maintained schools". Perhaps we avoided the term "grant-maintained schools" because we thought there might be some confusion with "grant-aided schools". *[Laughter.]* The Opposition Front-Bench Members may laugh about grant-aided schools. They represented a tradition of many hundreds of years of Scottish education and the Labour party destroyed them out of naked ideology. Let us not have any lectures from them about Scottish educational traditions.

The hon. Member from Garscadden also described the Paisley grammar saga as a bizarre story. That was a revealing comment because it went to the heart of his antipathy towards the Bill. He regards any option in which a school is supported by parents, as it was in Paisley, and in which people, under the parents charter, send children to the school of their choice, which allows them to frustrate the wishes of an education authority like Strathclyde, as bizarre. The Bill provides for a breaking of the monopoly of which the hon. Gentleman is so contemptuous.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Forsyth:** The hon. Member for Garscadden said that there might be schools that wanted to take advantage of that, such as those facing closure and others that he described as being interested in snob value. There we have it. The wish to send one's child to a particular school, perhaps because it has a uniform, a tradition, a discipline or academic standards, is now to be denounced as snob value. I have news for the hon. Gentleman: there are many people throughout Scotland who wish to have the advantage of such schools, and I repudiate the thinking of the education authorities. The Bill provides an opportunity for such parental choice.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also talked about the position compared with that of schools in England.

**Mr. Bruce:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Forsyth:** He said that the only schools interested in opting out were those facing closure. For the record, 59 schools have been involved, 26 of which are not subject to closure. The hon. Gentleman also asked about voting and consulting the wider community. There will be an opportunity to consult the wider community. The ballot will be held and the Secretary of State will consult on the parents' views.

The most bogus threat was that the hon. Gentleman argued that opting out would mean bringing back selection. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] We already have selection in local authority schools. We have made provision for children with special needs in Knightswood.

**Mr. Dewar:** Knightswood?

**Mr. Forsyth:** Yes Knightswood. Knightswood is an example of a school in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency which select children who are especially talented at dance for the school of dance. Self-governing schools would create an opportunity for schools to be established to provide for particular needs.

The Bill is a radical measure. It is the most radical change in Scottish education for a generation or more, and I freely admit that. Its potential is profound and the benefits it offers are obvious to some already. In time, they will be widely recognised. The concepts are novel, but as people realise what is on offer they will realise that they have a tool with which to reshape Scottish education to the great benefit of its users.

The Bill strikes a blow for freedom of choice, for diversity and for healthy competition. It promotes selection of the best kind—that is self-selection. We want to see parents and pupils selecting schools. That is the real issue, not whether schools can select pupils. It is no longer good enough that parents should have schools selected for them. It is no longer good enough that most parents have only one kind of school from which to choose. Uniformity breeds complacency and apathy.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Forsyth:** We need different styles of management and different teaching methods.

**Mr. Bruce:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Not at this stage of the evening.

**Mr. Forsyth:** Nobody has a monopoly of educational wisdom, so nobody should have a monopoly of provision. The Bill is designed to promote excellence. Equal opportunity must mean equal opportunity to excel. I commend the Bill to the House.

*Question put,* That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 243, Noes 206.

**Division No. 116]** **[9.59 pm**

**AYES**

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*

Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Norris, Steve
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

**NOES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Cook.

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).*

## Self-Governing Schools Etc (Scotland) Bill [Money]

*Queen's Recommendation having been signified—*
*Motion made, and Question proposed,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State under the Act and any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums falling to be paid into that Fund in pursuance of the Act.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.15 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): The money resolution should not pass without one or two queries being directed at the Government. The Government's wont on Scottish Bills has been to attach money resolutions stating that the costs will not be significant, or containing estimates of costs which experience has shown to be wild underestimates.

In one or two areas covered by the Bill it is unclear what the financial effects of the Bill are likely to be. The Bill states, for example, that

"The . . . provisions . . . should be generally neutral. Self-governing schools are to receive funding from the Secretary of State at the level they could have expected had they remained under local authority control."

As has already been said, however, there is every sign that schools that seek to opt out may be the very schools that would otherwise have been closed or rationalised. Although the Secretary of State has partially answered that point, he has not made it clear whether additional charges could fall on the local authority or the Government from that commitment. If the Bill prevents rationalisation from going ahead or ensures an unequal distribution of costs, the costs will not be neutral.

The Bill also states that there will be small additional costs relating to the funding of parents' ballots. The Government have no experience of such ballots. They may be contested, or they may need to be re-run—that would lead to higher than expected costs.

Other aspects of the Bill certainly suggest that the determination of costs will be inequitably decided. Clause 26 allows the Secretary of State to determine the transitional amount due from or to the local authority when a school opts out, with no right of appeal by the local authority against the Secretary of State's determination. That might lead to an extra cost for the local authority which might require it to seek more direct grant or increase the poll tax.

The Minister's estimates proved to be way below the actual costs during the passage of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. The original estimates were increased during its passage, as the Minister knows. The outturn of costs for the collection of the poll tax has been much higher than the Government estimated. As the orders to be discussed tonight will show, that tax is proving a most cumbersome, complicated and expensive tax to collect, which means that the costs have turned out way above the Government' estimates.

Some of us are sceptical about the idea that no additional costs will be levied on the public purse; the Government are not clear about what the take-up will be or about the costs.

I hope that if and when the Minister responds to this debate, he will do just that. He failed to respond to the main debate tonight. I do not mind that he did not respond to the points that I or the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) made, but he did not even answer his own Back Benchers' points—for instance, those made by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). No doubt that contributed to the smallness of the Government's majority because the provocation of not even having their arguments acknowledged, never mind responded to, must have been the final straw that drove them into the Lobby with the Opposition parties.

The Bill is not opposed, as the Minister tried to make out, simply by the Labour party and it is not the root cause of some curious ideological struggle. It is opposed by all the representatives of all the Opposition parties and by the overwhelming majority of the people of Scotland. It is a pity that the Minister tried to pretend differently and to turn the debate into a sort of Labour-Tory dog fight. He also failed to answer the questions that have been asked. The costs associated with the Bill are likely to be far greater than the Minister has said. Even if the costs in money terms are not great, the cost in human terms will be very high.

10.20 pm

**Mr. Andrew Welsh** (Angus, East): I should like some information from the Minister. As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has said, the Minister did not respond to the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). In this short debate I should like the Minister to put some flesh on the bones and tell us about the matters under the heading, "Financial Effects of the Bill". What exactly is meant by the phrase

"efficiency savings from more locally based decision-making"?

What is meant by

"offset by savings on local authority central administration"?

Will the Minister make clear what savings he has in mind? Surely the cost of training college councillors and the running costs of the councils will be increased because of duplication. Could the Minister tell us how the figures have been calculated and say why he is so sure about the statements in the Bill?

We are told that training costs will be "offset by savings". Can the Minister tell us what the savings are and whether they can be quantified? Are they pious Government hopes? Costs will eventually be passed to the taxpayers and the Minister should at least give an indication of what he has in mind. What is the expected allocation of costs to the technology academies? The Bill says:

"the cost of introducing and administering appraisal schemes will fall on Government and local authorities,".

What is meant by that. What proportion will fall on local authorities and what proportion do the Government

*[Mr. Andrew Welsh]*

expect to take up? Can the Minister reveal what he has in mind or whether he has any figures? That would certainly help to clarify matters.

I wish that the Government had spent money on the Scottish education system instead of transferring it out of the system. We can all be proud of that system. It deserves more resources and should be given more. This trivial Bill contains an alien set of principles which are to be imposed on the Scottish economy. The Government should give more resources to the teaching staff in further and secondary education in Scotland rather than acting in the way that they are.

10.22 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth):** The major payments covered by the Bill are grants to the board of management of a self-governing school under clause 25. The most important of these will be the recurrent grant for each to meet its normal running costs. Our intention is that in every course the recurrent grant will be set at a level which the school could reasonably have expected if it had remained under the control of the local authority concerned. This amount of recurrent grant paid to the school will then be reclaimed from the authority under clause 26.

Grant and recovery regulations will have to be made giving detailed effect to this policy. The principle is clear. The school and the authority are to be left in the same financial position overall. Thus the level of expenditure on any self-governing school will reflect local spending decisions by the authority.

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): The Minister speaks about the level of grant that a school can reasonably expect from a local authority. For years the Government have been telling local authorities that they have been spending above budget. Will the budget be decided by the Scottish Office or will it be the budget to which local authority schools have been adhering?

**Mr. Forsyth:** We have entered the new era of the community charge, and it is a matter for the local authorities to decide their own level of expenditure and their own priorities. I have some sympathy with the point —if the hon. Gentleman is making it—that perhaps the Scottish Office should be less proscriptive in these matters than it has been in the past.

Other grants under clause 25 will provide for capital spending in self-governing schools and for special purposes. These equally are aimed at ensuring financial neutrality. Capital projects funded by grants will require the consent of the Secretary of State. Grants will be set against the overall public expenditure programme of the schools' capital works. Special-purpose grants will cover such items of expenditure as it would not be appropriate to recover from the local authority. For example, there could be one-off management expenses associated with the transition to self-governing status. They will also provide a mechanism allowing self-governing schools to give the equivalent benefit to any specific balance available to local authorities, such as those in support of in-service training for teachers. As the financial memorandum states, the overall impact of creating self-governing schools for these grants will be "generally neutral".

The Bill offers a new way to manage Scottish schools within whatever level of resources local authorities choose to spend. Certain minor costs will fall on the Secretary of State as each self-governing school is established. These include the point made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce)—the costs of balancing expenses under clause 14(6). Our best estimate is about £1,000 for a medium-size secondary school with 500-plus pupils. There will be payments under schedule 9 to cover the work of the commissioners for school assets in arranging for transfer of the property of the school. There is a power under clause 5 to cover special additional costs during the transitional period. For example, in some cases it may be appropriate for a school board to make an early appointment of someone to deal with future financial arrangements for the school. The extent of these various minor payments will depend on the number of schools seeking self-governing status in any year and on the size and circumstances of each individual candidate.

As the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) does not believe that any school is interested in adopting self-governing status, he must draw his own conclusion as to the likely level of expenditure. It is not possible for me to offer any global figure for the same reason. Setting up and running the new college-based administration for further education colleges under clauses 43 to 58 will involve some added costs. However, these will be offset by savings in authorities' central administration. The hon. Member for Angus, East asked me to explain it, and it is very simple. If the centre is no longer required to administer the colleges, there will clearly be an opportunity for savings. By greater efficiency arising from more locally based decision making—our basic premise is of the people who are involved in providing services making the decisions—then there is likely to be a more efficient allocation of resources.

Moreover, these changes, together with the commercial activity powers granted by the Bill, will allow colleges to generate more income to boost further education. Primary testing will carry additional development costs of £2 million with some recurrent costs in administering the system. This spending falls under the Scottish examination board. We have made it clear that these costs will be met in full by the Government.

To summarise, this is not a Bill with significant consequences for public spending, overall. Where some additional spending is involved in the transition to self-governing status on technology academies or on primary testing, it will be met by Government. It does not place financial burdens on local authorities. I commend the money resolution to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State under the Act and any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums falling to be paid into that Fund in pursuance of the Act.

# Rating Reform

10.27 pm

**Mr. John Maxton** (Glasgow, Cathcart): I beg to move,

That the Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 32) dated 12th January 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 13th January, be revoked.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker):** I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House if we discuss with this the following motions:

That the Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 63), dated 17th January 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th January, be revoked.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 241), dated 23rd February 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 27th February, be annulled.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The third motion, on the abolition of domestic rates, Statutory Instrument, 1989, No. 241, has not yet been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. I hope that you can give me an assurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if any technical fault is found by the Committee, which will discuss the instrument tomorrow afternoon, it can be debated in its entirety again at some other stage. I also hope that it will not automatically be approved, or that further consideration on it will be excluded, because we will have referred to it in the debate. There is little point in setting up a Joint Committee to scrutinise statutory instruments if decisions are cut and dried the day before the Committee is due to examine a statutory instrument.

Several of these poll tax instruments have been reported by the Joint Committee to the House, and abuses by the Government have been noted by the Committee. Therefore, it is important that the Committee should have the opportunity to examine the instrument and to report on it if there is that justification. The counsel to the Joint Committee, who is, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, counsel to the Speaker, has not yet had an opportunity to give his views to the Joint Committee, so it is vital that any consideration of the instrument should be deferred until the Committee has considered it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for giving the Chair notice of his intention to raise a point of order. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall not be making a decision tonight on Statutory Instrument, 1989, No. 241. It will be debated with the other measures, but the House will not make a decision upon it. Should the Joint Committee find fault with it tomorrow, there will be a subsequent opportunity for the House to debate the statutory instrument and come to a decision upon it.

**Mr. Maxton:** We want the severely mentally handicapped to be exempt from the poll tax. We want also the mess that the Government have got themselves into with students to be sorted out. We shall debate the regulations and vote against them because we shall continue to oppose in any way possible in the House any measures that relate to the poll tax. That unwanted, unfair and unworkable tax has been rejected by the Scottish people. We have a responsibility to recognise that by opposing whenever we can regulations such as those mentioned in the Order Paper.

As we approach April Fools' day, when the first payments will be made, the tax becomes more ludicrous and unfair. Within the past few weeks it has become apparent that at the same time as imposing new and intolerable burdens upon the poor and the low paid in our society the Government are prepared to give private landlords in Scotland a massive £40 million handout as a result of the poll tax legislation. Many of those who rent private accommodation make a combined rent and rates payment to their landlord. It is clear that the Government have no intention of doing anything to stop those landlords from continuing to ask for the same amount of money after 1 April, even though the rates element of the charge will have disappeared.

When the Council of Scottish Local Authorities suggested to the Department of Social Security that it should reduce housing benefit payments to landlords accordingly, it was told that it could not do that by statute. It is incredible that, while those who can afford so little are being asked to pay exactly the same as the wealthiest in the land, private landlords should be encouraged blatantly to profiteer.

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): My hon. Friend has told us that the Government have made substantial concessions to landlords. Is he aware that a specific group of landlords are doing quite well out of Government concessions? I refer to farmers who have had empty farm cottages taken out of the poll tax system. Only last week the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board refused to do anything to compensate 10,000 Scottish farm workers, who may be earning as little as £103 for a 40-hour week, who are paying for their accommodation through their labour. They will not be compensated for the extra imposition of the poll tax. What sense can there be in that?

**Mr. Maxton:** My hon. Friend is right. That is typical of the Government's mean-mindedness. They promised that they would increase students' grants to compensate for the 20 per cent. contribution to the poll tax that they will have to pay, and that they have done. There is a mean-minded nature to this iniquitous tax, and it is clear that it is becoming an administrative nightmare.

It is absurd that, with only three weeks to go before the first payments are made, we are debating regulations that must take effect on 1 April. It makes nonsense of the procedures and democratic nature of the House that that is happening with only three weeks to go. Indeed, social security regulations that relate to the poll tax have not even been laid before the House, even though they have been the subject of consultation for months. That is what I have been told by COSLA. They have not yet come before the House, but they will have to take effect on 1 April.

The second group of regulations that we are discussing tonight deals with those who will be completely excluded from paying the poll tax. Almost all the exclusions have been wrung unwillingly from the Government as the Scottish and English legislation wound its way through this House and the other place. There were very few concessions in the Scottish Bill, only those for people in hospitals. The original Bill did not exclude people in old folk's homes and bit by bit the Opposition have won and have excluded more and more people. We would not

*[Mr. Maxton]*

particularly welcome some of the exclusions. I do not see why an American service man living in Dunoon should be exempt from paying the poll tax while a British service man serving in Dunoon must pay it.

It is typical of the Government that to the end they cannot be even remotely generous in the exclusions. The first regulation, for all the exclusions that it will involve, will not exclude any elderly person suffering from Alzheimer's disease despite the demands from the Opposition and from the caring organisations in Scotland that they should be treated in the same way as those suffering from other forms of severe mental handicap.

Many Alzheimer's disease sufferers are cared for by elderly relatives—wives, husbands, sisters or brothers. They have a thankless task, but one which many undertake rather than see someone they love put into institutional care. How heartless it is now to impose an extra burden on them. The sums of money involved are paltry in comparison with the money that will be collected by the poll tax in Scotland for local authorities, yet the Government refuse to concede anything.

The medical evidence used to debar Alzheimer sufferers from exclusion is spurious, as my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) will show if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to tell us from where he got his medical evidence.

Even at this late date we appeal to the Minister to show some compassion and to introduce regulations within days to allow Alzheimer's disease sufferers complete exemption from the tax in the same way that the Government are exempting sufferers from other forms of dementia. If the Minister introduces such regulations, I promise that we will not pray against them or oppose them in any way.

The regulations about students show the complete administrative muddle into which the Government have got themselves. This is the second regulation that we have debated in this House about the definition of students and how they are to be registered for poll tax purposes. The first regulation proved to be such a mess that it had to be withdrawn after we had debated and approved it when the Government realised that it simply would not work and that the registration of students would be impossible under it.

Because of that fiasco, some registration officers, particularly the one in Strathclyde, refused to register anyone as a student until the regulations came into force on 3 February. As a result of that, the whole process is now way behind schedule. The regulation states that all students in Scotland should have been issued with a document certifying that they are full-time students by their college or university by last Saturday 4 March. I am assured by the National Union of Students in Scotland that many simply have not received those certificates and many will not receive them for some time. However, registration officers are refusing to register students until they receive a certificate from them.

That is a doubtful legal procedure because there is nothing in the legislation which says that they must be given certificates before students can be registered. They are interpreting the law as they see it when they say that they will not register students until they have received a certificate. No one knows how long that will take, but it means that it is impossible for all students in Scotland to be registered on the poll tax register by 1 April when the first bills will be issued.

Therefore, students will face bills for the full poll tax and will face a long bureaucratic procedure to ensure that they pay only the 20 per cent. that they are due to pay as students. It is worth bearing in mind that bills for £250 or £300 will drop through students' letterboxes and will then have to be appealed against, so that they will be reduced to 20 per cent. of that figure, at exactly the time—in April, May and early June—when students in the colleges and universities of Scotland will be sitting examinations upon which their whole future will depend. For the Government to impose that burden on students at such a time is wholly unacceptable.

Both sets of regulations show, in their different ways, that the tax is unfair and unworkable. The Government are not prepared to be generous in any way. They are getting themselves into an administrative muddle, and my right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against both measures simply to make the point that they are an absurd part of a very absurd tax.

10.40 pm

**The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang):** The regulations bring us to the brink of the introduction of the community charge in Scotland, which is now less than four weeks away. They represent almost the final pieces of the jigsaw that we have been working to complete since before the Green Paper on abolishing the discredited domestic rates system which the community charge will replace.

Far from being the shambles that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) suggested, the procedure has advanced in an orderly and efficient way, despite all the attempts of the Labour party to inhibit progress.

To place the legislation in context, it is worth reviewing briefly the community charge arrangements as they now stand—up and ready to go. Looking first at the registration process—the key to the whole system—we see a remarkable success story. The canvass of households started in April 1988, and when the community charge registers came into force on 1 October last year, as planned, they showed that, on average, more than 99 per cent. of adult residents in Scotland had, according to the registrar general's population figures, been registered.

However, the Government made it clear at the time that that figure was subject to adjustment once individuals had been given opportunity to check their register entries. That checking process has now largely been completed, and I am delighted to report that the adjusted registration figure, as at January 1989, is 98·8 per cent.—a very marginal drop on last October's figure. That is an excellent result and shows, once and for all, that those who ran campaigns against the registration process totally misjudged the good sense of the Scottish people, who would not contemplate breaking the law.

On the basis of those registers, which are being continually updated, local authorities are now printing bills, which will be sent out to everyone on the registers in the next four weeks. The scale of that achievement is itself impressive, particularly when one considers the obstacles that many local authority practitioners had to overcome, and which had been imposed by their own councillors.

The most disappointing and self-indulgent of those obstacles was the refusal by a number of district councils to co-operate in the collection of the charge and in the operation of the rebate scheme. All that does is to make life difficult for the elderly and for the less well-off people in those councils' areas—for nothing more than the greater glory of a few councillors. The rebate scheme will help a very large number of people—more than 1 million people in Scotland stand to benefit from it. Both the Government and local authorities are continuing to encourage those who have not yet applied for a rebate to do so.

We have not been helped by the constant barrage of griping about the rebate scheme that has conveyed the message that only the very low paid could benefit from it. Opposition Members ought to know better by now. I need give only one example to demonstrate the fallacy of the Opposition's argument. A married man with two children aged under 11 living in Edinburgh could, depending on other circumstances, earn £168 net, including child benefit —which works out at about £10,400 per year gross—and still qualify for rebate. There are many more aspects to the new arrangements, and I shall deal with some of them later. The message that is clearly emerging is that every aspect of the policy is working.

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): I should be grateful if the Minister would say how much a single person living alone could earn while still qualifying for rebate.

**Mr. Lang:** Surely the hon. Gentleman knows that the circumstances of every individual will depend on a number of factors. I cannot possibly give him a specific figure without knowing many of those factors first.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Before the Minister leaves his own example, will he tell us what the rebate was for the married man in Edinburgh whom he cited?

**Mr. Lang:** The precise rebate will depend on a number of factors, but the point is that he will receive a rebate. What Opposition Members do not like is that some 1 million of the adult population of Scotland——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The Minister has been addressing the House for four minutes and has not yet addressed his remarks to the motion. I hope that he will do so now.

**Mr. Lang:** I have been trying to do precisely that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am happy to do so.

The Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 repeal and replace the corresponding regulations that came into force in April last year. We have taken the opportunity to make some changes in the criteria that must be met for a person to receive the full-time student concession. For example, the wording of regulation 3(b)(iii) has been expanded to make it clear that a sandwich-course student on a placement will continue to qualify for the student concession provided that he meets the other requirements.

The main changes, however, reflect changes and improvements made in the community charge arrangements by the Local Government Finance Act 1988. In particular, regulation 5 prescribes the arrangements under which educational establishments will have to provide certificates to their full-time students, and regulation 6 requires establishments to provide any additional information required by the registration officer, provided that it is information that he reasonably requires to carry out his functions and is in the possession or control of the establishment.

The provisions are designed to facilitate the registration of students to ensure that those who qualify for the concessionary rate can be readily registered without requiring time-consuming investigation by the registration officer. All the evidence that I have suggests that the system is working well, and that full-time students are being recorded on the register without problems. Regulation 4 makes specific provision in relation to student nurses and, taken with regulation 3, has the effect of providing that student nurses studying at universities, central institutions colleges of education, polytechnics or further education establishments in England and Wales and who are liable for the personal community charge in Scotland will pay only 20 per cent. of the personal charge and personal community water charge. The effect of the 1988 student regulations was in practice no different, although those regulations did not differentiate between students and student nurses, leaving the rules on students to determine which student nurses would receive the concession and which would not. Following the changes made to the 1987 Act by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of the Environment stated the Government's policy in a written answer last October, and the present regulations are consistent with that policy.

There has been criticism that the student arrangements were not finalised until too late and the hon. Member for Cathcart repeated it. That is nonsense. As I have said, the main student provisions have been in place since April last year, and the changes that have been made have effectively been to improve the operation of those provisions. Educational establishments have been implementing the new arrangements, and students are being entered on the register in time for them to receive their bills at the concessionary rate.

**Mr. Maxton:** Strathclyde region is the largest single local authority. Its registration officer, Jack Wood, rightly said when the Government withdrew the previous regulations and put forward new ones that he could not register anyone as a student until the new regulations came into force, because he did not know whether Parliament would bring them forward. For that reason many students in Strathclyde will not be registered by 1 April.

**Mr. Lang:** It is for the registration officer in each region to decide how he will discharge his statutory duties. I understand that in Strathclyde it was decided—for administrative reasons—to await the revised regulations. That was a temporary measure, until students had received their certificates and were able to send them to the registration officer. The registration officer sent a standard letter explaining what was happening to everyone who was entered on the community charges inquiry form as being a student, and where appropriate those people have now been entered on the register as students.

**Mr. Norman Buchan** (Paisley, South): Is this not a bit like the baptism of the Chinese with a hosepipe? Is this not to be an individual Act applying to individuals, rather than a portmanteau provision swallowing them all up?

*[Mr. Norman Buchan]*

In regulation 6, what precisely is the extra information that is wanted? What is wanted by the registration officer that is not covered by regulation 5?

**Mr. Lang:** The registration officer may, for example, require information about the course that the student is following to make sure that it qualifies. Some courses might not be long enough to qualify under the terms of the regulations affecting students. There is a requirement as to the number of weeks and the number of hours worked during the week, and so on. The registration officer will not ask for information that he cannot properly and reasonably require; nor will he ask for information that is not in the possession of the establishment.

**Mr. Jimmy Wray** (Glasgow, Provan): Does the Minister intend to bring in emergency legislation to protect some of the 40,000 Scottish tenants in the private sector, many of them students, following the abolition of rates?

**Mr. Lang:** I should have thought that most students in that situation would be able to take care of themselves. However, I was about to mention landlords because the hon. Member for Cathcart referred to them.

I reject the across-the-board criticism of landlords as though they were all rogues and scoundrels. The plain fact is that most landlords are earning an honest living in a responsible and respectable way, and it is quite inappropriate to abuse them. Nevertheless, I am grateful for another chance to make it clear that in the new situation—I refer to the fact that rates will disappear from 1 April—landlords should, of course, reduce the rent charged if it includes a sum for rates. Landlords have no right to ask for contributions of that kind. Regulated tenancies allow for the rent to be registered. In that case the rates will be separated, and the position will be perfectly clear. I urge students in that situation to have their rents registered.

I do not accept that the harassment excuse that is raised is a valid one. Indeed, in the Housing Act 1988 we strengthened the provisions to resist harassment, and I believe that that is the right approach for students in that situation.

Tenants with assured tenancies are entitled to obtain a statement as to the terms of their lease, and they will then be able to deduct from their payment the amount due for rates. Of course, from 1 April the rates element will disappear altogether.

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Minister make it clear that, if a landlord continues to charge a tenant the sum that represented the old rent and rates, that will be nothing less than fraud and that the landlord ought to be prosecuted?

**Mr. Lang:** Whatever the hon. Lady chooses to call it, there certainly is a sanction available to such tenants. They can use the resources of the law to have their rights enforced.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Lang:** I think I had better press on. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak during the debate. I must cover the other regulations.

The Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 make provision in relation to four exempt categories: service prisoners, the severely mentally impaired, cross-border students and care workers. The service prisoner provisions in regulation 3 are technical in nature and have the effect of placing service prisoners in the same position as other prisoners in relation to their community charge liability.

The regulation and schedule relating to the severely mentally impaired is also technical in nature. After we had made the previous regulations covering the severely mentally impaired it became apparent that there might be some benefits, particularly some war pensions, that ought to be included in the list of qualifying benefits for which people have to be eligible as part of the exemption criteria. The present regulation makes sure that nobody who is entitled to exemption would fail to qualify on a legal technicality.

The regulations relating to cross-border students are required to ensure that full-time students from Scotland who study elsewhere in the United Kingdom do not have to pay the community charge in Scotland when they return for any length of time during their course—for example, during the summer vacation—so long as a student's term-time address is outwith Scotland.

Regulation 8 covering care workers prescribes the criteria that have to be met if a person who is a care worker is to be exempt. The criteria have been drawn up after consultation to ensure that such workers who are disqualified from receiving income support by virtue of the hours they work will not be disadvantaged in terms of the community charge. The regulation necessarily defines the exempt group quite tightly to ensure that exemption is granted to, for example, community service volunteers where hardships would otherwise result, but not to workers who might in practice be better off financially than other non-exempt groups in the community.

Finally, the Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 close the loophole that occurred as a result of a drafting error in the amendment of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 by the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Under the terms of the incorrectly amended provision, people such as the proprietors of boarding houses, hotels and pubs who are solely or mainly resident in premises which are subject to non-domestic rates will be exempt from the personal community charge. The regulations represent no change in policy, as the Government have always intended that people in these circumstances should be liable to pay the community charge. Naturally I regret the need for the regulations to be made, but it is of course right that this loophole should be closed. An amendment to correct the error in the primary legislation has been inserted in the Local Government and Housing Bill. Once the correction comes into force, the temporary regulations will be repealed.

This is the last time that we shall have the opportunity to discuss Scottish community charge regulations in the House before the new community charge arrangements come into effect in Scotland on 1 April. The new system is ready to operate. I commend the regulations to the House.

10.55 pm

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): I shall not detain the House for very long. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said, we are now within three or four weeks of the poll tax coming into force in Scotland. However, we are still debating the regulations, many of which have been introduced only because the Government did not get it right in the first place. I do not think that the Minister believed it himself—he had a wry smile on his face—when he claimed that all is going forward in an orderly and efficient manner.

The Minister said that the arrangements that have been made to close the loophole will not come into effect until the Local Government and Housing Bill, now being considered in Committee, comes into force. When he replies to the debate I hope that he will refer to the position of those who in the meantime are exempt because of the loophole. If the Bill does not receive Royal Assent until the autumn, as it has to go through all its stages in both Houses, will those people be required to pay the community charge retrospectively for the forthcoming year?

**Mr. Lang:** It may help if I deal with that point at once. The purpose of the regulations is to bring individuals in that category into liability for the community charge until such time as the Bill to which the hon. Gentleman refers comes into force later in the year.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am grateful to the Minister. Those people will therefore be liable to pay the community charge as from 1 April. I assume that all the necessary registration and administration that go with it will have to be completed within a short period.

The Minister began his speech by referring to rebates. Although you pulled him up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that you will allow some latitude, in as much as the Minister raised a pertinent issue. There may be people who do not quite make it into the exemption categories. People who could be thought of as students but who probably do not fall into that category are constituents of mine. They are employed by the Orkney youth theatre. They receive approximately £40 a week, but they were informed when inquiries were made that they would be entitled to a rebate of only 47p per week. The local authority maintains that it will be unable to pay that rebate because it is under 50p per week. I hope the Minister will explain whether that is to be a national rule or whether it is just a question of a particular local authority's administrative convenience, because 47p per week——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. If the House allows the Minister to speak again, I hope that he will confine his remarks to what is contained in the regulations.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am sure that the Minister accepts that if these students do not quite fall within the scope of the regulations, a legitimate point has nevertheless been raised. If he is not allowed to reply to that point in the debate, I hope that he will write to me about the matter.

The hon. Member for Cathcart referred to those who will be exempt because of severe mental impairment. Many hon. Members referred to that point last week at Question Time and it has been the subject of much correspondence between hon. Members and the Minister. I refer to those who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It would not have been remiss of the Minister, who has taken the opportunity provided by the regulations to make amendments in order to close some gaps, to extend the scope of the exemption to those who suffer from Alzheimer's disease. We have heard of no rational or justifiable reason in the exchanges for the exclusion of those people.

We have been told that there has been medical advice. I think that in an answer last week it was said to have been given by the chief medical officer and others—the others being, curiously, anonymous.

I understand that some 90,000 people in Scotland suffer from dementia. Many in the earlier stages of the disease would not be classified as severely mentally impaired, so the number involved is probably well below that. It would not amount to many people, but those people can be hard hit by the regulations. There is considerable disparity which demonstrates that when one embarks on legislation which is inherently unfair the number of injustices which result when it is applied in detail are expected to be quite considerable. It is yet another injustice which goes to the heart of a very unjust tax.

The Minister will know that we have consistently proposed a local income tax. The Minister tries to find some justification for not exempting people suffering from Alzheimer's disease by saying that they were never excluded from rates. References to previous omissions do not justify their continuation. If one were to apply the system of local income tax, clearly that injustice would be covered, as such people could not possibly be earning. If they had substantial income from capital, it would not be unreasonable for them to contribute.

The regulations demonstrate the difficulties of implementing a basically unjust tax and we shall have no hesitation in supporting the Labour party and voting against the regulations tonight.

11.2 pm

**Mr. Dick Douglas** (Dunfermline, West): The kernel of our opposition relates to the principal legislation and the role of the poll tax registration officer. The principal statute gives that individual considerable latitude in his or her responsibilities. Poll tax registration officers are circumscribed by statute, but they are responsible to no elected individual. There is no one in the local authority, which is responsible in theory for collecting the tax, to whom the poll tax registration officer is responsible.

Many of our people fought against Hitler's Germany and Fascist Italy to remove dictatorial powers, but we are giving such powers by statute. Tonight we are discussing regulations that enhance the powers of the poll tax registration officers. Part of those regulations relates to service personnel. It is easy to determine when service personnel are in prison but how do we determine when they are at sea?

This may be the last time that we receive some indication of the power of the poll tax registration officer to create almost unilateral exemption. We have fought, and are fighting on the Floor of the House, for exemption for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The Secretary of State and his Ministers resisted that on the basis of spurious medical opinion.

Let us consider service personnel. I have a letter on a matter I raised concerning people in the Royal Navy. The

*[Mr. Dick Douglas]*

regulations refer to people in the Royal Navy being in prison. I received a letter from Fife regional council saying:

"The failure of the Community Charge Legislation clearly to define what is meant by 'residents' has meant that a practical approach has had to be taken in many cases. This approach may or may not eventually be upheld by the courts, but it is one of those matters which is left to them to determine."

At this stage, we have to leave it to the courts to decide who is resident. The letter continues:

"Insofar as the Royal Navy is concerned, the Community Charges Registration Officer for Fife has made an arrangement that residence will be determined by its quality and intention rather than its duration. There is no reason why this same criteria should not be applied to Merchant Seamen. Having secured the navy's agreement, it is reasonably certain that Navy personnel will accept the arrangements made, although they will still have their individual Rights of Appeal. No such assumption can be made for Merchant Seamen.

Married Seamen or single Seamen who have a permanent home will be registered at that address and will be removed from the Register only if at sea for a continuous period in excess of six months."

Depending on information provided by the Navy, it is possible to get out of the poll tax bracket, if that is administratively possible. We know about someone who is in prison—that is provided for in the regulations—but do we know when someone is at sea? The Russians spend a lot of money keeping Klondikers and others out in the North sea to determine the movement of our vessels. All they need do now is buy a copy of the poll tax register. That would save them a heck of a lot of money. I know that I am verging on the farcical, but the whole issue verges on the farcical. Someone in Fife—Mr. Thompson—can make an arrangement with the Royal Navy about who will be on the register.

I shall not stray out of order by referring to the other debatable nonsense in the letter. I am being respectful to the chief executive of Fife regional council—he is only saying what the poll tax registration officer determines. If I ask, "To whom is the poll tax registration officer electorally responsible?" he will tell me that the power is provided by statute. Someone can go on and off the register because of the say-so of that one person.

Is the Minister honestly telling the House that the poll tax registration officer can determine when someone is at sea for 61 days but cannot determine whether someone suffers from Alzheimer's disease? Is it impossible for medical opinion to say that someone is so severely mentally impaired that he ought not to be registered? The Minister knows the stand that I have taken on this matter. If the poll tax registration officer will not accept a case for exclusion on the grounds laid down in the regulations or the word of the general practitioner, a person who is acting on behalf of the severely mentally impaired person has to prove his case. That is the depth to which we have sunk to get this nonsense of legislation through.

I am convinced that this legislation will not remain on the statute book for long. I am aware from meetings during the past few months that there is a growing undercurrent of resentment at it. I can illustrate how it operates. I recently sat across the table from someone who earns about £35,000 a year and whose rates bill is £2,500. His poll tax bill will be £600. I have also sat opposite someone whose rate bill was £600 and whose poll tax bill will be £1,200. All of us could give such illustrations. We know from our surgeries that there are depths of poverty that we thought had been abolished. People come to my surgeries on Saturdays who are threatened with eviction or with great difficulty and they do not know which way to turn. I ask the House, at this late date, to take cognisance of the fact that the regulations are nonsense. How quickly they are removed from the law of the land depends on our tenacity.

11.10 pm

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) put his case well and he is undoubtedly deeply concerned. However, I believe that he would agree that the rating system had enormous anomalies which caused great difficulties. I promoted two Bills which attempted to change the legislation on rates and which were subsequently incorporated into Government measures so that the anomalies were dealt with.

The regulations will be welcomed. The students will welcome the opportunity to have certificates to show that they are students. There is a question about cross-border students, which is important in applying for rebates. Like everyone else, the students will apply according to their position and income to ensure that they enjoy the rebates.

**Mr. Maxton:** For the record, I must point out that the students will pay a student community charge. They will not claim a rebate.

**Mr. Walker:** The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that I have two daughters who are students, so I know what is going on. Whatever he may say, I want to raise the matter of cross-border students. Some future cross-border students will be at school or about to leave school. They will take up their positions in colleges or universities south of the border after the summer holidays. At what point does the students' position become clear? Is it when they have been offered their places, as is happening now, or is it when they take them up at the end of the summer holidays?

I also welcome the provision affecting war pensioners. I am pleased that there has been a response on that. People in my constituency who are affected by the boarding house and hotel technical amendment would have wished for the loophole to remain. However, we must understand that the community charge is a charge against individuals, and those people have always understood that they would have to pay the community charge.

I believe that, contrary to some remarks, more people are beginning to acknowledge that the community charge is a viable method of funding local government. Contrary to the Opposition statements, with the passage of time it is unlikely that any future Government will remove the community charge.

11.13 pm

**Mr. Ron Brown** (Edinburgh, Leith): We know for sure that travel broadens the mind. The further one goes north over the border into Scotland, the more one learns that Thatcherism is hated. It is hated because of the attacks on jobs, living standards, social services and the welfare state and now because of the poll tax. The working class of Scotland attack the Tories and vote accordingly. That is why the Tories have little support in Scotland and why the Scottish people oppose the regulations. Whatever we are

talking about, we must tell the Prime Minister that she got it wrong when she went to the Church of Scotland and gave a lecture. She tried to tell us that Scotland needed not less but more Thatcherism. She may have believed that God was on her side. Her god is the god of profit. That has been confirmed on many——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is speaking to the wrong subject. I hope that he will address his remarks to the regulations before the House and put theology aside.

**Mr. Brown:** Thank you for your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

People in Lothian can see what the regulations mean. Effectively they mean that many students and others—that includes the low-paid and pensioners—will have to pay the poll tax. They will have to pay £392 a year. That may not seem a lot of money to some members of the Government, but it is a lot for a family. It is not a matter of saying to the low-paid and pensioners, "Under the regulations, you can get a concession or some sort of rebate." Those people did not pay rates before because their income was so low. Now they will have to pay at least 20 per cent. Because of a sliding scale, many old-age pensioners will have to pay much more. Many will have to pay the full whack.

The poll tax, or community charge, call it what one will, is regressive. It attacks the working class—the vast majority—and benefits the rich. There is no doubt about that. Hon. Members may call it what they like, but it is a counter reform. It has taken back one of the gains that we achieved through the rating system. I am not saying that the rating system was perfect. I have heard it said tonight that the rating system also had some flaws, and I agree, but the rating system since 1979——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I must draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention the fact that we are discussing some narrow regulations. I hope that he will address his remarks to them. So far he has not done so.

**Mr. Brown:** I agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, as the matter was mentioned, I must say that high-spending councils are a myth. There are lies, damn lies and Tory statistics. Tory statistics are about unemployment, inflation, and anything that they care to cover. The experiment is being put to the test in Scotland because the Tories think that they will get away with it. They will not. Community organisations, unions, Labour councils and other groups——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is clearly disregarding the advice which I have offered to him. He will either address himself to the regulations or resume his seat, and I will allow another hon. Member to have an opportunity to speak.

**Mr. Brown:** I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I must say to Conservative Members—there are not many here tonight—that Adam Smith, the great mentor or guru, advised the Bourbons that there would be disaster if they imposed iniquitous taxes. That led to the French revolution 200 years ago. The Tory Government will lead to another revolution, not just devolution. That fact must be faced. Scotland is anxious and, obviously, will challenge the Government.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were quite correct to ask me to make some points about the regulations. When Conservative Members talk about democracy, they talk about hypocrisy. They are trying to impose class rule on the small country north of the border by means of the regulations, which, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, point out, are important.

Let us consider the law—which, in this place, is worshipped daily—and regulations to see what happens to individuals who work in many factories throughout this country. Some are injured, many are killed——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. We have heard all about Adam Smith, the French revolution and the Bourbons, but so far we have heard nothing about the Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 or the Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989. The hon. Gentleman must either address his remarks to the regulations before the House or resume his seat.

**Mr. Brown:** I am always grateful for your advice, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are talking about regulations, and this place—and about reality, which is not just in a little closet or box. We like to kid the working class punters outside that there is something marvellous about this place. However, as a mere representative of Leith, as a shop steward writ large—or small, because I am not that tall—all I can say is that, when we talk about the law and what happens to people outside, the ruling class is not that concerned.

The ruling class avoid regulations and paying taxes—certainly the poll tax—when that suits them, even though the poll tax is generous to them and benefits them.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. This is a very short debate and a number of hon. Members are waiting to speak on the regulations. I must instruct the hon. Member to resume his seat.

11.22 pm

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): The Minister has been poorly supported by his Back-Bench colleagues tonight and, after the speech of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), he probably wishes that he had been completely unsupported and had answered the House alone.

I shall be brief because the debate is no longer taking place in the House. Its focus has shifted to Scotland. The level of resistance to its imposition in Scotland over the next few months will determine the longevity of the poll tax.

It has been said that the separation between the severely mentally handicapped—who will be exempt from the poll tax—and the merely mentally handicapped—who will have to pay—is one of the most offensive distinctions in what is undoubtedly an offensive tax. There is also no doubt that the Minister of State's defence of imposing the poll tax on people with Alzheimer's disease, on the basis that such people would be offended if they were exempt, is equally offensive. What manner of morality or sensitivity argues that American air force or army personnel will not be offended if they are exempt from poll tax in Scotland but those with Alzheimer's disease will be?

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): Are people with Alzheimer's disease exempt from rates in Scotland?

**Mr. Salmond:** If the hon. Gentleman had not just wandered into this Scottish debate, he would have known

*[Mr. Salmond]*

that that precise point was addressed earlier in the evening. *[Interruption.]* The answer is simply that two rights do not make a wrong—*[Interruption.]*—or even that two wrongs do not make a right.

If the Minister seriously argues that people with Alzheimer's disease are anxious to pay the poll tax and would be offended if they could not do so and were placed in an exempted category, he demonstrates how out of touch he is—not just with the people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers, but with the vast bulk of Scottish public opinion that finds such definitions totally offensive.

The Minister recently made a concession for unoccupied farm cottages, apparently not realising that the real issue in Scottish rural communities is occupied farm cottages. Can he not find it within his heart, even at this late stage, to make a concession for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease?

Statutory instrument No. 32 refers to students. I had an interesting opportunity last Thursday night to test students' attitudes to the poll tax in Scotland when I spoke in a debate at St. Andrew's university. Hon. Members will know that St. Andrew's has suffered from the reputation of being responsible for the genesis of the radical Right in United Kingdom politics. Even worse, it has had to carry the burden of having been responsible for the university education of the Under-Secretary of State for opting out —thereby devaluing the worth of my degree from that noble institution. In a packed union debate on Thursday night in the old parliament hall in St. Andrew's, the students not only voted by a majority of three to one against the poll tax but they voted for a non-payment campaign against it, which did much to restore the reputation of the university and showed that free thought is still alive in that institution. It also showed the amount of resistance to the poll tax that is building up in Scotland.

Resistance will be greatest at the point of payment. Over the next few weeks and months the Minister will find himself even more isolated in Scotland than he has been in this debate.

11.26 pm

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths** (Edinburgh, South): The Government have lost a golden opportunity to show that Conservatism has a caring face. They had the chance to heed the representations of those representing sufferers from Alzheimer's disease and senile dementia. They have ignored those representations in a way that has caused a great deal of anger among the groups acting for the disabled.

Regulation 4 does not cover millions or hundreds of thousands of disabled sufferers. It deals with a few lives that have been blighted in their later years by the tragedy of Alzheimer's disease. Appeals have been made to the Conservatives to include that small but important group in the legislation and it is little short of tragic that the Government and the Minister have not taken this opportunity to reverse last week's decision and show some compassion to the disabled.

The *Hansard* report of oral answers to questions on Scotland on 1 March has given my constituents a true insight into the thinking of the Conservatives on Scotland. Last week, the Minister of State said:

> "Because of the gradual onset of the disease, many people suffering from degenerative disorders seek to play a full part in the community, which includes contributing to the cost of local government."

There are people like Mr. Guthrie of Lasswade road in my constituency. His wife phones me every weekend to tell me about her husband's condition and her worries about his having to pay the poll tax, and the notion that people like him can ever again play a full part in the community would be laughable if it were not tragic.

The Minister went on:

> "The disease has a gradual onset, leading to progressive decline in all aspects of mental functioning."

That is what we believe.

> "The difficulty is one of diagnosis to establish precisely at what point any exemption should be made."

All that we are asking is that the Minister shows some generosity of spirit and of action in accepting that at a certain stage people suffering from Alzheimer's disease should be exempted. We are not asking for hard and fast rules. We are asking that for a few thousand people in Scotland suffering from the disease the Government should accept the advice of medical officers and make an exemption. The Minister of State said:

> "The balance of medical advice that we have received is that it is impossible to establish a method of assessing precisely at which point an exemption could be granted".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 260-61.]

That is used as an excuse not to grant any exemption, and it is little short of disgraceful.

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn** (Perth and Kinross): Most Conservative Members take the view that you are dotty. Do you think you should be exempted? We should be happy to exempt you.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Many Opposition Members realise that far from you being dotty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your faculties are as good as ever. We deplore the fact that Conservative Members treat as a laughing matter and a joke people who suffer from senile disorders and who are being described as dotty.

That attitude is exemplified by the rather typical intervention on Wednesday by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who sought to make cheap, party political points at the expense of disabled people. We know that such attitudes are not lost on the people of the United Kingdom, and that relatives who have to care for disabled people and cope with the day-to-day problems of senile dementia know full well that the comment "dotty" by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) is typical of the Government's uncaring, arrogant, aristocratic attitude towards the problem.

The second set of regulations is about personal community charges. I should like to speak on a slightly different tack. Yesterday I visited Pollok halls of residence which contain 1,800 students. I was accompanied by David Martin, the Labour Euro MP, and local councillor Alan Tweedie. We met Terry Cole, the senior warden, and students in those halls. They told us of their worries about their grants which have fallen by 20 per cent. in value under the Government. The grants are simply not sufficient to meet the charges laid on them by the personal community charge. The Minister mentioned that the whole of the community water charge will have to be paid by students. There will be no 20 per cent. exemption.

**Mr. Lang:** The exemption applies also to water charges for students.

**Mr. Griffiths:** We are pleased to hear about that concession and that they will not have to pay the full water charge. Will the Minister extend that to make the water charge rebatable? I think that the answer to that must be no.

Students form a low-income group in society and will have to meet the community charge. Previously they did not have to pay rates because the University Grants Committee reimbursed halls of residence for rates. Now there will have to be a charge. The impact of the Government's failure to exempt students and chronically disabled people from the charge is plain for all to see. Ten years ago the Government provided £58 for every £100 spent on local services such as schools, housing, street cleaning, libraries, swimming baths, environmental health and pollution inspection. In 10 years, the figure of £58 out of every £100 spent has gone down to £31. That has rocketed the rates, and it is blasting the poll tax into the stratosphere.

Sad to say, the Government will now inflict a higher than necessary charge on my constituents in Edinburgh who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and on the students. If Edinburgh residents got the same allowance from the Government towards the poll tax as the average Scot, they would be paying not £392 each but £250. If they got the same allowance as the Government are providing for Glasgow's residents, they would be paying only £146. Instead, the Government have brought all the powers that they can to bear on Edinburgh's residents to force up the poll tax to unbearable levels. The tragedy is that under these regulations, when, at the eleventh hour, the Government had a chance to help vulnerable groups and to recant on some of the worst aspects of the community charge, they failed.

I am pleased to say that in the Euro-election coming up in June, only two short months after the community charge comes in, the people of Scotland will have the chance to show the Government what they think of that tax. We can expect another rout of the Tory party in Scotland.

11.36 pm

**Mr. William Ross** (Londonderry, East): At first sight, these regulations refer only to Scotland. If that were so, I would be happy to leave them to the representatives of that part of the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, like so many other matters in a unitary state, these regulations have consequences beyond the boundaries of Scotland. In particular, I am concerned about the position of students from Northern Ireland.

It is true that those who leave Scotland and come to England, Wales or Northern Ireland will initially be leaving a place where they have to pay a community charge, and arrive in a part of the kingdom where rates are still the norm. However, there is no proposal, as far as I am aware—indeed, it has been denied—to extend the community charge system of financing local government to Northern Ireland. This means that students from Northern Ireland in Scotland will find themselves paying 20 per cent. of the community charge, while their parents in Northern Ireland will continue to pay rates at the level applicable in that part of the kingdom. This is manifestly unjust, and, despite the fact that it has been reduced from the full rate to 20 per cent., that does not remove the inequity of injustice from which students from Northern Ireland suffer.

I remember interrupting a Labour Member during the passage of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and asking him why, if the Act was so damaging to the Conservative prospects, the Labour party was not supporting it. I was told that the Labour party was a party of principle—a fine sentiment. I only regret that its principle did not extend to insisting that the same level and type of taxation prevailed throughout the kingdom. When the Minister replied on behalf of the Government, I asked him why Northern Ireland was denied the evident benefits that the Government saw in this system of local taxation, and I got a non-answer. It was even worse than that from the Labour representative. I regret that, because this question should have been faced.

The House knows what the reality is. It is that a Government who cannot see to it that the BBC collects the television licence in the Republican-dominated ghettos of Northern Ireland know very well that they cannot collect the poll tax there either. Therefore, I accuse them of cowardice in the face of the terrorist organisations.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I trust that the hon. Gentleman is aware that many Conservative Members believe firmly that Northern Ireland should be treated in exactly the same way as the rest of the United Kingdom when it comes to local government taxation and other related matters.

**Mr. Ross:** I welcome the general principle behind the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I should like to discuss it with him at greater length on another occasion rather than trespass upon the time of hon. Members who wish to contribute to this debate. The hon. Gentleman's general principle is welcomed, but if he were trying to introduce this system of local government taxation in Northern Ireland it would not meet with general approval. It would not meet with my approval. By introducing this system of local government financing we are merely replacing one bad system with another.

11.40 pm

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): There has been more than a touch of hypocrisy and humbug about the debate. We heard a moving speech from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who told us that certain categories of people should be exempt from the community charge. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that everyone who he says should have been exempted from the community charge is currently not exempted from the rating system. The Labour party had time to do something about that and it chose not to do so.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that Mr. Guthrie of Lasswade road does not pay his rates. His wife pays the rates.

**Mr. Marshall:** It seems that the householder pays the rates. The hon. Gentleman knows that Labour Governments could have considered the problems that he has described and that they chose not to do so.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South complained about the level of rates in Edinburgh. He should have said that Edinburgh had a high-spending Labour authority which forced up the rates. In days gone by Edinburgh used to be a byword for efficiency and economy of local

*[Mr. Marshall]*

government—[HON. MEMBERS: "How does the hon. Gentleman know?"] I lived in Scotland for many years. I know that within the local government system Edinburgh was well known as being the most efficient authority throughout Scotland among the four cities. That is no longer true.

**Mr. Maxton:** If the hon. Gentleman had managed to listen to any part of my speech, he would have different ideas about the regulations.

**Mr. Marshall:** If the hon. Gentleman——

**Mr. Maxton:** Why did the Tories lose Edinburgh, South?

**Mr. Marshall:** The Conservatives won Edinburgh, South at the district council elections. It was the Labour party which lost it. That tells us about the verdict of the electors of Edinburgh, South at the district council elections on the policy of the then district councils. The electors did not support it and wanted to see it changed.

I was sorry to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) about his visit to the University of St. Andrews. Why the hon. Gentleman was not here last Thursday and was in St. Andrews, only he can tell us.

**Mr. Salmond:** The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the Under-Secretary of State was also billed to appear for the debate at St. Andrews, and that he mysteriously failed to turn up.

**Mr. Marshall:** Obviously my hon. Friend felt that it was his duty to be in this place.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** My hon. Friend will be interested to know as well that St. Andrews asked me to attend the debate. I made it clear that it was my duty to be in the House.

**Mr. Marshall:** That is the sort of devotion to duty that we would expect from my hon. Friend.

It is unfortunate that the University of St. Andrews, which is well renowned historically as being a centre of compassion, voted against the community charge. We know that 80 per cent. of single pensioners will be better off under the community charge than under the rating system. I must apologise to the people of Scotland that my former university has become so heartless as to vote against the community charge.

11.44 pm

**Mr. Sam Galbraith** (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The contribution from the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was one of the most disgraceful contributions to the debate. He is not just an hon. Member of this House, he is also a Euro Member for north London and he collects two salaries.

**Mr. John Marshall:** That is not true. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that I do not take any salary as a Euro Member? I do not know whether his Labour colleagues can boast the same.

**Mr. Galbraith:** I withdraw that and rephrase it. The hon. Gentleman collects two lots of expenses. We do not require any tutorials from him about hardship and pensioners. He also made a great play about talking to local authorities. He should speak to his local authority and to the chief officer who is bitterly opposed to the poll tax before he talks to us about that.

**Mr. Marshall:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Galbraith:** No. Sit down. The hon. Gentleman is not interested in what we have to say, so he should not bother boring the House with his comments.

I rise at the Dispatch Box briefly once again to challenge the Government's medical advice on the regulations. I did that in the House last week and I want to do so again now. I have taken extensive advice since last week from my colleagues who are experienced in these matters and who might have expected to have been consulted, but were not. They are at one with me in the belief that the Government's medical advice in relation to Alzheimer's sufferers is wrong. I do not expect the Minister to give me any specific answers tonight. I accept that because I am going to make some technical points and it would be unfair of me to ask the Minister to respond to specifically medical matters. I expect the Minister to reconsider my remarks and return to the House to say that he will stop treating Alzheimer sufferers differently from other patients with dementia.

When considering patients with Alzheimer's it is important that we distinguish between a diagnosis and a clinical picture because often those two factors are confused. The diagnosis is Alzheimer's disease while the clinical picture is a separate presentation. The latter is the way in which the patient behaves and his relationship to surroundings, relatives and the environment. Alzheimer's disease is a diagnosis and I accept that it is not necessarily the same thing as severe mental handicap. Essentially, for those patients the diagnosis is irrelevant. We must decide whether patients can lead an independent existence and whether they have severe impairment of social and intellectual functions.

When we consider diagnosis and presentation, we must also consider acquired dementia. I have referred to severe mental handicap which may be due to dementia. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was right. Between 90,000 and 100,000 people in Scotland suffer from that form of dementia. The majority of those people have Alzheimer's disease, the figure being about 80 per cent.

If I use slightly technical terms it is not for the Minister's benefit, but for the benefit of his friends and colleagues who will consider this later. Ten per cent. of those dementia sufferers have what is known as a multi-infarct syndrome. It is impossible to distinguish between a patient presenting with Alzheimers's disease and multi-infarct syndrome based on the presentation. That is clinically impossible. Alcoholism is another cause of dementia and the clinical picture can be the same as Alzheimer's disease. Parkinson's disease is another cause of dementia and its clinical picture can be the same as Alzheimer's. Similarly Huntington's chorea is another form cause of dementia.

The clinical presentation and everything that the Minister has said about Alzheimer's disease—that it is progressive and intermittent—applies to all those causes of dementia. However, the only cause that the Minister is excluding is Alzheimer's disease. Will the Minister explain why that is so? Alzheimer's clinical presentation is exactly

the same, as is the nature and cause of the disease. Why is it that those suffering from Alzheimer's disease are discriminated against? What is the difference between a patient suffering from Alzheimer's disease and one suffering from multi-infarct syndrome?

In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), the Minister wrote:

"Parliament recognised that considerable difficulties and some potential for unfairness would be involved in assessing precisely when a person with a degenerative condition, such as Huntington's Chorea, reaches the point during the progress of the condition where intelligence and social functioning are severely impaired."

I accept that, and I do not dispute that it can be difficult to decide when that point is reached—but the same applies to every other form of dementia, even congenital dementia. Will the Minister explain what difference the diagnosis makes?

In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote:

"People with degenerative brain disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, have a very gradual onset of their condition and may continue for a period of some years to carry on a normal life".

So may a patient suffering from multi-infarct syndrome, from alcoholism, from dementia caused by a head injury, or from Parkinson's disease. Why do the Government persist in discriminating against patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease? That is the question I ask the Minister to answer tonight.

The Minister may give the easy answer that people in residential care will be exempt. He surely does not suggest that the way to exempt a loved one from the poll tax is to place him or her into care. I quote again from the Minister's letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North:

"I do not therefore believe that the community charge arrangements offer any financial discouragement to caring for people . . . in the community."

In truth, they do just that. Instead of being able to look after a loved one at home—albeit that they may have no relationship with those around them or with their surroundings—it is suggested that they be placed in residential care and in that way be exempt from the poll tax.

It is not the diagnosis that should concern us but the clinical picture. The regulations refer to "severe mental handicap", which makes the actual diagnosis irrelevant. Everything that the Minister and his right hon. and hon. Friends have said in relation to Alzheimer's disease applies to every other cause of dementia, be it congenital or acquired. The diagnosis remains irrelevant. I put it to the Minister again that the medical advice which the Government have been given is wrong. By accepting it, the Minister penalises those who wish to look after their loved ones at home. For all those reasons, we shall certainly be voting against the regulations.

11.52 pm

**Mr. Lang:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I reply? Nobody can say that this evening's debate has been a particularly uplifting affair. As was said by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), the debate has shifted to Scotland, where we all eagerly await the arrival of the army of 100,000 protesters that the hon. Gentleman promises will descend upon us at some unspecified time.

Perhaps I should first concentrate on the constituency of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), where the Scottish Nationalist council is implementing the community charge so efficiently.

**Mr. Salmond:** I hope that the Minister will answer the substantive points made in the debate, but perhaps he noted that the thousandth non-payer has been signed up in the constituency of his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** It will be interesting to see what happens about that army of 100,000 people who "Can pay, won't pay". I think that it will be more a case of "Can't find, won't find".

Alzheimer's disease is a serious subject, and it is one that I am content to address. However, it was significant that when my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) asked what was done by the Labour party to exempt Alzheimer's diseases sufferers when they had the opportunity to do so, there was no answer. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) suggested that the House should reverse last week's decision. The fact remains that, after two years' debate, only now do the Opposition begin to show any concern for those suffering from conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

The debate concerns a serious and sensitive issue. Many of us know people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and we all recognise that it is a tragic condition, but when the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) says that we are discriminating against those with Alzheimer's disease he misunderstands the position, which is that diagnosis is difficult: his comments underlined that. We are not discriminating against Alzheimer's. We are taking exactly the same attitude to all degenerative brain disorders.

**Mr. Galbraith** *rose*——

**Mr. Lang:** I am sorry, but I should like to reply to the points that the hon. Gentleman made.

Considerable serious research is going on, some of it promising, but an indication of how much there is still to learn about diseases such as Alzheimer's can be found in the most recent edition of the *Lancet*. In an article headed

"Senile Dementia of Alzheimer's Type: Normal Ageing or Disease?"

it states:

"The clinical diagnosis of dementia is very inaccurate in general practice, and the same applies to senile dementia of Alzheimer's type in hospital practice, with a preponderance of false positives when checked against the post mortem findings."

In the *Lancet* of 4 March, an article headed

"Senile Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease"

states:

"The existence of senile dementia of Alzheimer's type as a disease entity has lately been questioned. Is it instead part of the normal process of ageing?"

In the *Lancet* of 29 October, another article asks:

"Do general practitioners miss dementia in elderly patients?"

It continues:

"How accurate are general practitioners in recognising dementia in their elderly patients? In a frequently cited study by Williamson and colleagues, 200 patients in three Scottish general practices were assessed by a geriatrician and a psychiatrist. Later their diagnoses were compared with information taken from the general practitioners' medical records and from interviews with them about each of their

*[Mr. Lang]*

patients. The general practitioners were said to be aware of only seven of the 48 cases of dementia identified by the investigation team."

I could give a number of other quotations from articles in the *Lancet*. They prove that diagnosis is extremely difficult, and that is the underlying problem that we face in finding any method of assessment whereby we can decide on a dividing line making it appropriate to exempt sufferers from degenerative brain disorders.

**Mr. Galbraith:** The Minister continues to make the mistake of confusing clinical diagnosis with clinical picture. The regulations apply to the clinical picture—severe mental handicap and severe impairment of social and intellectual function. The diagnosis is not at issue here.

**Mr. Lang:** The difficulty is of assessing when it would be proper and fair to grant an exemption without creating more anomalies than it would remove. That has governed the balanced medical advice that we have received.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked whether the maximum rebate of 50p was a national rule or one local to his area. The answer is that regulation 51 of the Housing Benefit (Community Charge Rebates) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 provides that housing benefit shall not be payable in respect of any claim where the weekly amount awarded would be less than 50p.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked about the community charge in Northern Ireland. It is not, of course, for me to say anything about the Government's intentions in the Province, but, as I am sure he will acknowledge, the structure of local government, the level of its funding and the area of its responsibilities are very different there from in the rest of the United Kingdom. For students from Northern Ireland to come to the rest of the United Kingdom and pay the community charge at 20 per cent., although their parents are paying rates in Northern Ireland, seems entirely acceptable to me, and I do not believe that it will reduce the enthusiasm of students from Northern Ireland to come to Scottish universities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) asked when students would start to pay. The answer is, when they enrol for the start of their courses, as regulation 3(c)(i) of the student regulations shows.

This evening we have again witnessed the now familiar sight of the Opposition striving to find anything cogent to say in response to the new community charge arrangements. It is clear that they have nothing of substance to contribute, which is why they are reduced to scavenging for peripheral titbits. Even then they are finding nothing of worth.

The measures to introduce the community charge system have proceeded steadily towards implementation on our planned timetable, as we have always maintained that they would. This is possibly why the Opposition have run out of substance for their arguments.

This debate marks another, and near final, step forward in the process of removing the totally discredited domestic rating system. The Opposition's usual, tired criticisms of the regulations and of the community charge pale into insignificance when they are contrasted with the huge, and entirely justified, weight of criticism which, over the years, has been directed against the domestic rating system. It is a source of great satisfaction to me and to millions of ratepayers in Scotland that we are now within a few weeks of ending the domestic rating system there.

*Question put:—*

*The House divided:* Ayes 197, Noes. 207.

**Division No. 117]** **[12 midnight**

**AYES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri

Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

**NOES**

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Neale, Gerrard
Norris, Steve
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## ACCESS TO PERSONAL FILES (HOUSING)

*Resolved,*

That the draft Access to Personal Files (Housing) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 17th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Trippier.]*

## ADJOURNMENT

*Resolved,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

*Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Twelve o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 7 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## DEFENCE

### Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

1. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on defence policy from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

15. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on defence policy from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger):** Since last year's summer recess, I have received three letters, four petitions and one questionnaire from representatives of CND regarding aspects of defence policy.

The low level of correspondence from CND reflects, no doubt, the decline in support for that organisation. It is clear that the Government's, and NATO's, policy of defence and detente is the only sure way of achieving peace, and that unilateral disarmament gestures would undermine efforts towards multilateral disarmament.

**Mr. Boswell:** I am sure that my right hon. Friend will pay CND the courtesies appropriate to its declining membership. Will he ensure that he does not listen too hard to its views, any more than he did on cruise missiles? As a result of his resistance to CND, we now have a multilateral intermediate nuclear forces agreement and we hope to achieve similar mutually beneficial agreements on other weapon systems.

**Mr. Younger:** I strongly agree with my hon. Friend. Although my disposition is normally to listen to everyone on all subjects, I am very glad that we did not listen to CND because if we had done so we should not have the current arms reductions.

**Mr. Hunter:** As the debate on CND is one that my right hon. Friend clearly wins, will he undertake to challenge robustly CND's opposition to the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons because such modernisation may well be necessary to maintain deterrence and to negotiate from a position of strength?

**Mr. Younger:** Yes. My hon. Friend makes a valid point. As I have said, there may be arguments for having no weapons at all, although I do not accept them, but in my view there are no arguments for having weapons that are ineffective and out of date.

**Ms. Ruddock:** Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that he has received from CND a briefing on the competitive strategies doctrine? *[Interruption.]* Yes, a briefing—and I am sure that the Secretary of State has read it. Did the Americans consult him about that doctrine and what are its likely effects on NATO strategy in relation to conventional arms talks?

**Mr. Younger:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I did, indeed, receive a piece of paper stating that it was a briefing on that matter and I found it interesting, as I always do. I do not think that the doctrine has any effect on the conventional arms talks which are a very specific set of talks with very specific objectives. Our objective is to achieve equal ceilings of conventional weapons at much lower levels than they are now. A very good start was made at the Vienna talks yesterday.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the British Government's success in pursuing a multilateral policy flies in the face of everything that CND has proposed? Does he share my concern that the SLD party—the old Liberals—seems to be riddled with CND members, including the current general secretary of CND, who is on the committee considering defence?

**Mr. Younger:** My hon. Friend has raised a very interesting point. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made some excellent remarks in the Navy debate last week. The only trouble was that they seemed to conflict diametrically with the views of the leader of his party who recently made it clear that he was against all nuclear weapons.

**Mr. James Lamond:** Does the Secretary of State recall that when he last answered questions in the House he was asked whether he was prepared to match the initiative of President Gorbachev in reducing nuclear weapons, and boasted that he had left President Gorbachev far behind as he had reduced the number of nuclear weapons in Britain by 30 per cent. Why was he pretending to be a unilateralist then but now he is a multilateralist?

**Mr. Younger:** I am not sure that I come into either of those categories. The point that I made then is equally valid today—that NATO has reduced its nuclear warheads by about 2,400 since 1979 and, as I understand it, Mr. Gorbachev recently announced that the number of Russia's systems has been reduced by about 24, so it seems to me that he has an awful long way to go.

### Military Depots (Security)

2. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has made any assessment of the effect of contractorisation on the security of military depots.

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton):** Security is one of a number of factors taken into account in the assessment of proposals to contractorise activities at defence establishments. The subsequent effect of such measures on the security of those establishments is assessed by the commanding officer or head of establishment as part of their constant review of their security arrangements.

**Mr. Grocott:** Is it not a matter of simple common sense that if long-serving, loyal civil servants in the Ministry of Defence are replaced by short-term contractors, that must involve increased security risks? In view of recent events, does not the Minister owe it to military establishments —I mention in particular COD Donnington in my own constituency—to listen to the overwhelming views of the work force, both civilian and military, and at the very least to put a freeze on existing contractorisation proposals and undertake a thorough, long-standing review before presenting any further plans?

**Mr. Hamilton:** No, we continue with contractorisation to give us value for money on the defence budget. There is no evidence that contractorisation increases security risks.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** Is my hon. Friend aware that at this time of IRA threats we shall be grateful for any assurances that he can give about the safety of our military camps? Will he assure the leader of the Liberal party, through his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), that Norton Manor Royal Marine camp in my constituency is safe and does not require the attentions of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)?

**Mr. Hamilton:** We keep the security systems on all our camps constantly under review. I am convinced that the Royal Marines are as capable as anyone of defending their camps.

## Procurement Expenditure

3. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the relative priority, in terms of procurement expenditure, his Department gives to *(a)* the British Army of the Rhine and *(b)* warships for the Royal Navy.

10. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the relative priority, in terms of procurement expenditure, his Department gives to *(a)* the British Army of the Rhine and *(b)* warships for the Royal Navy.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The balance of expenditure within the defence programme reflects the Government's defence policy as set out in successive statements on the Defence Estimates.

**Mr. Galbraith:** Does the Minister agree with Lord Carver that Britain should concentrate its commitment on British armed forces on the continent at the expense of the Navy, or does he agree with Sir Peter Stanford that the Navy has already shown its worth and should be given priority? Does the Minister agree that that unholy dispute within the military is the result of concentrating too many of our resources on nuclear weapons at the expense of conventional weapons? Is it not also due to the fact that the Government have neglected to undertake a proper defence review?

**Mr. Hamilton:** There is no need for a defence review. I agree with Lord Carver who, at the end of his recent lecture, said:

> "It will not be, as it has never been, a choice for us between a maritime or a continental strategy, but a delicate judgment of how to apportion scarce resources between the two."

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** When Admiral Stanford asks where are the construction orders, how does the Secretary of State answer?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Construction orders will obviously follow. When it comes to ordering ships, we have not been backward in coming forward, and we have ordered a very large number.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Does my hon. Friend agree that when allocating resources, whether for the British Army of the Rhine or for the purchase of ships for the Navy, control of the skies must also be considered? Neither Army nor Navy operations can be much good unless we also control the skies. Is it not time that we advised the West German Government that, in controlling the skies, it is essential that our aircraft are permitted to operate at the same altitudes at which they will be required to operate during operational periods—particularly during a war?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I agree with my hon. Friend. It is sad that the Opposition's question makes mention only of the British Army of the Rhine and of the Royal Navy and does not include the demands of the Royal Air Force, which we take into great consideration when deciding our priorities.

**Mr. Brazier:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the question is a particularly silly one? There is no more certain way of decoupling Germany from the alliance than to run down our presence on the continent. Equally, there is no easier way of convincing the Americans that we are not fully supporting them than to reduce our forces in the eastern Atlantic. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) pointed out, it is impossible to reduce the capabilities of the British Army, Royal Navy or Royal Air Force without causing political damage, irrespective of any military damage.

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is absolutely right. If the suggestion behind the original question is that we should run down the Royal Navy to support the Rhine Army one must bear in mind the critical role played by the Royal Navy in guaranteeing our reinforcement in wartime and in its anti-submarine warfare capability.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Does the Minister understand that the answers that he has given today, the answers that his officials gave to the Select Committee on Defence and, indeed, his answers to the House during the debate on the Royal Navy last week, have done nothing to allay the fear of many hon. Members that the surface fleet's frigates and destroyers are too few to enable the Royal Navy to fulfil its wartime or peacetime responsibilities and functions?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I think that the problem is that the Opposition refuse to believe that we are maintaining our commitment to about 50 ships. I must repeat what I said in the Navy debate—that I call 49 surface ships "about 50".

**Mr. Rogers:** Are not the fears expressed by two very senior officers merely a symptom of the fears felt throughout the armed services that insufficient emphasis is placed on our conventional weapons? Will the Minister undertake a defence review so that the fears of those officers can be allayed?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The only justification for a defence review is when we do not have the resources to meet our

commitments. An extra £20 billion has been spent in real terms since 1979, and there is no shortage of resources to meet our existing commitments.

### Territorial Army

4. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the role of the Territorial Army; and if he will make a statement.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert):** The Ministry of Defence receives a great many representations about the Territorial Army, including its role, from a wide variety of sources. Careful note is taken of all those views. Where appropriate, they are fed into the continuing process of evaluation of the effectiveness of the TA, and the vital part that it plays in the defence of the nation.

**Mr. Thurnham:** When my hon. Friend is next in the north-west I hope that he will be able to visit the Bolton artillery unit, which has a long association with the town dating back to 1860. He would then appreciate the urgent need for new, larger premises. Will my hon. Friend press the Territorial Army premises unit to find larger premises and to respond more quickly to commercial opportunities as I understand that the unit has £2 million available to spend?

**Mr. Neubert:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his invitation to his constituency. He can be assured that North-West TAVR, which is responsible for TA accommodation in the area, is maintaining close contact with the local authority and estate agents in the Bolton district. I am aware of the long association of the Royal Artillery with Bolton. I confirm that we intend to find a site and that funds will be available to construct a suitable permanent centre for 216 air defence battery.

**Mr. Duffy:** Why did Territorial Army manpower fall off so sharply in 1988?

**Mr. Neubert:** It is true that we have suffered a small setback in our aim to reach an increased target, but our present level is none the less very much higher than it was when we came into power in 1979, increasing from 60,000 to 73,000. We have plans to attract more recruits and to retain more people in the Territorial Army. We have simplified administration and increased the tax-free bounties, and we have improved training. We have a major advertising campaign under way, which has already enhanced public awareness of the importance of the Territorial Army.

**Mr. Conway:** As the Territorial Army supplies 50 per cent. of the manpower but takes up less than 4 per cent. of the Army budget, does my hon. Friend agree that it represents extraordinarily good value for the taxpayer? As the birth rate is expected to decline towards the end of the decade, does my hon. Friend agree that the efforts of the employers' support groups in encouraging recruitment among young people will become more and more vital and deserve the congratulations of the House?

**Mr. Neubert:** Yes, and I readily pay tribute to Tommy Macpherson and the national employment liaison committee and to the efforts that they are making to foster greater awareness among employers and to make more facilities available for people to serve in the Territorial Army which, as my hon. Friend says, has a vital part to play in peace and in war.

### Nuclear Weapons

5. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Denmark to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

**Mr. George Younger:** I last met the Danish Defence Minister when he came to London, at my invitation, on 6 February. We discussed a range of issues of mutual interest, including SNF.

**Dr. Moonie:** The Minister must be aware that the Danes share the disquiet of the West German Government about our modernisation plans. Will their views be taken fully into account, or will it again be a case of Granny knows best for Europe?

**Mr. Younger:** It will be for the Danish Government to decide their attitude when NATO comes to discuss the modernisation of the SNF. I spoke to the Danish Minister and it is worth recording that Denmark fully subscribes to NATO's strategy and nuclear deterrence, which is more than I can say for Her Majesty's Opposition.

**Sir John Stokes:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that I recently had the opportunity to visit Denmark, Norway and Iceland to see NATO defences in that area? Is he further aware that while Denmark is a non-nuclear power it is a loyal member of the Alliance and its small forces would give a good account of themselves in the event of war?

**Mr. Younger:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those comments. Recently, at the last nuclear planning group meeting, Denmark fully subscribed to the principles contained in the communiqué, which made it clear that it was in full support of NATO strategy.

**Mr. Cohen:** The Secretary of State says that Denmark fully subscribes to NATO strategy, but does it fully subscribe to the Prime Minister's plans for short-range modernisation in central Europe, as the Germans do not and most of Europe does not?

**Mr. Younger:** None of those countries has yet been called on to make a decision on the matter. They will all have to decide in due course what their views are, but there is a wide measure of agreement on a number of important principles. They are, first, that if we are to have weapons we must keep them up to date; secondly, that the Lance system will be obsolete by 1995; and, thirdly, that none of us wishes to see a third zero in nuclear weapons in Europe.

**Mr. David Martin:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the western nations, including Denmark, would be wise, when listening to what Russia says, to see what that country actually does before abandoning any plans that we may have to modernise short-range nuclear weapons, bearing in mind that Russia has a long way to go not just to abolish chemical weapons but even greatly to reduce its conventional weapons?

**Mr. Younger:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. While we warmly welcome the change of climate in the Soviet Union and the willingness to discuss matters that it refused

to discuss for many years, we must wait to see results from the suggestions that the Russians make. As I made clear earlier, from the point of view of reducing weapons, NATO has a much better record than the Soviet Union in having done so already.

**Mr. O'Neill:** The Secretary of State spoke of Montebello and of how important it was in relation to the reduction of weapons, but there were two elements in Montebello, one being the replacement of weapons. When the right hon. Gentleman speaks to his colleagues in western Europe, will he appreciate that there is no great enthusiasm for the early replacement of many of the systems which it was envisaged in 1983 would have to be replaced because the circumstances in Europe in particular and the world in general have changed considerably since then? Does he further agree that the Prime Minister's hectoring approach to the NATO allies is regarded as offensive and irrelevant in relation to the modernisation of those weapons?

**Mr. Younger:** The hon. Gentleman is right to remind all concerned that the Montebello decision was not just a decision to reduce nuclear weapons but to replace those that were aging or out of date. The only criterion as to whether weapons should be replaced is whether the existing ones are out of date and no longer usable. That is the position that we must face in relation to those systems which will become out of date soon.

### Nuclear Weapons

6. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what nuclear weapons the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has scrapped over the past 10 years.

**Mr. Younger:** Since 1979 some 2,400 nuclear warheads —or some 35 per cent. of the land-based stockpile—have been unilaterally withdrawn from NATO Europe. In addition, under the INF treaty, some 400 deployed land-based nuclear missiles, together with their warheads, will be withdrawn from Europe by the Alliance by June 1991.

**Mr. Hayes:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that during the last 10 years NATO, rather than the Warsaw pact, has taken nearly all the arms control initiatives? Will he warn some of his wobbly colleagues in the Alliance that when the Soviet Union finally lifts the seventh veil of its arms control striptease something rather nasty may be revealed?

**Mr. Younger:** I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said. I agree entirely that, in performance, there is simply no contest between NATO, which has managed to reduce its weapons systems while maintaining its security, and the Soviet Union, which until recently has done absolutely nothing in that regard. As to the future, we should be very wise to continue our successful policy of maintaining strong defences and forcing the Soviet Union to the negotiating table. After all, that policy is working.

**Mr. Douglas:** Will the Secretary of State, instead of looking back over the past 10 years—though it is natural that he should do so—try to look to the next five to 10 years and give us some insight into his views on the START negotiations? At this juncture the Soviet Union and the United States have both made gestures towards building down to 50 per cent. What meaningful contribution are the Government making to that process by proceeding to develop four Trident boats, all armed with D5s?

**Mr. Younger:** The START negotiations, on the whole, have been fairly encouraging, and we are fairly confident that, before very long, there will be agreement on a 50 per cent. reduction in the super-powers' strategic systems. That is very remarkable progress. So far as the British deterrent is concerned, everyone involved in negotiations —not least Mr. Gorbachev himself—has made it clear that it is not expected that the British deterrent or, for that matter, the French deterrent, will be included at the current stage. We have always made it clear that if, in the future, there is a major change in the line-up of the super-powers, if there is a 50 per cent. START reduction, if the conventional imbalances can be substantially reduced, and if there is a world ban on chemical weapons, we shall be prepared to see whether we can make a further contribution in respect of our deterrent.

**Mr. Barry Field:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the promotion of Lt. General Gromov to his new key position means that, for the first time, NATO troops will face battle-hardened Soviet troops? Does not this make it even more important that NATO should keep its nuclear deterrent—particularly its short-range weapons—intact and modernised?

**Mr. Younger:** I have no doubt that those factors should all be taken into account. Undoubtedly, the ability of NATO to defend itself is a key factor in persuading all concerned to negotiate a reduction in weapons.

### European Fighter Aircraft

7. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent decisions he has made in respect of procurement of a radar system for the European fighter aircraft.

16. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent decisions he has made in respect of procurement of a radar system for the European fighter aircraft.

**Mr. Tim Sainsbury (The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement):** No decisions have been taken recently on the radar for EFA.

**Mr. Vaz:** Will the Minister ensure that any decision that is made on new radar systems for European fighter aircraft will benefit Britain's electronic and radar industry? Does he not agree that the real choice is between a British system and a ravamped version of the old Hughes system? If the latter is chosen, will not that perhaps be the death knell for Britain's radar research base? Will the Minister therefore ensure that a British system is adopted?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I suspect that my hon. Friend recognises that it would be wrong for me to prejudge a decision of those who have the job of considering the present competitive bids. Of course, both bidders include British companies.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** Does the Minister agree that he is under increasing pressure from both German and American interests to accept one of the off-the-shelf

systems that are in use? If that is so, will it not be a severe body blow to the British electronics and radar industry, particularly the radar research base? If the Minister accepts that, exactly what does he intend to do to safeguard this vital British national interest?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I do not think that I recognise the competing bids in the description that the hon. Gentleman has given of an off-the-shelf developed system. He will be aware that we are awaiting a recommendation to the NATO European Fighter Management Agency, the international management agency, from Euro-Fighter. It would be wrong for me to anticipate that recommendation. We must wait to hear what it has to say about its assessment of the competing bids.

**Mr. Stern:** Does my hon. Friend agree, in order to safeguard the EFA project, that the most essential elements of any radar system are that it should work to specification and be available on time? Will those be the primary considerations which will be taken into account in deciding competing bids?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** As my hon. Friend will be aware, a wide range of issues and aspects of the radar system have to be taken into account in assessing its ability to meet the requirement and its competitiveness. I am sure that all the issues will be properly taken into account. Clearly those that he mentioned are among the primary considerations.

**Mr. Mans:** When the decision is taken, will my hon. Friend take into account the export potential of EFA and any restrictions that may be imposed upon it by a particular choice?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I assure my hon. Friend that export potential is one of the issues which will be taken into account before a decision is made.

**Mr. O'Neill:** Is the Minister aware that the problems being created over the choice of radar are likely to endanger the whole project? Can he be more fulsome in indicating the true significance of that? While previously we were talking in terms of GEC-Marconi against Ferranti, the danger may now be that a German-backed GEC system, if not chosen, may be the rock on which the whole project founders. Will he confirm that the Government back EFA and will continue to support the British-led technology which lies at the heart of the radar system which many on this side of the House are prepared to support?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I think that the hon. Gentleman is well aware that all four collaborating nations entirely support the project. I can also confirm that they all share the stated aim, which is to achieve maximum commonality across the whole programme, including the radar system. That remains the objective. I do not think that I can add anything more about the radar while we are awaiting the recommendation from Euro Fighter to NEFMA. It is frustrating for the House that we have not had the recommendation. I cannot say more. We must be patient until we get the recommendation.

### Reciprocal Unilateralism

8. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received advocating a defence policy of reciprocal unilaterism.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Ministry of Defence has received no letters on the subject of reciprocal unilaterialism since last year's summer recess. The Government share with our allies a security policy based on strength in defence and readiness for dialogue.

**Mr. Coombs:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that reciprocal unilateralism is really a transparent sleight of hand by certain Opposition Members to defend the indefensible? Does he also agree that it is an attempt to conceal from the British public Labour party defence policies that are not only profoundly dangerous but that have been regarded as unrealistic by the Soviets themselves, and are proof positive that, far from the Labour party being able to run a defence policy for this country, it could not even run a bath?

**Mr. Hamilton:** My hon. Friend is right. I can see no difference between reciprocal unilateralism and the policy that the Opposition adopted at the last election which was robustly rejected by the electorate. What we are talking about is the hook on which the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) finds herself—trying to reconcile her former chairmanship of CND with being on the Labour Front Bench at a time when the party is changing its policy.

**Ms. Short:** Did not the Minister hear the Secretary of State say a few moments ago that NATO had unilaterally got rid of many weapons? The whole world knows that Gorbachev has taken a series of unilateral initiatives. Is it not the case that in so far as we are making progress on disarmament, it has been a process of reciprocal unilateralism?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I think that the hon. Lady is playing with words. We all know what unilateralism means to the Labour party. Labour supporters would get rid of our independent deterrent without expecting anything in return or, if there was something in return, it would be very minimal. They would leave us with nothing when our enemies would still have considerable nuclear capability.

**Mr. Hind:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that he is a multilateralist and, unlike 100 opposition Members, he has no plans to join CND? He will, therefore, have no use for a bilateral, unilateral and multilateral nuclear defence policy, whatever that means.

**Mr. Hamilton:** I certainly confirm that I have no intention of joining CND. It is quite interesting that the whole idea of reciprocal unilateralism was advocated by an American, Mr. Leonard Sullivan. He said, however, that, if the reciprocation did not come through, he believed that nations should go back to rebuilding their nuclear arsenals with up-to-date weapons. I cannot believe that that is what the hon. Lady the Member for Lewisham (Ms. Ruddock) is advocating.

**Dr. Thomas:** Is the Minister not being completely hypocritical, because the Government have just indicated their endorsement of non-reciprocal unilateral short-range modernisation?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Hon. Members are continuing to play with words—*[Interruption]* We have always thought it necessary to keep our weapons up to date, otherwise there would be no point in having them.

**Mr. Baldry:** Does my hon. Friend agree that it is impossible for the Opposition to reconcile reality with the policies of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? The more the Opposition try to do so by their various policy somersaults, the more they demonstrate that they are completely unfit to govern this country, to keep our defences and to maintain the peace.

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is right. I do not believe that anyone in the country will be fooled by the Opposition's performance. Although the Opposition are trying to obscure what they are up to, they will end up leaving people bemused and certainly in no way convinced that they have a reputable policy with which to defend this country.

### US National Security Adviser

9. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet General Scowcroft, United States national security adviser, to discuss defence matters.

**Mr. Younger:** I hope to meet General Scowcroft later in the year to discuss a wide range of matters of mutual interest.

**Mr. Smith:** When the Secretary of State meets General Scowcroft will one of the issues discussed be the seriousness of the West German Government's decision to postpone any decision on the modernisation of Lance until after their general election in two years' time? In such discussions, will the Secretary of State be taking the view of the Americans, who are forcing the pace on this issue, or that of the West Germans, on whose heads those missiles would fall if they ever had the misfortune to be fired?

**Mr. Younger:** I do not think that the West German Government have taken any such decision. There is, indeed, full agreement within the coalition of the West German Government that there should be no third zero, that there will need to be modernisation some time and that Lance will be out of date by about 1995. It is up to each Government to decide how they will react to the proposals which will eventually come before NATO. I cannot, of course, answer in advance for what the view of the West German Government may be.

**Mr. Brazier:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm to General Scowcroft that this Government still regard America as a reliable and faithful ally, unlike many Opposition Members?

**Mr. Younger:** Of course, it is an essential part of NATO's success that the United States and, indeed, Canada are fully integrated as part of the Western Alliance. That is an important part of the security which we all enjoy.

**Mr. Sean Hughes:** If General Scowcroft asks whether this Government take seriously the threat of a Warsaw pact short-range missile attack on NATO fixed assets in Germany, will the Secretary of State answer yes or no?

**Mr. Younger:** I shall reply to the general to any of those questions that he knows, and I know, that we are both members of the same Alliance with exactly the same views on the strategy of that Alliance. There is no difference between us. That is the answer to all the questions that hon. Gentlemen have asked.

### Chemical Weapons

11. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the accuracy of Mr. Gorbachev's statement that the Soviet chemical weapons stockpile is no more than 50,000 tonnes.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Soviet claim that its stockpile of chemical warfare agents is no larger than 50,000 tonnes has not been backed up by any supporting data. We assess that total Soviet chemical warfare stocks are several times higher.

**Mr. Shaw:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there was an unfortunate failure in glasnost when a British team visited Shikhany recently? Does he agree that in those circumstances we have to be extremely wary as to whether the Soviet Union is serious in its arms control negotiations?

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is absolutely right. We have every reason to believe that the facilities at Shikhany have the capability of manufacturing serious quantities of chemical weapons. When our people asked to see the manufacturing facilities they were told that these were commercial, that they would have no interest in looking round them, and they were prevented from doing so. So this certainly was not an example of glasnost.

**Mr. Corbyn:** In calling for the dismantling of Soviet stocks of chemical weapons, what action will the Minister take towards countries such as Iraq which have used chemical weapons in the recent past? Will he ensure that the maximum possible sanctions are taken against them to show our abhorrence of all chemical weapons wherever they are and by whomsoever they are used?

**Mr. Hamilton:** We are, of course, looking for a global ban on chemical weapons and verification will be a critical element of this. This must include all countries that are signatories to that global ban. So the whole business of verification is something on which we will concentrate, not only with regard to the Soviet Union.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson-Smith:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that the NATO and independent assessment of the chemical weapons stockpile of the Soviet Union is not 50,000 tonnes but 300,000 tonnes? Will he also confirm that it is NATO's objective to have a verifiable assessment of chemical stockpiles both in our country and elsewhere?

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is absolutely right. Our estimates of Soviet stocks are very much higher than 50,000 tonnes; 50,000 tonnes is the biggest quantity of chemical weapons held by any country in the world anyway, and our estimates are considerably larger than that. Certainly, we shall need to have a much greater exchange of information, visits and so forth, to be in a clearer position to know how much is held by each side.

**Mr. Boyes:** Including the Soviet Union and the United States of America there are about 20 countries with a chemical weapon capability and the world would undoubtedly be a safer place if there were no chemical weapons at all. Will the Minister assure the House that to

help to achieve this he will do all that he can to encourage the early completion of the treaty on chemical weapons at Geneva, agree to tough verification procedures carried out by the United Nations and encourage stringent economic and trade sanctions against any country that uses chemical weapons? The mass of the people of the United Kingdom want an end to these obscene weapons, and that means more and resolute action by the Government.

**Mr. Hamilton:** As my right hon. Friend has already said, it is one of our priorities that a global ban treaty should be achieved as quickly as possible. Certainly, everything will be done to get the global ban agreed and the verification for which the hon. Gentleman has asked.

**Mr. Patrick Thompson:** Bearing in mind the very large stockpiles of chemical weapons held by the Soviet Union and the fact that the United Kingdom unilaterally gave up its chemical warfare capability back in the 1950s, does this not make nonsense of the policies advocated by the CND and others on any kind of unilateralism? Do we not want to go for worldwide disarmament of chemical weapons?

**Mr. Hamilton:** That is absolutely right. This is an example of unilateral disarmament certainly not working, and it was not reciprocal either.

### Nuclear Weapons

12. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on Her Majesty's Government policy on the circumstances in which United Kingdom nuclear weapons may be used against (1) a non-nuclear state and (2) another nuclear nation.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I am not aware of any such representations.

**Mr. Skinner:** Is not the reason why the Minister is unable to, or will not, answer that question that the Americans will not let him? Is not the truth of the matter that the fingers of George Bush and Daniel Quayle are nearer to Britain's nuclear button than those of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence will ever be?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The question asked was what representations we had received. My answer was that I was not aware of any such representations. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that we have an independent nuclear deterrent and that we have our own control over it.

### Courts-martial

13. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average length of time between charges being made and verdicts being delivered in courts-martial.

**Mr. Neubert:** The length of time elapsing between charges being made and verdicts being delivered varies from case to case. Records are not maintained in a form that would permit accurate calculation of the average time without incurring disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Key:** Will my hon. Friend look at the efficiency of the Army legal service? Can he say why nine months elapsed between my constituent ex-Warrant Officer Newbery's cancellation of release and the time he was charged? He was subsequently acquitted but his life was in ruins.

**Mr. Neubert:** Warrant Officer Newbery was charged not with the theft of £700 but on ten counts of false accounting relating to a period between December 1984 and March 1986. The investigation that preceded the charges being brought required the services of a specialist accountant—a trained royal military police officer. There are few such people and their time is much in demand.

The investigation ultimately resulted in a report of nearly 100 pages, and I am satisfied that there was no undue delay. Once the charges were brought the court martial was set for six or seven weeks later. It was delayed for a further few weeks solely at the request of the defence. Throughout that time, Warrant Officer Newbery remained on full pay, except for one month when he took unpaid leave to attend to his business interests.

### Unreliable Equipment

14. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the annual cost to his Department of unreliable weapons, aircraft and military equipment.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** We attach very considerable importance to reliability of equipment, which is a key feature of our procurement policy. A broad brush estimate of the cost of appropriate elements of scheduled and unscheduled maintenance for the RAF, and for similar work for the Navy and Army, was given as more than £1 billion in a recent Comptroller and Auditor General's report. As the report recognised, that figure does not indicate the amount that could be saved by better reliability, nor does it take account of the extremely rigorous maintenance policy that we operate in order to maintain the highest standards of safety. However, we believe that the costs of unreliability can be reduced. A number of measures have already been taken to bring about improvements in reliability, and more are in hand.

**Mr. Powell:** I thank the Minister for that lengthy reply. Is it not true that £1 billion of taxpayers' money a year is wasted? Is it not also true that the fast jets of the RAF are grounded for 50 per cent. of the time, which is a total waste of taxpayers' money? Is it not about time that the Government did something about that?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman thinks that I gave a negative reply and I hope that, on reflection, he will realise that it was positive. I should point out that on a broad assessment of the value of the aircraft that the RAF flies, unscheduled maintenance comes to only 2 per cent. of that cost—the equivalent to spending £120 a year on the maintenance of a Metro.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher):** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I also attended the closing session of the ozone

layer conference. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

**Mr. Battle:** Does the Prime Minister think that the EC was right to refuse to allow her Secretary of State exemption from the legal requirement to provide pure water? Is not the real protector of the environment in Britain proving to be the EC, not the rhetoric of her Government?

**The Prime Minister:** We are wholly committed to achieving compliance with the EC drinking water directive as soon as is practicable. Obviously, a great deal of capital investment—which Labour cut and we have increased—is involved. For the purpose of accuracy, may I say that we know of no change with the EC from that previously reported? Matters are still under consideration.

**Mrs. Roe:** Will my right hon. Friend find time today during her busy schedule, to consider the press publicity surrounding the libel court case brought by two of my constituents—Mrs. Warby and Mrs. Chastell—against Tesco in relation to an alleged shoplifting offence in 1984, of which they were acquitted in 1985? Will my right hon. Friend urge the Lord Chancellor to respond swiftly to my letter to him asking him to investigate the case and the associated legislation? There is no doubt that there is grave concern amongst the general public that the people who sought to clear their names are suddenly finding themselves liable to pay substantial sums in costs to the unsuccessful party.

**The Prime Minister:** I understand my hon. Friend's concern about this case. However, as she knows, we are totally unable to interfere with a judicial decision. As she will be aware, the costs are at the discretion of the courts. The Lord Chancellor will consider the issues raised by this case. My hon. Friend will know that some of the proposals which he put forward in the Green Paper might be of assistance in such a case.

**Mr. Kinnock:** May I congratulate the Prime Minister on speaking for the whole country on Saturday morning, when she attacked her Secretary of State for the Environment?—*[Interruption.]* When is the Prime Minister going to sack him?

**The Prime Minister:** May I advise the right hon. Gentleman to listen to an interview that I gave to Channel 4, in which I pointed out that our Secretary of State for the Environment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Our?"] My right hon. Friend, ours on this side—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The Prime Minister is replying.

**The Prime Minister:** I pointed out that he is one of the people most fitted for the job—whether it be in architecture, art or in the fact that he is a civil engineer, and therefore knows a good deal more about the subject than the Leader of the Opposition. My right hon. Friend has a superb record. I am so grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the chance to point out that my right hon. Friend is absolutely first class in every way.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Obviously, we are not amused. If the right hon. Gentleman is one of the best Secretaries of State for the Environment that we have ever had, why does the Prime Minister feel it necessary to take charge herself?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is not expected to be amused; he is expected to recognise outstanding talent when he sees it. For his information, I have not taken charge of water privatisation. It is we who have put forward money—[HON. MEMBERS: "We?"] Yes, we on this side of the House. This Government have poured money into investment in water. It was the Labour party that cut it.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the NATO proposals for reductions in conventional forces in Europe which were tabled yesterday by our right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary? Will she wish the Vienna negotiations every success?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I welcome the proposals that were tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend yesterday. They would set equal ceilings for NATO and the Warsaw pact on tanks, artillery and armoured troop carriers. They would require the Warsaw pact to make greater reductions than NATO, because the pact has far higher numbers of these weapons. Even after the unilateral reductions announced by Mr. Gorbachev at the United Nations, the Warsaw pact's superiority will still be of the order of two to one. We shall need to continue to keep weapons—conventional and nuclear—up to date to ensure effective deterrence.

Q2. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Callaghan:** Is the Prime Minister aware that if basic old-age pensions had been uprated in line with earnings since 1979, a single person's pension would now be £48·80 instead of the present £41·15, and a married couple's pension would be £78·15, instead of the present £65·90? Will she therefore instruct the Chancellor, when he produces his Budget speech, to uprate pensions instead of giving away millions of pounds to rich people in tax handouts?

**The Prime Minister:** In the last uprating that the Labour Government did before 1979, they did not uprate pensions in line with earnings. It was left to us to do that. Although that Government put the discretion to do so into their legislation, they introduced a national incomes policy which cut earnings and even cut the real wages of many people in the public services. We have done much better, by keeping pensions uprated in line with the retail prices index.

Q3. **Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Nelson:** Following my right hon. Friend's speech to the closing session of the conference on protecting the ozone layer, would it not be an appropriate time for me to add—and I believe that I share this view with other Conservative Members—my congratulations to my right hon. Friend and the Government on taking the initiative in calling and organising the conference? I hope that my hon. Friend recognises that it has attracted a considerably larger commitment of nations to the Montreal protocol

and has also drawn acceptance that there is a shared environmental responsibility among all nations, not just some.

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The conference was extremely successful and surpassed all expectations. It was stimulating and was enjoyed by everyone present. When we began, 33 nations had signed the Montreal protocol. In the course of the conference, 20 other nations agreed to sign it and 14 more, including China, are considering that seriously. Altogether, it was a very successful operation which made it clear that the co-operation and action of all nations and all peoples is required.

Q4. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Griffiths:** When does the Prime Minister plan to visit Glasgow Royal infirmary?

**The Prime Minister:** Not next week and not immediately.

Q5. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Evennett:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Opposition's attempts to make political capital out of the recent rail tragedies are deplorable and will be deplored by the vast majority of people? Does she agree that people should wait for the report of the independent inquiry before making comments on those tragedies?

**The Prime Minister:** All three recent accidents caused great personal tragedies and great concern to everyone, especially those who work for British Rail. As for trying to find the causes of the accidents, we must await the official inquiries and not attempt, in any way, to postulate the causes. As my hon. Friend knows, I have visited the hospitals in both Clapham and Purley and I very much regret that I shall be unable—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]—under present plans to visit the third one.

**Mr. Ashdown:** Does the Prime Minister agree that if we are to build—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Interruptions take up a lot of time.

**Mr. Ashdown:** Does the Prime Minister agree that if we are to build on the welcome success of the ozone layer conference, worldwide action is needed and that that will require an understanding of the special problems of developing countries in ending the use of CFCs? Will the Prime Minister commit her Government to being equally active in putting together the co-operation of the industrial nations to provide the resources necessary for the Third world countries, especially India and China, so that they can sign the Montreal protocol as soon as possible?

**The Prime Minister:** I indicated that China is thinking of signing the Montreal protocol. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, at present our own industries are finding more ozone-friendly chemicals. They are either ozone-friendly and less damaging than the present CFCs or ozone-benign and eliminate that particular problem altogether. There are few chemical concerns that sell them, so they will have the main sales. There are some factories in other countries that have started on that production, but I see no reason why the substitute chemicals should cost very much more than the present ones. With regard to our multilateral aid programmes through the World Bank and through Europe, we shall have regard to environmental considerations in deciding our priorities. The same will be true of our bilateral aid programme.

Q6. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Patnick:** Will my right hon. Friend welcome the announcement by Guy's hospital that it is considering applying for self-governing status? Will she confirm that self-governing hospitals will remain an integral part of our Health Service?

**The Prime Minister:** I confirm that self-governing hospitals will remain part of the National Health Service. They are not opting out; they are self-governing within the National Health Service, financed by the taxpayer according to the services that they perform. I believe that under that different system of administration doctors and nurses will have more freedom to harness their skills and dedication and to improve services to patients.

**Mr. Michael J. Martin:** Is the Prime Minister aware that the Glasgow train accident took place in my constituency? I find it rather sickening that she is not prepared to visit the Glasgow royal infirmary, where the victims of the crash now are, although she has visited other hospitals with the cameras rolling. Surely she should stop ambulance-chasing and get on with doing something for public safety.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. I have gone to the scene of every accident when it has been possible for me to do so. I was able to go to Piper Alpha, and twice to Lockerbie. I must, however, have regard to my other engagements. I very much regret that on this occasion I have no plans at present to go to Glasgow, but I fully understand the tragedies that have been brought about. As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is on hand to visit patients.

**Mr. Riddick:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that membership of a trade union should be on a purely voluntary basis? If so, does she think that it is about time that we did away with the iniquitous closed shop?

**The Prime Minister:** In principle, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is considering whether any further legislation is advisable.

**Dr. Thomas:** Will the Prime Minister join my colleagues and me in condemning the recent escalation in arson attacks on properties in Wales? Will she ensure

that adequate resources are available to the North Wales and other police forces, so that those responsible for these dastardly crimes are apprehended before anyone is killed?

**The Prime Minister:** I gladly join the hon. Gentleman in condemning those attacks utterly. We shall do all that we can to ensure that the necessary police forces are there.

## Train Accident (Bellgrove)

3.32 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon):** With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the accident that occurred on ScotRail at Bellgrove in Glasgow yesterday. I understand that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) received his copy of the statement late, for which I apologise.

At about 12.50 yesterday the 12.20 Milngavie to Springburn train collided with the 12.2[illegible] Springburn to Milngavie train. A passenger and the driver of one of the trains were killed, and five people with serious injuries were detained in hospital overnight. The two trains collided head-on on the branch line to Springburn near to Bellgrove station. British Rail has not yet completed all its tests of equipment, but stated this morning that all the indications are that the accident, like that at Purley, was caused by human error rather than technical defects.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has visited the scene, as have both my hon. Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment at the Scottish Office. They have already expressed their deepest sympathy to the injured and the bereaved, and our thanks to the local rescue and hospital services who responded so well to the emergency. The House will, I know, want to join me in expressing sympathy to the people of Glasgow.

British Rail is carrying out its own internal inquiry into the circumstances and causes of the accident. An officer from the railway inspectorate attended the scene, and the inspectorate has already started its investigations. I have today appointed Major Anthony King, one of my inspecting officers, to carry out an inquiry into the accident. His inquiry will of course be wholly independent. It will be held in public in Glasgow and the report will be published. I have asked him to report to me as quickly as possible.

I discussed with Sir Robert Reid this morning the problem of trains passing signals at red, to which British Rail and the railway inspectorate have been seeking solutions for some time. BR has had research carried out into the psychology of driver reaction to the automatic warning system and has been looking into technical improvements to make the system more effective. The chairman told me that BR has now authorised a pilot scheme to develop and test a system of automatic train protection which will work with United Kingdom signalling systems.

Meanwhile, the immediate priority must be for the inquiries into each of the three recent accidents to be completed quickly so that prompt action may be taken.

**Mr. David Marshall** (Glasgow, Shettleston): I also wish to express my deepest sympathy to those injured in this tragic disaster and to the families, friends and relatives of those who have been killed. I thank the Secretary of State for the statement, and I add my thanks to the emergency services and those local people who assisted in this very difficult rescue operation.

However, I ask the Secretary of State to confirm the report in the *Daily Telegraph* today that this accident happened on a single track of line which had been coverted from a dual track as an economy measure a few years ago. If that is the case, will he take immediate action to restore all section of single track line to dual track immediately as being in the best interests of public safety?

**Mr. Channon:** I am grateful for what the hon. Member says. As it happens, this accident occurred on the double line, not the single line. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends must not be unfair to the hon. Member; he made a very relevant point. Of course, single track lines, when properly operated, and when the signals work properly—as I hope they did in this case—and are properly obeyed, should be no more dangerous than double track, and they are widely used on British Rail.

**Mr. Michael Martin** (Glasgow, Springburn): I, too, convey my sympathies to the bereaved relatives of the driver and passenger; indeed my sympathies go to a near neighbour of mine who was trapped in the wreckage for more than four hours.

No hon. Member wants a tragedy in his constituency, but it is our job to try to highlight problems which can be avoided. The Minister should take on board the fact that only a few miles further up the track are the railway workshops where his Government took away 3,000 workers, reducing the work force to 300. Also, a depot has been asking for voluntary redundancies. The Government are seeking to get safety on the cheap on the railways, and it is time that the Minister considered doing more about safety. That means getting a work force that is capable of doing the work, not seeking voluntary redundancies and shedding labour.

**Mr. Channon:** I can well understand the hon. Members's feelings, this appalling disaster having occurred near his constituency and that of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), and his concern for those injured and killed in the accident. The House understands that he feels strongly about the matter.

What the hon. Gentleman says about the Springburn works, although an important point, must be irrelevant to the cause of this accident. However, I must refute very strongly what he said about our trying to get safety on the cheap. Safety remains a top priority for British Rail. I have discussed the matter with Sir Robert Reid on many occasions, and he has confirmed to me that it remains a top priority. I have told him that it must remain a top priority.

We are determined to get to the bottom of these accidents so that we can learn the lessons from them and take the appropriate measures.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** (Eastwood): My right hon. Friend has spoken for the whole House, indeed the whole country, in expressing our sympathies for the injured and bereaved and in congratulating the emergency services. As he knows, I represent a large number of commuters on the south side of Glasgow. He also knows that the Glasgow commuter network has an excellent safety record. However, can he reassure all those using that network that urgent checks are being carried out on the safety and signalling systems throughout the network?

**Mr. Channon:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Every step will be taken to maintain the high level of safety to which my hon. Friend has referred, and I can give him the assurances for which he asks.

The important thing with this accident, as indeed with all the others, is to get at the truth as quickly as possible.

*[Mr. Channon]*

Then it will be clear what lessons can be learned from it. I hope that it will not be long before the facts of this accident are established beyond dispute.

**Mr. John Prescott** (Kingston upon Hull, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I offer our deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the two people who died and all those who were injured in yesterday's terrible accident. This is the third fatal crash in three months and it has left us all shocked and dismayed.

Once again, we express our unfailing admiration of the emergency services who responded so swiftly and with such skill and courage. We pay tribute to their professionalism and dedication. We also pay tribute to the way in which ordinary people living nearby once again played their full part in the rescue operation and wanted to do what they could to help.

We welcome the fact that British Rail, as at Clapham and Purley, has already accepted full responsibility for the latest tragic accident. But it is not enough to go on blaming individual human errors, which will always be a feature of such accidents, especially at a time when British Rail has received a report showing that last year alone there were over 700 incidents of trains going through red lights and has apparently failed to do anything about it. I welcome the Secretary of State's statement today that he has had discussions with British Rail about that problem.

Many of the questions that I asked yesterday are relevant today. For example, would it be easier to determine the circumstances that lead to such accidents if trains were fitted with black boxes? Will a study be made of the nature of the injuries sustained at Bellgrove, Purley and Clapham so that we can learn the appropriate lessons about the design of coaches, their seating and internal layout? The Secretary of State failed to respond yesterday. No doubt he was affected by the appalling tragedies with which it has been his misfortune to deal. However, I hope that he will read yesterday's *Hansard* and give a more detailed written response to the questions that I posed.

Again, I ask the Secretary of State whether he will order an independent inquiry into all aspects of safety on British Rail. Such an inquiry would take full account of investment, design, staffing and other factors that contribute to British Rail's safety. It would not replace the other separate and necessary investigations into the individual accidents. Indeed, it would complement them. Why will not the Secretary of State sanction a public inquiry with the broad remit that we have requested so that public confidence can be restored? Yesterday's accident illustrates why such an inquiry is needed.

Today I shall concentrate on one specific aspect arising directly out of the terrible accident and, indeed, arising out of the Secretary of State's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), who asked whether the collision took place on single or double tracks. Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify the position because that is a most important point?

Is the Secretary of State aware that until recently there was a twin rail track for trains entering and leaving Bellgrove station which made a head-on collision impossible? Is he also aware that when British Rail announced that it intended to replace the twin tracks—which I believe are known as a diamond crossing—with a single track, it was warned that safety would be compromised. it was warned that in the event of a human error or signal failure two trains on the same track could collide head-on. Can he tell me exactly why two trains were in the same position on one line?

Can the Secretary of State tell the House whether, if the extra leg of crossing had been there today, the accident would have been prevented? That is the question to which we are asking the Secretary of State to address himself. British Rail's justification for the removal of that extra link, which I believe played a contributory part in the accident, was that the maintenance of the diamond crossing was expensive in terms of costs and manpower. That is an essential point. Yesterday's terrible accident could have been avoided if British Rail had not had in mind the need to meet the Secretary of State's financial targets by reducing costs, thus affecting the level of safety.

**Mr. Channon:** I strongly refute what the hon. Gentleman said in the last part of his question, but I will try to deal with the serious points that he has made. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are all serious."] Yes, they are all serious. That is what I said. If I fail to deal with any of them, I shall write to the hon. Member, as he has asked.

The hon. Member asked me yesterday about the black box. Black boxes might make it easier in certain cases to get information after an accident but would not tend to make trains safer. We will see what happens at the inquiries, but I doubt at this stage whether black boxes would have made any difference. Let us wait and see what happens. Indeed, my answer to a great deal of what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said is that it is a great mistake for hon. Members on either side of the House to prejudge these inquiries until we know exactly what happened.

**Mr. Prescott:** Human error.

**Mr. Channon:** Human error, but whose error is for the inquiry to determine, and that is what British Rail says. I do not prejudge the inquiries.

As to single and double lines, I give the House the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). The accident took place on the double line. Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and his hon. Friends are on to a perfectly fair and pertinent point; there is a piece of single line. There are many places both in the United Kingdom and abroad where there are single tracks just like this one. When they are operated properly, when the signalling works—and that will be established by the inquiry—they are safe. I hope that the hon. Member will not suggest that single track, wherever it is, is dangerous. A higher level of signalling is required on single track than on the diamond crossing. The inquiry will, no doubt, determine whether this was a relevant factor. We must wait and see what happens, why this accident took place and what was the relevance of single or double track. Single track is operated extremely successfully and safely in many parts of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that all of us in Scotland wish to be associated with the words spoken about the bereaved and those who were injured? We welcome the fact that a public inquiry will be held and that all the evidence will become public.

I caution my right hon. Friend against the overtures that he is getting about single-track operations. ScotRail operates single track in many parts of Scotland. In my constituency, the line between Perth and Inverness is single-track and it works most efficiently. We would be very distressed if any changes were made there to the detriment of the service. In recent years ScotRail has improved its services between Perth and Glasgow and there is no question whatever but that the services are better and that times are better. There has been a great improvement. Anyone who uses that line regularly, as I do, will vouch for that.

I also find it distressing and disturbing that every time the Prime Minister visits Scotland she is chastised by Opposition Members, yet on the one occasion when she cannot do so because of her other engagements she is again chastised. It seems that regardless of what one does one cannot be right. Hon. Members forget that there is no Secretary of State for England, but there is a Secretary of State for Scotland, who has visited the site.

**Mr. Channon:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland visited the infirmary this morning.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend also on the important point, which I hope hon. Members on both sides of the House will take, about single rail and the way in which it operates successfully in many parts of the United Kingdom, particularly the line that he mentioned. I am grateful to him for what he has said.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): May I associate myself with the earlier remarks and pass on our condolences and sympathies to the victims and their families? As someone whose father and grandfather were committed railway workers, I more than anyone else know of the awareness of British Rail and ScotRail staff about safety north of the border.

It puzzles me that the Secretary of State says that he does not wish to prejudge the inquiry, and then says that British Rail has stated that this accident is attributable to human error. Will he tell the House who said that this morning? The lesson that we should have learned from the M1 air disaster is that such rumours can fly round very easily. We should wait until a full inquiry has been carried out before we start attributing the accident to human error.

It also strikes me as odd that the railways have to produce a strict 7 per cent. economic return on developments, whereas road funding, when new roads are being developed, can take into account social and safety factors.

Will the Government give us a clear undertaking that any future capital investment in rolling stock will allow British Rail and ScotRail to take safety factors into consideration when replacing rolling stock? It is quite clear that the House is concerned about investment in the railway system. The river Ness rail bridge disaster was another example of lack of investment. Will the Secretary of State respond to the demands for a full general inquiry into British Rail's safety?

**Mr. Channon:** As I have told the House on a number of occasions, we must get to the bottom of the recent accidents to discover the causes and take immediate action when we know what is required. There has been considerable investment in ScotRail and there have been all sorts of improvements at stations such as Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley and by Strathclyde PTE in electrification and rolling stock. *[Interruption.]* I shall answer all the points that the hon. Gentleman raised. He will be interested to know that new rolling stock is due on that line.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about what British Rail has said. It was not said by me. I believe that it was said by counsel to British Rail to the Hidden inquiry this morning, but I shall have to check that. I am merely quoting what counsel for British Rail said.

I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that we do not want to prejudge the result of the inquiry. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has asked me a question and I am doing my best to answer it.

I shall not go into the question of funding for roads. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, although there are superficial differences, no worthwhile investment proposal by British Rail in the past 10 years has been turned down by my predecessors or me. I see no reason why that should not continue to be the case.

**Mr. Conal Gregory** (York): I am sure that the whole House joins my right hon. Friend in expressing sympathy to the families of the bereaved. As there has been a series of railway accidents, while my right hon. Friend is correct in setting up independent inquiries, will he consider initiating a separate signals inspectorate which would be a completely independent body, to approve British Rail when it undertakes important signalling matters? Not only would that be a major step towards public safety and confidence in our great British railway industry, but it would be one step towards denationalisation and an appropriate division, as we have in the airlines between the Civil Aviation Authority and the airways. We have had such a spate of accidents that nothing less will restore confidence.

**Mr. Channon:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know of the great importance of British Rail to his constituency, and his deep interest in the industry. His suggestion of a signals inspectorate must be relevant to Mr. Hidden's Clapham inquiry. I suspend judgment until we know the result of that inquiry, but my hon. Friend has raised an important point which needs to be considered.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): The Minister mentioned the pilot study. When will it begin? What will it cost? How long will it last? How quickly can he get the results? Will he give a guarantee that if the pilot study is successful there will be no question of sufficient money being withheld from British Rail to apply it to the entire track?

**Mr. Channon:** I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the answer to all those questions. Given his experience, he will understand that it is a very complicated matter and no system can be installed quickly. In many ways, United Kingdom signalling systems are more advanced than many continental systems, and no systems are available which could be applied to British Rail immediately. They have to be tailored to our signalling system. There has been preliminary work for some time and now we have to move to a pilot scheme, as British Rail wishes, and as I think is a very good idea.

**Mr. Hughes:** When will it start?

**Mr. Channon:** The work is going on now, but I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an answer this afternoon as to when the scheme will begin. I do not want to mislead the House as it is an extremely complex matter.

**Mr. Jeremy Hanley** (Richmond and Barnes): Although the three recent accidents were tragic and regrettable, and we must learn from the results of the inquiries, does my right hon. Friend agree that 15 people are killed on the roads every day, and that he should reassure the public that travelling by rail is one of the safest modes of transport?

**Mr. Channon:** I agree with my hon. Friend about the tragic losses in road accidents every day. His figure is approximately right. In spite of the tragedies in recent weeks, rail travel remains a very much safer form of transport than practically any other.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): On behalf of my hon. Friends in the nationalist parties, I extend sympathy and best wishes to the families and friends of the injured, and in particular, our sympathies to the families of the bereaved.

Reverting to the question raised by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), is there not an element of a public relations exercise about this when the Secretary of State gives a throwaway line in a statement of great importance but cannot give the House accurate details of the pilot scheme? That is surely to hold out false hopes that there can be early action to improve the signalling system. May we have from the Secretary of State a commitment that when evidence of the need to upgrade equipment and rolling stock is brought forward from the public inquiries, he, like the Secretary of State for Energy after the Piper Alpha inquiry, will be prepared to say that, when safety recommendations are made, no expense will be spared in implementing them?

**Mr. Channon:** I assure the hon. Lady that, as I have said on many occasions, safety is our top priority. We shall study the reports of the inquiries and take appropriate action. I see no reason why the House should doubt me on that. If it does, it will have a chance of finding out very shortly.

As to the hon. Lady's question concerning automatic train protection, and whether, as she says, it is a so-called PR exercise, it would only be a PR exercise if I tried to mislead the House and to pretend that there was a quick and easy solution. I am giving the House the best information that I have at present. It is an extremely complicated matter. It is very difficult to install protection systems, which are not exactly comparable to systems used in other parts of Europe. Work is urgently progressing, and a pilot scheme will come forward as quickly as possible. If the hon. Lady will write to me or put down questions, I shall make sure that she is kept in touch.

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): I add my condolences and sympathy for the relatives of those who were killed or injured, and offer my congratulations to the emergency services.

How many times will the Secretary of State have to come to the Dispatch Box, how many accidents will have to occur, and how many lives must be lost before the right hon. Gentleman will admit that we are experiencing not a series of specific incidents but a growing general pattern of accidents? How can the right hon. Gentleman properly investigate that pattern of accidents unless he establishes a general inquiry into the safety of British Rail, including aspects such as investment, schedules, rosters, the drive for productivity, and cost reductions? In the absence of such a general inquiry, how can the right hon. Gentleman be so sure that the rundown in cash, increases in productivity, cutbacks and cost reductions have not affected British Rail's safety standards? How many times must human error be a factor before the Secretary of State accepts that pressures may be causing that human error? Will the present inquiries include an examination of schedules and of the pressures that are placed on drivers?

I ask the Secretary of State to clarify what appeared to be a contradiction between his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and a later answer? Will he tell the House straight whether the accident occurred on a two-way track that was previously a one-way track? If so, was that change made for reasons of economy and cost saving?

**Mr. Channon:** On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I do not think that I misled the House—certainly I did not mean to do so. The accident occurred on a two-way track, beyond a one-way track.

**Dr. Reid:** But was it previously a one-way track?

**Mr. Channon:** No, it was not. It is a two-way track.

**Dr. Reid:** The right hon. Gentleman has not answered my question.

**Mr. Channon:** I do not want to mislead the House. I am doing my best to clarify the situation, and I do not want to make matters worse. I have given the hon. Gentleman an exact and accurate answer. If he does not think that I have, no doubt he will write to me, and I shall try to clarify the matter further.

As to pressures and all the other factors the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and which may occur in such situations, the inspector can take all relevant matters into account. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if there is a link between all the accidents, that will become clear as a result of the inquiries and we can then take appropriate steps. As to investment, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that, this year alone, investment in our railways is 30 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1978.

**Mr. Gary Waller** (Keighley): In view of recent claims and allegations, and in view of the last question, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is very wrong to reach conclusions about patterns in accidents whose causes may prove to be very different? Also, is it not a fact that, despite recent tragic accidents, rail is, by and large, one of the safest surface modes of transport—perhaps 15 times safer than travelling by road?

In view of the many questions that have been asked about expenditure, will my right hon. Friend confirm that not only is spending at a very high level—and, incidentally, unrelated to the size of the PSO grant—but that, in the next four years, British Rail's expenditure, including that on safety, will rise very considerably?

**Mr. Channon:** I can give my hon. Friend all the assurances for which he asks. I agree with him that we should wait for the result of the inquiry so that the House

will be in an informed position rather than that hon. Members should draw conclusions long before there is evidence to support them.

My hon. Friend is right in saying that rail remains one of the safest forms of transport.

On the question of capital investment, my hon. Friend will be interested to know that it is £560 million a year, and will increase to about £755 million a year. It is already 30 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1978.

**Mr. Bob McTaggart** (Glasgow, Central): May I join other hon. Members and express my sincere thanks to the emergency services and indeed the volunteers who were involved after this accident? I extend my sympathy to all those who were involved in it.

I agree with the Secretary of State that there is a pressing need for the inquiry's findings to be reported as soon as possible. But surely the Secretary of State must be aware that the public have the right to expect the highest possible level of service and safety in the public transport system, although at the moment in their mind's eye the safety requirements are seen to be damaged or expendable in the case of obtaining the cheapest possible public transport system. Will the Secretary of State undertake to ensure that the safety of the public is uppermost in any plans for an integrated public transport system?

**Mr. Channon:** I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's feelings and that he and his constituents are deeply concerned about this accident and rail transport safety in Glasgow. I cannot accept, however, what he says about safety; nor can I accept what he says about economies being made in this way. The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that basic costs of these lines, including those provided by Strathclyde, have risen in real terms between 1984 and 1989 from £195 million to about £205 million. So far from going down, they are increasing.

**Mr. Brian Wilson** (Cunninghame, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that his understandable pleas for the suspension of any attempts to attribute responsibility for these terrible tragedies would be convincing if he stopped doing exactly that himself? He said that all the indications are that this accident, as with that at Purley, was caused by human error rather than technical defects. May I suggest—although I hope that the right hon. Gentleman makes no more of these excursions—that he should impose upon himself the same self-denying ordinance that he asks of others?

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge the simple reality that, where there was previously a diamond crossing with two cross-over points to prevent collisions, there is now a single crossing? When the Secretary of State met Sir Robert Reid this morning and while he was talking about the problems of drivers going through signals at red, did he also ask what part diamond crossings play in railway safety? Did he ask why this particular diamond crossing was removed? If the answer proves to be that it was removed solely on grounds of economy, will he accept that there is something very wrong with our priorities in the way that we run our railways? Will the right hon. Gentleman at least have the humility to consider the possibility that cuts kill?

Will the Secretary of State please talk to railway workers as well as management to get an authentic grass roots view of what is being done to our railway system? I believe that he will find widespread concern that in the run-up to privatisation, which he currently regards as his personal responsibility, corners are being cut, and especially safety corners.

**Mr. Channon:** The hon. Gentleman grossly exaggerates the situation. Although he says that cuts kill, I have already told the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) that basic expenditure has risen in this area. It has not been reduced.

The question of single lines and diamond crossings is very important. Diamond crossings have their own problems of maintenance and safety. Indeed, every part of the railway has its own particular problems. It is a mistake for any hon. Member to say at this stage that single-line systems are unsafe. It is well known that large parts of the railway network have single lines. When they are operated properly, there is no reason to assume that they are in any way unsafe.

On the point that the hon. Gentleman makes about not imputing blame, I have not imputed blame to anyone. I have merely quoted what British Rail said. It is extremely important for the general public to realise that there are no technical defects on this line. Otherwise they would have every right to be worried about that and deserve reassurance. The Opposition have failed to make that important point.

## Standing Committee F

4.5 pm

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I see from the Order Paper that you have appointed the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means as an additional chairman of Standing Committee F in respect of the Social Security Bill. I have read in the press—and perhaps you could let the House know whether this is the case—that Government Whips strongly prevented the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), a member of the Conservative party, from chairing that Committee at certain times because they said that the hon. Gentleman had signed an early-day motion.

There are several points on which I should like you to give your view, Mr. Speaker. First, relating to the impartiality of the Chairmen's Panel, is it suggested that because an hon. Member has signed an early-day motion when that hon. Member is on the Chairmen's Panel he or she is not impartial? That would be an insult to the hon. Member concerned. I know that the opposition did not come from you, Mr. Speaker——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman there. It is within my discretion who is appointed to be the Chairman of a Standing Committee. I took into account several factors concerning Chairmen of Standing Committee F and I have appointed for this day one of the Deputy Speakers. I cannot go further than that.

**Mr. Winnick :** May I ask you a question, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** No, I do not believe the hon. Gentleman can do so.

**Mr. Winnick:** Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** No. I shall deal with the statutory instrument motion.

### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the draft Evidence in Divorce Actions (Scotland) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

## Early-day Motion 523

4.6 pm

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is this a different point of order?

**Mr. Skinner:** Yes, it is. You, Mr. Speaker, probably noticed early-day motion 523 on yesterday's Order Paper. It had little political significance as it congratulated the Prime Minister on the birth of her grandchild. I thought that I would give it some political significance by tabling an amendment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman should not refer in the Chamber to a decision that I have taken regarding the Order Paper.

**Mr. Skinner:** I did not know that you had taken a decision, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have.

**Mr. Skinner:** That explains it. I went to the Table Office. Probably we were trying to do the same thing, little knowing that we were working together, you and I. When I got there, I thought, "I shall amend this thing by saying that I hope that the"——

**Mr. Speaker:** No; the hon. Gentleman must not mention in the Chamber what his amendment might have been.

**Mr. Skinner:** Our amendment.

**Mr. Speaker:** I know that the hon. Gentleman and I work very closely together, but let us leave it at that.

## Control of Litter (Fines)

4.8 pm

**Mr. Simon Burns** (Chelmsford): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to give local authorities the power to impose on-the-spot fines for litter offences and to make retail outlets and other premises responsible for the cleanliness of the public footpaths outside their premises; and for connected purposes.

The background to the national problem of litter is well known and widely debated. It is a self-inflicted problem caused by a minority of thoughtless, selfish litter louts who cause a great deal of damage to the environment in which we live and to the quality of life. Sadly, this country is fast becoming the dustbin of Europe and the image that we present to visitors and tourists should fill us all with shame.

The problem can be put in perspective by realising that enough paper and card is thrown away each year to afforest an area the size of Wales. Incidentally, politicians who are concerned for the environment should remember, particularly at election time, that we add to the weight of litter with a plethora of election literature. I trust that Members of the SLD in particular will bear that in mind in 1991-92.

Local authorities, public-spirited individuals and central Government are trying to tackle the issue, but their efforts are hampered by the sheer scale of the problem. For example, Chelmsford borough council has an excellent ad hoc "Cleaner Chelmsford Committee" which, under the leadership of the mayor, Councillor Philip Firth does an excellent job, but its efforts are not so well rewarded as they should be because of the lack of effective legislation to back up what is done with meaningful penalties and deterrents against litter louts. Despite all its good intentions, the Litter Act 1983 is fast becoming a national joke. Between 1984 and 1988, 5,901 people were found guilty of offences under the Act, but the number of people successfuly prosecuted represents but a tiny proportion of the problem throughout the nation. Furthermore, no deterrents have been built up because the average fine imposed by the courts was a mere £32 compared with a statutory maximum of £400. In short, litter louts realise that the overwhelming majority of them can offend with impunity. The chance of getting caught is minuscule and even if they are caught the punishment is paltry.

My Bill is designed to launch an effective attack on litter louts and to show them that society means business in controlling them and reducing the problem. To that end, my Bill has three aims. The first is to extend to all local authorities the power that Westminster city council took for itself last year in a private Bill to enable specially designated local authority employees to impose on-the-spot litter fines on people caught offending. At present, every local authority watching the Westminster experience and wishing to have that power in its own area will have to go through the procedure of launching a private Bill to seek the power. Sweeping away that problem and giving every local authority that power is therefore the first aim of my Bill.

Designated officials of councils—Westminster has between 50 and 60—will then have power, on seeing people throwing down litter in the streets or on the roads, to request them to pick it up and put it in a refuse bin or take it home with them. Should they refuse, they will get a fixed penalty ticket, similar to a parking ticket. They will have 14 days in which to pay the fine, with the option of going to the magistrates' court to plead the case and show why they should not have to pay the fine. In the first six months of the Westminster scheme, up to December last year, 590 people were apprehended. Of that number, all but three picked up their litter and put it in a rubbish bin. One person is being prosecuted. It is difficult to proceed against the two others because one lives in Hong Kong and the other gave a wrong address.

The second purpose of my Bill is to adopt a scheme that is common on the continent. Shops, fast food outlets and banks—particularly banks with cash dispensing machines—would be responsible for their shop fronts and the pavements in front of their premises. At present, one has only to visit any area of any town in Britain late at night, particularly near fast food outlets, to see the mess and wanton disregard for the environment. Fish and chip bags, fast food plastic packages and so forth are discarded for the local authority to clear away. The shopkeeper as well as the individual should have a moral responsibility to ensure that our cities, towns and villages are kept clean. That is why my Bill would impose a duty on the keepers of such premises to keep their fronts clear of litter.

Thirdly, my Bill would encourage—I say no more than "encourage" because it would be difficult in law to do more—manufacturers to bring back the disposable deposit scheme that was popular up to 20 or 30 years ago. That would be reintroduced on bottles and cans so that when people brought bottles of lemonade or whatever, they would have an incentive to return the containers to the point of sale and to obtain a refund. There would also be an incentive for youngsters to add to their pocket money by picking up that sort of rubbish and returning it to shops, thus cleaning up behind those who do not bother to get the refund and continue to discard bottles and cans. That would enhance our recycling programmes because more cans, bottles and glass would be collected.

Those are the three key points of my Bill, which would set an example for the way forward and give local authorities the power to build up deterrents against litter louts, who would no longer discard their rubbish with impunity. Areas would soon gain a reputation for being tough with litter louts. By that means we would enhance the centres of our cities, towns and villages and improve the quality of life generally.

I ask Members in all parts of the House to support my Bill. If through lack of parliamentary time, as only six or seven months of the Session remain, all stages in both Houses cannot be completed. I urge the Government to take careful note of my Bill and what is said by its supporters—the public in general, local authorities and people with a special interest in improving the environment—and to introduce a Bill of their own. That would increase the reputation that the Government are justifiably establishing for being concerned with the environment. It would show that they are not merely whingeing about the problem but are actively doing something to solve it and thereby providing a better future for our children.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. David Wilshire and Mrs. Teresa Gorman.

### CONTROL OF LITTER (FINES)

Mr. Simon Burns accordingly presented a Bill to give local authorities the power to impose on-the-spot fines for litter offences and to make retail outlets and other premises responsible for the cleanliness of the public footpaths outside their premises; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 May and to be printed. [Bill 92.]

## ESTIMATES DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

## SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1988-89

## CLASS IV, VOTE 3

*[Relevant document: The First Report from the Agriculture Committee of Session 1988-89 on salmonella in eggs (House of Commons Paper No. 108-I).]*

# Egg Industry

*Motion made, and Question proposed,*

That a supplemental sum, not exceeding £1,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on market support, grants and loans for capital and other improvements, support for agriculture in special areas and compensation to sheep producers, animal health, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection, and certain other services.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I remind the House that today's debate on class IV, vote 3 of the Estimates is limited to the subject of assistance to the egg industry, in accordance with the recommendation of the Liaison Committee, whose report was agreed to by the House on 28 February.

4.10 pm

**Mr. Jerry Wiggin** (Weston-super-Mare): It is a rare privilege for the Chairman of a Select Committee to be able to introduce a report for debate on the Floor of the House; to be able to do so within a week of its publication must be almost unique. I fully appreciate that this subject has received more than its fair share of attention in recent weeks, for reasons that the House well understands, and not unrelated to the fact that in the course of the last three weeks at least one Supply day has been devoted to similar issues. Nevertheless, by the nature of things, the press can, and does give only a modest amount of space to our findings.

I hope that those who have read the report in full will appreciate the comprehensive way in which we have sought to cover this limited subject. We have deliberately confined our study to salmonella in eggs, even though many witnesses sought to divert us to the wider territory not only of salmonella in poultry generally but of the whole question of food safety.

Because of the nature of the emergency, the widespread concern expressed in the media, and the catastrophic effect on the industry, we felt that it was extremely urgent to produce our report, together with the evidence that went towards it, as soon as possible. We claim no records, but I doubt whether many Select Committee reports of the substance of this one have been produced in such a short time. Indeed, had it not been for the delay occasioned by the illness of a key witness, we might have been able to report even earlier. We had to invite evidence from all interested parties and leave them a reasonable reply period, which, incidentally, overran the Christmas holiday.

With a number of members of the Committee serving on Standing Committees, and some representing constituencies in regions as far away as Northern Ireland and Scotland, it was really practical for us to meet only on Wednesdays. Although this allows proper consideration of

the written evidence in preparation for oral sessions, it may seem from the outside somewhat dilatory. Nevertheless, once we had completed our oral sessions we were able to consider the draft report in the course of the next two weeks, and we finally published on 1 March, only one day behind our original estimate of the end of February.

I must pay tribute to the Clerk, Mr. David Robson, and his staff in the Select Committee office—actually, only two assistants and one hard-pressed secretary—who have to deal not only with the study in hand but with the other peripheral business, which is quite extensive.

Conscious of the fact that in this whole matter there was a considerable element of scientific evidence, we appointed as our special advisers Dr. Michael Whitehead, formerly head of the public health laboratory service, and Mr. Don Haxby, a former president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. We could not have asked for, or received, greater help than we were given by those two gentlemen. I am delighted to learn that Dr. Whitehead will be advising another Select Committee in the near future —with a glowing reference from ourselves.

Naturally, I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food cannot be with us today, but I fully understand the extreme importance of his presence in Brussels, where he is negotiating the price review. Sad as his absence from this House may be, I have to say that in the national interest his presence there is probably more important. I am certain that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, who occupies a most important position in the Government, will be an excellent substitute. I know that his day-to-day work on this matter has been extensive, and we could not ask for better guidance from the Front Bench.

I appreciate that the Government will wish, at a future time, to respond in full detail to our conclusions and recommendations. However, I hope that the Minister, when he intervenes, will be able to give a clear indication of the Government's initial reaction to our report, particularly as many of our recommendations are already in train. Indeed, the Ministry of Agriculture has been claiming that no fewer than 17 measures have been introduced to help to remedy this difficult problem. While it is quite clear that many of those were in preparation before 3 December, the Ministry, too, must have been listening to the evidence that we received, and to the tone of our questions, to have responded in such an across-the-board manner and so promptly. I hope also that the Government will see the time scale for their response as being rather shorter than the normal three months, in view of the widespread public concern about this matter, as well as the very special efforts that my Committee has made to produce its report as soon as possible.

Predictably enough, the press has described the report in various ways, but most of the newspapers have concentrated on those to whom we ascribe blame. I hope that those who have read the report in its entirety will recognise that it is much more balanced than that. Generally, it acknowledges that the Government are on the right track in the way in which they are trying to control salmonella, but it has to be said that some of the measures have been taken too slowly—a criticism that we have set out in detail.

If our report has put the Government under the spotlight, I believe that today's debate puts Select Committees as a whole very much in the same glare. It is obvious, to me at least, that the public, and even journalists, who should know better, are still not clear as to how Select Committees should operate and what resources and information are open to them.

As I see it, it is our role to monitor past decisions of the Government, particularly those involving public money. This is a natural extension of the right of the House in relation to the Government of the day. There are some, of course, who see us in the same light as Select Committees of the United States Congress. Those people fail to observe the very substantial difference, which is simply that Ministers in the United States Administration are not members of the elected Houses and cannot answer questions there. The American Select Committees, therefore, provide a connection and an arm of Government that are neither necessary not desirable in this country.

One journalist, who commented that we as a Select Committee should have been better informed about this affair during last summer, fails to recognise that at no time does a Select Committee have privileged access to Government decisions or papers or to ministerial decisions —nor do I believe that it should. We are a post-mortem body, the pathologists of Parliament, if I may put it that way. It is up to us to judge what has taken place in the past and to cast our judgment where we will. On top of that, it is not unreasonable to say that, having made a criticism, it is only right and positive to make suggestions as to what should be done by way of correction. I hope that the House will find that in our report we have tried to adopt that principle.

This is a classic case of a Minister sparking off an incident encompassing not only the mass media but a large and important industry, as well as touching that most sensitive nerve—the health of the general public. The Government sought to respond, yet even the most partisan observer must acknowledge that the matter had reached a stage of substantial national interest in a very short time. Government money of a potentially serious order was involved; two Government Departments had direct responsibility; the egg producers and the food industry were thoroughly alarmed; and individual members of the public were left bemused, confused, and frightened. The matter was directly the responsibility of the Agriculture Select Committee, and the announcement that we proposed to investigate the matter was greeted with considerable relief by all the interested parties—anyhow, those outside the Government—who recognised that we provided a forum in which the matter could be considered reasonably, with all the information available.

I do not pretend that our report is definitive. No doubt there are questions that we failed to ask, and answers that we misinterpreted. However, the report was the product of a careful examination of the issues in which party politics played little or no part. Commentators are sometimes surprised that committees of politicians with very different views can reach unanimous conclusions. I do not share this scepticism. In the case of this Select Committee, and this report, the conclusions are based on the evidence. The more evidence we heard, the more certain we became of some of our conclusions. We received a comprehensive and widespread selection of written evidence, and further questioned a number of key witnesses.

*[Mr. Jerry Wiggin]*

Until now, unofficial comments from the Government have been somewhat limited, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has said that he intends to take parts of the report seriously. It is interesting to observe the reactions of interested parties, all of whom, so far, have concluded that it is an excellent report, except the part that criticises them. I must repeat that the whole report was considered with the greatest care by the Committee and its final version was unanimously accepted.

I have been concerned by the innuendo that there should be some bias in the report, simply because there happens to be a majority of one Conservative in the composition of the Committee. My hon. Friends and I are not noted for our hostility to the Government—quite the reverse—so I ask Ministers, even if they are not in agreement with our findings, to acknowledge the integrity of the evidence-gathering and evidence-sifting that we have been through.

In that context, I noted the remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who described our reaction to his part in the matter as "ridiculous". Anyone who has been in active politics for any time occasionally gets it wrong or is misquoted in the press. We all know the immense difficulty that retraction or correction presents and, even with the wisdom of hindsight, I acknowledge the problem. What is clear, however, is that the reaction of the Government at the time did not produce the desired result. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will ponder that section of the report as carefully as any other.

Interested as the press may be in the safety or otherwise of eggs, we all have no illusions as to why our investigation attracted such intense attention from the press. It was a matter of great relief to me when my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) agreed to attend a hearing of the Committee. Whether the public believes our report or not, we would have seriously lacked credibility if we had not been able to question her in person. While she maintained that there was little that she could add to the total sum of our knowledge—and her evidence did little to dispel that—she certainly corroborated our impression of events leading from her statement on 3 December, and for that alone her presence was merited.

Many hon. Members took the view at the time that there was a substantial constitutional point at stake. If an hon. Member who had herself been a member of a Select Committee in the past, and a former member of a Government committed to assisting Select Committees, were to refuse to appear before us, how much harder would it be for Select Committees which wished to compel reluctant strangers to attend. The House absolutely insists on its right to question Ministers, and I do not believe it would be well understood by anyone inside or outside the House if former Ministers were to rely on some claim of privilege that precluded them from examination, particularly when the matters concerned referred to their time as office holders. However, there is no sanction on anyone who refuses to answer questions, although the Committee is entitled to draw its own conclusion from such reluctance.

I recall describing the experience of resigning from office as being "extremely hurtful". I am sure that my hon. Friend has suffered considerably. I am personally grateful to her for avoiding a constitutional dilemma for the House, and for her kind words to me personally, which I appreciated.

Now that the Committee has produced its report, which I hope deals with the important issues involved in the affair, I would not seek to bore the House by going over it again paragraph by paragraph. Nevertheless, it is certain that the newspapers' obsession with criticism obscured the far more important issues of establishing an answer to some of the questions that were being asked. Therefore, by way of a summary, we set out what we believed were the six most important questions and our answers to them, extracted from the main body of the report.

Clearly, the point to which we wish to give most emphasis concerns the safety of eggs. It was our very firm conclusion that normally healthy people should feel no cause for concern. I will read to the House the answer to our question, "How safe are eggs?" We said:

> "The risks to individual consumers cannot be quantified exactly, but given that the likelihood of an egg being infected with salmonella is very small, and the likelihood of the infection not being destroyed by cooking is even smaller, normally healthy people should feel no cause for concern. Those who consume uncooked eggs or uncooked egg dishes should be aware that these carry a slight risk. Care should be taken to cook eggs thoroughly for vulnerable groups, in line with the Chief Medical Officer's advice."

I hope that that will give comfort to the many millions who every day eat eggs and who look upon them as a cheap, reasonable and safe food, and will also put the market back where it belongs in due course.

I should like to say a word about the role which some television programmes played. Ever ready to pour petrol on the flames, they sought and found two individuals who were ready to spread alarm and despondency with selected facts and figures. The opportunity that was presented to Dr. Lang, a social psychologist who runs the London Food Commission, was not lost on him. Television could scarcely complete a programme on the subject without his gloomy tidings and instructions on hygiene. His business is propaganda. If I say that his organisation was originally funded by the Greater London council when it was led by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), I do not think I need say more.

Professor Lacey, whose credentials as professor of microbiology at Leeds university are substantially more relevant, was able with almost theatrical statements to use his position and knowledge to considerable effect, again owing to the endless exposure which his woeful tale obtained, particularly on television. It would be too much to expect that any balanced view should be broadcast, but I wonder how widespread the distress caused by these two gentlemen must have been among the less well informed members of the public, to say nothing of the many thousands of egg producers and others who lost substantial sums of money as a result of the crisis.

The news that bits of dead chicken were being fed to chickens drew pictures of appalling cannibalism that clearly revolved everyone. We examined the matter in detail and found that no less than 1·25 million tonnes of animal products every year are ground, boiled, dried and processed to provide a highly nutritious form of animal protein, very little of which is used in laying rations. While it is true that it can be infected with salmonella, there is no

evidence that that was the cause of any outbreaks, nor indeed would any ordinary person be particularly repelled by the substance, which is simply a brown coloured powder, except possibly by its rather rich smell.

I hope to be able to claim that my Committee has enhanced the reputation of Select Committees, has produced a balanced report which contains positive suggestions for improvement that will be informative to the House and the general public, and will uphold the principle that the House will be vigilant and, if necessary, critical of the Government in the interests of the welfare of all the people.

4.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder):** As my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) has already said, my right hon. Friend the Minister is in Brussels taking part in crucial negotiations and has asked me to apologise for his absence from the debate. I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend's balanced speech and I express personal admiration for the clear, fluent style used by the authors of his Committee's report. We should also recognise that the Committee worked against deadlines with great speed.

I stress that my speech today is not the Government's official response to the Select Committee report. That will come soon, once we have absorbed the report's interpretation of events and completed our analysis of those recommendations not already executed or known publicly to be in the pipeline. The 17 measures which the Government have already announced to tackle salmonella cover many of the Committee's recommendations. Indeed, as my hon. Friend knows, 15 of the 17 measures had been decided on and disclosed to the Committee before its hearings began.

Soon after my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare decided to inquire into the new and growing problem of salmonella in eggs, the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food submitted a joint memorandum to his Committee. That was, and remains, a key document because it sets out at length and in detail the international nature and prevalence of salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 and the action being taken by the British Government to combat it. Paragraph 16 of the submission says:

"There is no other zoonosis as complex in its epidemiology and control as salmonellosis. Epidemiological patterns differ greatly between geographical areas depending on climate, population density, land use, farming practices, food harvesting and processing technologies, and consumer habits. Moreover, the biology of salmonella serovars differs so widely that discussions on salmonellosis, salmonella infections or salmonella contamination are inevitably complex."

Those words were not written by a Minister or Government official—they were plucked as a direct quotation from the World Health Organisation's 1988 expert committee report. So if anyone here or outside still contends that this complex issue can be tackled by sloganising or simple solutions based on magic potions they should cast aside their misleading thoughts and concentrate on the facts so starkly highlighted by the World Health Organisation.

Definitive identification of affected flocks can be achieved only by isolation of the organisms in laboratories. There is no rapid, simple blood test anywhere in the world to identify live birds with salmonella enteritidis phage type 4. Consequently, there can be no guarantees that a flock is free from salmonella. Salmonella organisms are present and persistent all around us in the environment and there is no sound method of eliminating them from laying houses. The Government's chief veterinary officer has always argued that even a wholesale slaughter policy, followed by thorough cleansing and disinfecting of sheds, would not guarantee that subsequent flocks would be salmonella free. The Select Committee acknowledged in paragraph 30 that

"experts agree that salmonellas are impossible to eradicate altogether. They are ubiquitous organisms: reservoirs of infection exist in all birds and animals, and in humans."

**Mr. Martyn Jones** (Clywd, South-West): What the Minister is saying is, of course, true for all salmonella species, but it must surely be possible to eliminate one particular type—for example, salmonella enteritidis phage type 4, which was the one that the Committee mainly considered—as, indeed, salmonella gallinorum and pullorum have been eliminated from flocks because they are pathogenic to chickens.

**Mr. Ryder:** I have great respect for the hon. Gentleman's scientific knowledge and background, but no country has found the answer to that form of salmonella. If such an answer existed, clearly it would be deployed. There have been ways of detecting other forms of salmonella, but not enteritidis phage type 4. As soon as an answer is found anywhere in the world, the hon. Gentleman can be certain that the British Government will be the first to deploy it in chicken houses.

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): Following my hon. Friend's response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), does he agree that other salmonellae are also capable of causing food poisoning in humans? Even if we eliminate enteritidis phage type 4—as we hope in due course to do—we shall still need the general vigilance and the precautions set out in our report to reduce to a minimum the risk of food poisoning.

**Mr. Ryder:** My hon. Friend is right. There are nearly 2,000 different forms of salmonella. Indeed, salmonella typhimurium—the form of salmonella which affected the House of Lords last year—is in many ways even more serious than salmonella enteritidis phage type 4. Moreover, far from being unique to Britain, reservoirs also exist in countries such as the United States, France, Eire, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, and some reported cases of salmonella in Britain have been from people laid low immediately after returning from business or holiday trips abroad.

As soon as the Government received confirmation last summer from doctors, scientists and vets of a serious problem linking food poisoning in humans and salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 in eggs, action was taken. An immediate and intensive review was carried out by doctors, scientists and vets. Joint meetings were held between the Department of Health, the public health laboratory service, the Ministry and representatives of the egg industry. The joint working party on salmonella and eggs drew up a report on specific areas where research was required. That report was made available to the House in January. The short-term research that it recommended was commissioned as soon as the working group identified the needs. We did not wait for the report to be finalised.

*[Mr. Ryder]*

Other committees were established at official level, and work was accelerated in order to forward firm recommendations to Ministers.

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): The report states that in February last year the Hull medical officer of health advised hospitals in his area not to give under-boiled or raw eggs to patients, but it was not until July that the Government conveyed that recommendation to the National Health Service generally.

**Mr. Ryder:** The doctors, scientists and vets who advised the Government did not have conclusive confirmation until last summer that there was a serious problem linking food poisoning in humans and salmonella enteritidis phage type 4.

My right hon. Friend the Minister informed the Select Committee in his own evidence that Ministers received recommendations from officials in November. He stressed that we not only decided to act on them straight away but that we decided at once to go further by introducing extra measures which included giving statutory effect to significant sections of the codes of practice. In parallel with those decisions, I met representatives of the industry to repeat to them that Ministers took the problem of salmonella very seriously and that we looked to the industry to do so as well. We also urged it, as a matter of urgency, to carry out the action in the codes of practice. I explained to the industry that the safety of the food chain was paramount—one outbreak of salmonella was one too many—and that public confidence in the industry would dissolve unless it was seen to be acting at the same time as the Government began announcing their comprehensive package of measures.

There is a postcript to the story of my meeting with the industry. Last Wednesday evening, after publication of the Select Committee report, I watched the BBC's 6 o'clock news. I saw Keith Pulman of the United Kingdom Egg Producers Association interviewed by Clive Ferguson. Mr. Pulman said:

"The egg producers were not told about it"—

that is, evidence of salmonella in eggs—

"until 19th December".

That is very rum, because Keith Pulman had written in an article in the "United Kingdom Egg Producers Association News" that

"The Ministry of Health announcement on Friday, 26 August advising the public to avoid eating raw eggs was made after full consultation with the industry".

That article was dated 2 September. All I can say is that Mr. Pulman either has a capricious memory or is a victim of impersonation. The Government decisions and meetings to which I have referred all occurred before the ITN interview of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 3 December.

The Select Committee has rejected the charge that our package of measures would not have been planned, let alone implemented, but for the events of early December. We assert that those 17 measures amount to the most comprehensive package drawn up anywhere in the world to combat salmonella. Action has been taken at every point in the chain from imported feedingstuffs through to breeding and laying flocks. As the House knows, the egg market collapsed towards the end of last year. The Government reluctantly decided that emergency measures were needed to stabilise the industry in such unprecedented circumstances.

The measures taken are the subject of the motion before the House today. The Select Committee concluded that my right hon. Friend the Minister deserved credit for putting together a skilfully constructed package. It was designed to restore stability to a disrupted market in which sales had fallen to around half normal levels. Hens, unlike men and machines, are not responsive to market forces in emergency conditions. They continue to lay eggs and require feeding even if demand for their product plummets —and, of course, feed is by far the major cost of egg production. As a result of the sudden and dramatic slump in demand, millions of eggs piled up at packing stations and many innocent producers, especially small ones, faced bankruptcy. Moreover, there was a real risk that a major part of the industry's productive capacity would be destroyed so that when demand recovered we would have had to rely on imports to meet it. That would not have been in the interests of British producers or consumers.

The Government therefore introduced two short-term schemes. The purpose of the egg scheme was to restore stability to the market by enabling packers to dispose of the accumulating surplus of eggs. The Government offered payments for eggs destroyed under Government supervision. Although the scheme was only at a safety-net level of 30p per dozen, broadly equivalent to the cost of feed, this rapidly put a floor in the market.

The complementary scheme, for the slaughter of hens, was designed to enable egg producers to cull younger birds in order to adjust production to the lower level of demand which might prevail for some time ahead. Again, payments were offered only at a modest safety-net level of £1·50 per bird, but this at least provided a way out for those producers who considered it prudent to plan for a lower level of output over the ensuing six to 12 months.

In the event, as the Select Committee report states, the package

"was designed to put a bottom in the market and did just that".

My right hon. Friend the Minister was determined that there should be no half measures. If calm was to be restored to a disturbed market any intervention measures had to be on a bold enough scale to meet the maximum demands that could reasonably be placed upon them. That is why he deliberately provided for expenditure of up to a maximum of £19 million on the two schemes. The real key to the cost-effectiveness of the schemes, however, was not that figure but the levels of payment offered and the nature of the mechanism adopted. As soon as the scheme had succeeded in raising the market above the safety-net level of 30p per dozen eggs, this automatically removed the attraction of destruction.

I welcome the Select Committee's conclusion that the package was necessary and I am grateful for the complimentary remarks made about it. In the event, the schemes not only achieved their objectives but did so at minimal cost to the taxpayer precisely because of the way in which they were designed by my right hon. Friend the Minister.

Nevertheless, I do not wish to leave the House with the impression that those two short-term emergency measures have fully restored the market or resolved the severe economic problems of the industry. Egg sales are still only some 75-80 per cent. of normal and prices to producers,

though above the rock-bottom levels reached at one stage, are far from remunerative. A full return to normality depends on a full restoration of consumer confidence. I welcome the rising interest in consumer issues, which mirrors my own longstanding political beliefs. Power wielded by interest groups—trade unionists, lawyers, bureaucrats and producers of any description—should be fragmented or balanced by watchful Governments if they exceed the size of their boots. The president of the National Farmers' Union knows full well that my right hon. Friend the Minister and I are not his producers' poodles, but that appraisal may not yet have reached every out-station of the food and farming industry.

Consumer sovereignty is the key to the market place. It can be threatened by monopoly and cartels, trade protectionism masquerading as protection, or neglect of public health standards. The eagle eye of Government must always fall on such threats to consumers, however powerful, influential and persuasive they may be. The rights of consumers must be safeguarded by Government in any democracy where entrenched interests, public or private, can ignore the national good. Producers must adhere to them, and, in fairness, the vast majority of Britain's food industry realises their crucial significance. After all, no industry depends more upon repeat purchasing than does the food industry. To the few whose recklessness undermines the reputation of the many by putting public health at risk, however, my message is clear; clean up your act or face the full brunt of the law; and where the law falls short it is being strengthened.

In listening to, and acting on, legitimate consumer anxieties we must never be bamboozled by know-alls and busybodies dispensing flimsy advice. As my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare has already stressed, we should also beware of a few so-called independent experts. During the past few weeks, some people with political axes to grind have implied that the entire food chain in this country is part of a capitalist conspiracy designed to undermine public health. They merit our derision, they warrant our scorn and they deserve our anger.

Some romantics see all new developments in food science as potentially evil and want a return to a 19th century Utopia, but in reality the 19th century posed far greater hazards to health. Diets were restricted—and besides, Utopia never existed. Confidence in the safety of food is the Government's overriding concern. That is why we are taking so many measures to remove the risk of infection in eggs, even though this is recognised by the Committee to be very small. We have launched a campaign more rigorous and more comprehensive than has been launched anywhere else in the world to ensure the maximum possible degree of safety at every point in the chain from chicken breeder to chicken table. Twenty-seven years ago almost to the day President Kennedy sent a message to Congress that consumers should enjoy a right to safety, a right to be heard, a right to be informed and a right to choose. These rights are being and will continue to be safeguarded by this Conservative Government.

4.57 pm

**Dr. David Clark** (South Shields): First, I congratulate the Select Committee on a truly excellent report on salmonella in eggs. I also wish to commend the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) for delivering his report to the House in a very lucid manner. In a sense, his speech today was reflected in the report of the Select Committee, because we saw the same lucidity in that. I congratulate him and the members of the Committee on producing this report so speedily. The Committees of the House have gained a fine reputation for producing reports which are clear and are understood by the ordinary person in the street. This is no exception and the members deserve tremendous credit for producing such a thorough, speedy and forthright report. Apart from the cursory, yet fundamental, criticism of the former Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), they identified the villains of the piece—quite rightly—as the Government. I sincerely hope that the Government will heed the recommendations and the criticisms of the Select Committee.

The Government have completely mishandled the whole affair by their incompetence, excessive secrecy and delaying tactics. By their failure to act speedily they have allowed the problem to become exacerbated and as a result have put public health at risk. Since they were caught out, we have seen a flurry of Government activity in this sphere. Ministers, and the Minister today, repeatedly brag—that is the appropriate word—about the 17 measures that they have taken to control salmonella in poultry since December 1988. That begs the question of why they did not act sooner, because they have certainly been aware of the problem for months, possibly for years.

However, even the 17 formative measures leave much to be desired because, as the Minister told me in a parliamentary answer on 3 March, only two of the 17 measures have the backing of legislation and a further five are merely voluntary codes of conduct.

As the Minister knows and has acknowledged, none of the new changes needs primary legislation. Why, over the past few months, have the Government not come to the House and asked for legislation?

**Mr. Ryder:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I do not wish to delay the progress of the debate. However, later, with the permission of the House, I shall answer the charge that the Government have not introduced the measures. We have introduced them. They are being introduced and are proving successful.

**Dr. Clark:** The Minister gives the game away. He should be frank with the House. He has not introduced the measures; he is going to do so, which is something quite different. The Government have no right to claim that the Minister has introduced 17 measures because, frankly, he has not.

**Mr. Ryder:** I do not wish to delay the House on this point, but I must put the hon. Gentleman straight. We have doubled the rate of inspections on protein processing plants since December, introduced stop provisions to prevent contaminated material entering the feedstuffs chain and served notice on a plant. We have imposed even more rigorous controls on the importation of animal protein, imposed restrictions on the sale of eggs for human consumption and served notices for the compulsory cleansing and disinfection of premises. I could continue.

**Dr. Clark:** The Minister could not continue and that is the point. He has given five out of the 17 measures. As he is going to reply, let me remind the Minister about the

*[Dr. Clark]*

third initiative which he mentioned. He said he will require protein processors to take samples from each day's production and notify MAFF, but the Government are still required to bring an order before the House before they can effect that measure.

The sixth initiative provides for the compulsory bacteriologist monitoring of all poultry-laying flocks. Under section 1 of the Animal Health Act 1981, that still needs to be ratified by the House. The seventh initiative requires the registration of breeding and laying flocks and the monitoring of hatcheries. It, too, awaits ratification under section 1 of the Animal Health Act.

The tenth initiative relates to the tightening up of hygienic handling of eggs, and is inoperative while we await new statutory action. The eleventh initiative tightens up the controls on rodents and is inoperative for the same reason.

The Minister could not have continued. He may be proposing to take action, but he has not yet taken it, which is the key point. The Minister should not mislead the House—and certainly not the nation—by saying that he already has such powers. He has not. He merely intends to take them.

**Mr. Ryder** *rose*——

**Dr. Clark:** I shall be happy to give way to the Minister but it would perhaps be better if he waited until I have finished speaking and sought an opportunity to catch Mr. Speaker's eye.

There is no excuse for not bringing forward the necessary statutory instruments. Labour Members and, I am sure, Members of the Liberal and other minority parties would agree that we would facilitate the passage through the House of any Bill which protected public health. We have repeated to the Government—and I repeat today—that they have no excuse for not introducing such legislation.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): Is not the hon. Gentleman judging Government action in the light of what he now knows? At the time, what evidence did the Government or the hon. Gentleman have that would have led him to take the sort of action that the Government took last year? When should that action have been taken —many months ago or some years ago? Frankly, the evidence did not exist.

**Dr. Clark:** The hon. Gentleman intervenes in most of these debates, which is helpful to me because it gives me the opportunity to develop my arguments, and I shall certainly consider the detailed points that he made. I was simply replying to assertions repeatedly made by Ministers, and by the Minister this afternoon, that, since December 1988, the Government have introduced 17 measures. Those measures have not been introduced. The Government intend to introduce them and any leglislation in the form of statutory instruments will certainly be supported by the Opposition. *[Interruption.]* The Minister disagrees, but I warn him that the Government are responsible to the House and the Minister does not rule by edict. Statutory powers are laid down and the Minister knows that he must bring regulations to the House.

I shall now deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). The Opposition's argument centres on the Government's slowness and delay in handling the food issue. Perhaps one of the most disgraceful factors was the Minister's failure to tackle the problem of salmonella food poisoning earlier —about which the hon. Member for Wealden asked.

Apparently, the Select Committee supports my view that if the Government had acted when they originally discovered the signs, they would not have found themselves in the ridiculous mess which followed the former Under-Secretary of State's comments last December. Also, they would have saved the taxpayer £3 million. I refer the hon. Member for Wealden to the conclusions of the Select Committee, which support the thrust of my argument.

What signs and evidence are there of salmonella poisoning? The report shows that evidence had been accruing since 1982, and that salmonella enteritidis—not just salmonella—had been increasing and had become a serious health problem. In July 1985 the Government's food safety research consultative committee reported some revealing points, which I shall quote in answer to the hon. Member for Wealden. Its report stated:

"In 1983 more than 17,000 cases of bacterial food poisoning were reported in the United Kingdom. More than 80% of these involved Salmonella . . . The United Kingdom faces a serious and apparently deteriorating situation in regard to microbial food poisoning . . . This subject is highly-research sensitive."

**Mr. Boswell:** The hon. Gentleman quoted from the report that 80 per cent. of cases were related to salmonella. What proportion of that 80 per cent. was related to salmonella enteritidis, and what further proportion was related to salmonella enteritidis phage 4? It would be useful to have those figures.

**Dr. Clarke:** The hon. Gentleman is usually so well informed that I am amazed that he asked that question. The minutes of evidence given to the Select Committee on which he served contain the answer on the first page:

"The isolation of one serotype, *salmonella enteritidis*, has increased almost 13-fold between 1981 and October 1988".

I need not continue. I wish that the hon. Gentleman had studied the report before he deigned to intervene. That was our of character. He appears to have missed a vital piece of evidence.

We have evidence that the Government knew there was a problem as far back as 1982. It is interesting to note that the Department of Health was aware of the possible connection with eggs as far back as November 1987. For confirmation of that, I refer hon. Members to page 171 of the evidence.

Next, we discover that the Minister became clearer about the risk of eggs in May 1988. A month later, on 13 June, the DHSS called a meeting which included representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and, interestingly enough, representatives from the industry. I say "interestingly enough" because of the strictures that the Minister directed at those representatives this afternoon.

The House will recall that the purpose of the meeting was

"how to inform the NHS that recent outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning at two hospitals appeared to have been caused by raw eggs".

True to form, the Ministry of Agriculture and the industry decided once again to play down the matter. It was not until 29 July that hospitals were informed of the problem.

Even worse, we had to wait another month, until 26 August 1988, before the chief medical officer warned the general public—another example of the Government's secrecy and delaying tactics taking over official policy.

Finally, on 3 December, the former Under-Secretary of State for Health signalled an apparent change of approach when she said—I quote with care—

"We do warn people now that most of the egg production of this country, sadly, is now infected with salmonella."

I draw the House's attention to the fact that the first word of the text of the Select Committee's report was "we".

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): Not the royal "we".

**Dr. Clark:** Indeed not. We all get confused about "we" becoming grandmother these days.

The former Under-Secretary of State was clearly not speaking as an individual: she spoke on behalf of the Government. The fact that she said "we", not "I", was a clear sign that she was enunciating Government policy——

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** *rose*——

**Dr. Clark:** I have given way three or four times and I am anxious to make progress. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will catch Mr. Speaker's eye later.

The Select Committee was clearly correct to conclude that it found

"no evidence to support Mrs. Currie's assertion".

We believe that she should have been allowed to qualify her original ambiguous statement, as she did in a letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee on 25 January. If she had done so at the time, much unnecessary suffering could have been avoided.

All this does not detract from the fact that the Minister of Agriculture has shown incredible complacency about the problem. When the Ministry found a farm selling eggs contaminated with salmonella in May 1988, it failed to take action and continued to allow eggs from a farm with a flock that was proven to be infected with salmonella to be sold to the general public. The Ministry issued no warnings to consumers. As the Minister reminds us, we had to wait until January of this year—nine months—before the Government implemented a clause under the Zoonoses Order to stop that sort of thing happening.

In evidence to the Select Committee the Minister justified not taking action sooner on the ground that only a small proportion of eggs was affected, which is no answer. Surely he must have known that people were dying of salmonella poisoning. As many as 35 died in 1987 from all types of salmonella, nine of them from salmonella enteritidis phage 4. Incidentally, the figures for 1988—they are now available up to the end of October—were considerably worse: there were 48 deaths from all types of salmonella and 23 from salmonella enteritidis phage 4.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton** (Congleton): Can the hon. Gentleman tell me from the table of figures from which he is reading how many of the people who were supposed to have died from salmonella poisoning were suffering from other serious illnesses? I understand that some were suffering from terminal illnesses.

**Dr. Clark:** The hon. Lady is familiar with the report, which contains the evidence to the Select Committee on which she served with such distinction. I quoted figures from the report because, as the debate is about it, I thought that the best way to proceed. I do not have the detailed figures that she seeks. Paragraph 7(3) makes the point that some of the patients suffered from other diseases.

The Minister knew that there were dangers. The hon. Lady has made the point more succinctly than I could. We are all aware that the problem is much more acute for vulnerable groups—the ill, the young and the elderly. That is the message of the report. The Chairman of the Select Committee made the point that for healthy people the problem is not nearly as great as it is for vulnerable people.

The Minister made great play today of how he would bring the wrath of the law down on people who were found transgressing and putting public health at risk. The record of such action, however, is not particularly good. I have already cited examples of farms that were proven to be sending out contaminated eggs. Twenty-one protein processing plants were found in 1987 to be sending salmonella-contaminated feed to egg producers. In spite of being warned, some of them continued to ply their trade; yet the Ministry refused to name them, so the poultry breeders and egg producers did not know that their suppliers were sending them salmonella-contaminated feed. The Minister also refused to prosecute—so his words today have a hollow ring. The Government have been weak on enforcing the legislation and thereby safeguarding public health.

Another hallmark of the Ministry's approach is obsessive secrecy. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) seems to disagree, but I shall justify my remark. If the Ministry had not been so secretive, it would have been more able to tackle the problem. The result would have been that many of the egg producers and the workers in those plants would not have been placed in such a vulnerable position. They are in that vulnerable position because the Government were plainly caught unprepared and had no contingency plans. The fault is wholly the Government's and the Minister knows it.

The Minister quoted figures today showing that egg demand is about 75 per cent. of what it was. He knows that the irony is that in the months ahead, because of bankruptcies and redundancies, we may have to import eggs from abroad, which will come from flocks over which we have no control. That does not seem to be a sensible approach. Will the Minister work with the EC to ensure that other countries have as high a standard of poultry hygiene as possible? How does he intend to cope with the problem of the import of eggs from non-EC countries? How will he ensure that they are salmonella-free? As the Minister has pointed out rightly, we are dealing with an international problem. As a result of his own complacency and his having no contingency plans, he made the industry very vulnerable.

Before I leave the issue of secrecy, I must point out that the Minister announced last month that he would establish a committee on food safety to deal with salmonella and other issues, chaired by the eminent Professor Richmond. Since that flourish of trumpets, the Minister has become strangely quiet. Why is that? Who are the other members of the committee? Will he ensure that there are representatives from the consumers on that committee? We would find it completely unacceptable if, as is the case with the Food Advisory Committee, there was only one representative from a consumer organisation. On previous occasions, the Minister has claimed that there is more than one consumers' representative on the Food Advisory Committee, but he is wrong. There is only one such

*[Dr. Clark]*

representative, Mrs. Ann Strumper, representing the National Federation of Women's Institutes. All the other members who do not represent industries represent bodies such as the British Nutrition Foundation.

**Mr. Ryder:** No.

**Dr. Clark:** I have checked those facts, so the Minister may want to apologise afterwards. The British Nutrition Foundation is funded by levies from industry. Other committee members represent trading standards operations or other professional bodies. I repeat my charge——

**Mr. Ryder:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Dr. Clark:** I shall give way in a minute. There is only one representative from a consumer body on the Food Advisory Committee.

**Mr. Ryder:** If environmental health officers and others who enforce food safety are not representatives of consumers, who is?

**Dr. Clark:** The Minister does not understand my point. We are in no way challenging the integrity of the people who serve on that committee, but the point that I am trying to make is that they are there to represent viewpoints and organisations. They are not appointed because they are consumers and the only person who is appointed because she is a consumer is Mrs. Ann Strumper. The others are appointed because they are trading standards officers or representatives of industry. I hope that the new committee will contain more people from consumer organisations.

In a recent written answer the Minister confirmed that members of the advisory steering group on food surveillance are required to sign the Official Secrets Act 1911. Will the members of the new committee be required to sign it? I must remind the Minister that we are living in 1989, not 1939, and it would be for the benefit of consumers and the industry if we had far more freedom of information. An obsession with secrecy runs throughout the Minister's approach.

A further reflection of that secrecy is the Minister's habit of not being open with hon. Members. Last week, I tabled four simple, naive questions about hygiene standards in abattoirs in the United Kingdom to which I know the Minister has the answers on file. All I received was a holding answer that he would reply as soon as possible. That is an example of the Minister withholding information from the House. He knows that EC inspectors are in this country at present inspecting abattoirs which, by and large, are in a dreadful state.

I want to draw attention to the point made by the Select Committee about research and development. Has the Minister anything fundamental to tell us today about that crucial matter? I would like to think that, when dealing with a matter as important as that, the Minister would admit the error of his ways and would step up research into the complex problem of salmonella. In particular, is he prepared to work with industry as a partner to try to continue Dr. Mead's research project at Bristol? There are only two more years of field trials to go. The Minister would have the support of Members of all parties if he made an announcement and took an initiative on that project.

**Mr. Ryder:** The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point and I want to quote from the evidence given to the Select Committee:

> "There is a number of companies in GB at the present time who are interested in applying the work done by Dr. Mead on their farms. I know of at least two organisations who want to apply competitive exclusion techniques: in part to see whether they can assist in the control of salmonella in their growing flocks."

Who said that? It was not a Government Minister, but the Government's chief veterinary officer.

**Dr. Clark:** I was under the impression that the Government's chief veterinary officer was paid by the Government, not by industry. Obviously, I was wrong. It seems to be privatisation gone too far when we find some private companies paying the salary of the Government's chief veterinary officer. The Minister must not play semantics with the House. The chief veterinary officer is an officer of the Ministry, as the Minister knows.

I repeat my question: is the Ministry prepared to go into partnership with industry, if necessary, to ensure that that vital research work, which has two years to go in field trials, is continued? The Minister knows as well as I do that industry is reluctant to pay the lot because it is worried that the independence of the study would be put in jeopardy if it funded the whole work. We are talking only about £300,000 for two years' work. The Minister and the Ministry have a terrible record. The Minister knows that over 2,000 posts have been lost from the Agricultural and Food Research Council and he also knows that the Government are shortly to propose the axing of a further 2,000 jobs in vital food and agriculture research and development. Will the Government recognise that that is a shortsighted approach? Will the Minister increase the number of research staff working on salmonella?

We tried to do some work, at short notice, on the Select Committee report. We looked at its recommendations about monitoring flocks and we believe that we need at least a further 50 members of staff in scientific work if the protections for which the Select Committee asked are to be carried out. It is imperative that if new research is carried out into salmonella money is not switched from other essential research work on bovine spongiform encephalopathy or listeria. To rob Peter to pay Paul is not an effective way to run research and development.

I note with interest that the Select Committee believes that the Government should actively discourage retailers from issuing misleading statements about eggs. Is the Minister aware that eggs are still being sold as being salmonella-free?

**Mr. Martlew:** Quite right.

**Dr. Clark:** If the hon. Gentleman listens, he will understand the difficulty. Will the Minister confirm that he has not issued any guidance to local authorities about the misleading nature of such claims? In the interests of consumer protection, will he not issue advice to them? This specific issue highlights the Government's failure to issue clear advice to consumers and local authorities about food matters and the need for a body such as a food standards agency to give independent advice to consumers.

I am sorry that the Minister has not seen fit today to give us even a preliminary assessment of the Government's reaction to the Select Committee report. We have been able to give our reaction. The Minister saw that——

**Mr. Andy Stewart** (Sherwood): *Farming News.*

**Dr. Clark:** Ah, now we know who writes in *Farming News*. That is very interesting.

The Minister has been dilatory. It would have been helpful to have more of a reply than we have received this afternoon. By not providing such a reply the Minister has added weight to our charge that the Government are in a state of complete confusion when it comes to handling the issue of food safety, and has confirmed our general view that procrastination and confusion are the order of the day. The Government do not know what they are doing, and meanwhile the health problem is getting worse and worse.

I urge the Minister to take more definitive action in the next few weeks, if he cannot do so today. If he brings orders before the House as soon as possible to protect the public health, he will have the support of Opposition Members.

5.30 pm

**Mr. John Biffen** (Shropshire, North): I begin my modest remarks with a declaration of interest. I am a non-executive director of J. Bibby and Sons plc, a subsidiary of Barlow Rand, whose activities include animal feed production.

Opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said that it might be argued that the topic had had more than its fair share of attention. I do not think, however, that my hon. Friend or the Select Committee should be at all diffident about bringing it before the House. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary has reminded us, questions of public health were very much an issue in the politics of the last century. We think of Disraeli or of Richard Cross—although my hon. Friend sounded more like a Gladstonian Liberal as he reeled off his consumerist aspirations in the Department. In any event, we are discussing public health today in support of a real and legitimate public interest. I congratulate the Select Committee on the temperate nature of its report, which I believe will be of great value to all who carry on the debate more publicly in the world outside. I also congratulate the Liaison Committee on choosing the matter for debate in the House.

I wish to raise four points. The first is of a quasi-constitutional character, and concerns whether ex-Ministers should appear before Select Committees. Departmental Select Committees are of such recent origin that they are all the time tentatively establishing parameters, not merely for their current work but for the work to be undertaken by successor Committees. The objective of a Select Committee in the last century—perhaps set up to investigate circumstances related to railway legislation—would have been to examine the public at large, not to examine other Members of Parliament. But when we set up the departmental Select Committees at the beginning of this Administration a convention was established whereby Ministers—who, by definition, were Members of Parliament—would appear before those Committees and give evidence. It was therefore necessary to find an appropriate and protective framework. It was established, for example, that advice divulged by civil servants was not conventionally to be disclosed to Select Committees.

It seemed to me inevitable that at some stage there would be interest in parliamentary circumstances involving the resignation of a Minister, and it would have been inconceivable in common-sense terms for the Committee to carry out its work without seeking and securing evidence from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). She approached it with quasi-Trappist enthusiasm, but that is not really the point. The point is that the principle was established and, I am sure, is of value to the work of Select Committees. Our thanks are due to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare and the Committee's members for their handling of a very delicate issue affecting the way in which this place conducts itself and, ultimately, how it is seen by the public.

A more difficult task is to comment on the behaviour of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, and I do so with diffidence and sadness because he is a good friend of mine. In "Who's Who" he states that modern jazz is his recreation—he is the Satchmo of the Treasury Bench. He is also one member of the current Administration who actually looks as though he enjoys his job. I work on the basis that one Cabinet Minister found in Ronnie Scott's is worth 10 captive cultural apparatchiks at Glyndebourne. As a consequence, however, my right hon. and learned Friend's relaxed attitude has the potential to slide imperceptibly into the cavalier. I well understand his reactions when my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South made her compelling contribution to the debate about food hygiene. On 5 December, he told the House:

> "It may be that many hon. Members are a little envious of her natural gift for obtaining publicity. This is not the first occasion on which she has obtained great publicity on a serious matter".—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 20.]

These are all matters of judgment, not of political morality. There is no more to it than the grubby business of being a street politician getting by from one problem to the next. From the day she arrived in the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South should have worn a label saying that she was a political health hazard. She was a person of extraordinary genius, gifted in almost every quality except that of being a subordinate, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State found that the matter in question had been given a most powerful lift by her television interview. It is easy to speak with the benefit of hindsight, but I say bluntly that that was a political situation and not a technical contribution to a discussion on health education and public health generally. Although it was understandable that Sir Donald Acheson, the chief medical officer, should have been propelled into being master of ceremonies for the next few days, I think that that judgment was mistaken.

It is a matter of careful political discrimination to decide how senior members of the public service should be used in such circumstances, and it is often a considerable political hazard. There has been an increasing tendency for public servants to be put into the position of being more overtly political in speech and behaviour than would have been the case a generation ago. That forms a kernel of seriousness in the wider issue. Although I feel that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was wrong

*[Mr. John Biffen]*

to hold back from the circumstances for so long, I do not feel that he should be the subject of serious censure. Of course not—it is the kind of mistake that we all make on a day-to-day basis in the conduct of our political lives. Nevertheless, the Select Committee was absolutely right to identify that point and to make that judgment, and I wholeheartedly concur with its convictions.

On the subject of research and the comments in paragraph 41 of the report, I had not heard of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) as a great agricultural debater and he seemed to me to have a preference for the sword rather than the ploughshare today. I should have thought that there must be broad general agreement across the House with the recommendations of the Select Committee and, indeed, with the tentative response from the Government. Nothing can be definitive at this point, but I am sure that there is widespread anxiety that we should look again at the funding of research in the industry to see what is a proper and legitimate public commitment, especially in trying to establish the mode of transmission of salmonella and the whole question of bacterial and viral infections in farm animals. I do not think that this is an area in which one can be dogmatic, but there is a long and legitimate tradition of collective interest and responsibility in the funding of research into these matters. I hope that my hon. Friend will not think it too much of a streak of Tory paternalism if I suggest that we look at the present levels of funding to see whether they can be improved.

Finally—this is the point at which I have a modest direct interest to declare—I should like to talk about the regulations that the Government must secure to have more effective control over a healthy food supply throughout the chain. Of course, I suspect that the area of most intractable difficulty is domestic hygiene and what goes on in the house, where one can do little more than constant exhortation. Government can take action, it seems to me, for example, in regulations concerning animal feed, and I very much welcome the recommendations made in this report in paragraphs 62 and 63. The regulations which have to be made must, first of all, be enforceable, and they must be enforced. That is true in relation to both on-farm mixers and compounders. Secondly, in seeking effective regulations, we have to ensure that they can be applied equally to imported as well as home-produced products.

Those are my four points. I end as I began by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare and his Committee on the report. There is always a tendency to try to fashion out of a fairly scrawny acorn a massive constitutional oak. I shall not do that, but I say to my hon. Friends and to Opposition Members that in the past decade or more we have seen a situation in which increasingly the power of the Prime Minister dominates the Cabinet and the Executive dominates the House. The traditional means whereby this House has sought to balance the Executive by debates and the normal forms of processing legislation are becoming less and less effective. I do not yet assert that Select Committees can tangibly help to restore that balance, but the process is well started and I offer congratulations to my hon. Friend and to the members of the Select Committee.

5.43 pm

**Mr. Elliot Morley** (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I start by echoing some of the words of praise for the Chairman of the Select Committee. It has been said to me that it is very hard indeed for 11 people from three different parties to come to a conclusion. However, the reason why the Committee did compile its report so speedily and in such depth and, in fact, came to a unanimous conclusion, was that it recognised the very serious nature of the salmonella scare, the effect that it was having on the industry and the need to react quickly to determine not only what the real threats were but to examine the way that the Government had handled it at every level.

Not everyone saw that in the same light, and I refer in particular to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), in terms of the assistance which she gave to the Committee. It has been said that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South did the country a service in bringing this matter to the public's attention. That in many ways is undeniably true; she was, in fact, the catalyst which led to this inquiry and allowed the Committee to uncover a number of issues, whereas the Government, shall we say, did not give a sufficient response. However, it must also be said that her comments were purely accidental. They were not made out of any great concern for the consumer, and when she had the chance to clarify them, she did not take it nor, during the course of the Committee's inquiry, did she join the Committee to state what she knew about the serious deficiencies in the way the Government were tackling the serious problems. I do not believe that her role in all this should be acclaimed as being of any great assistance to the consumer. In fact, because she refused to clarify her statements, £3 million has gone on compensation which could have been spent in more productive areas, for example, on research or other medical areas.

At that point, I must take issue with the Secretary of State for Health over the way that he dismissed the criticisms of the Committee as they refer to him personally. If we accept that the former junior Minister had to resign over the mistake that she made—we know that it was a mistake because of the Committee's inquiries—we should also accept that the Secretary of State for Health should take his share of the blame as part of the collective responsibility of government, as he was her immediate superior. It does the Secretary of State no credit whatsoever to dismiss those comments, nor does it do the Department of Health any credit that there is no Minister here today to take part in this debate. I believe that Ministers are abrogating their responsibility in this affair by not being here to discuss it.

There is one issue in the report that I would like to expand on in depth, and that is whether free-range eggs are safer than battery eggs. The Committee found that the evidence suggested there was slightly more risk with free-range eggs than with battery eggs. This was because the independent scientific adviser pointed out that in free-range systems the eggs are more likely to be laid on the ground, where there is a higher risk of faecal contamination. There are also problems with droppings of wild birds and shared drink water, with the risk of cross-contamination. Those are very valid points, which I do not criticise in any way. However, since the report has been published I have had the opportunity to make further inquiries. I should point out that, of course, the Committee

was not given the responsibility of looking into whether free-range eggs were safer than battery eggs, but I would like to take this opportunity to evaluate the differences between them.

The evidence suggests that there is no greater risk with either system. I have seen a report by the Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetic Research at the Edinburgh research station by Dr. Hughes, who carried out detailed studies into the incidence of eggs being cracked when laid. He came to the conclusion that it depends on the laying box being used and he demonstrated in his work that there could be a lower rate in certain free-range systems than in battery systems. His argument is that cracked eggs are more of a risk than external faecal contamination. He also pointed out that the incidence of cracked eggs depends very much on the age of the bird; as the egg-laying hen gets older, the shells get thinner and therefore the incidence of cracking is higher.

I have also seen a paper by Mandy Hill, a MAFF scientist, who looked at the alternatives to battery systems, such as free-range, straw yards, deep-litter, aviaries and percheries. In July 1981 the former Select Committee on Agriculture recommended that the battery system of egg production be phased out within five years. I am sorry to say that few steps have been taken in that direction. Quite apart from the fact, which few would dispute, that the battery system is an unattractive way of handling animals, it could be argued that there are inherent risks of cross-contamination because of the constant proximity of birds. There are more humane ways of producing eggs. They may be more expensive, but people are now prepared to pay slightly more for products that are produced in an environmentally sensitive and, as in this case, more humane way.

Mandy Hill discovered that the perchery system had clear advantages, and that is confirmed in a paper by McLean, Baxter and Michie of the Scottish farm buildings investigation unit which points out that the perchery system has clear welfare advantages, providing such things as dust baths and wider areas in which birds can move around. In addition, the collection of eggs from Astroturf cuts down the number of cracked eggs in comparison with the battery system.

The 1981 Select Committee recommended that more research should be done and that funds should be allocated to look into more humane ways of producing eggs which avoided contamination. It recognised that any restrictions on egg production must be in the EEC context. Restrictions on the way in which birds are reared and eggs produced would be grossly unfair to our poultry farmers if continental egg producers could export their eggs produced at lower cost using a less humane system. The report suggested that there should be a block on such imports or that agreement should be reached within the EEC.

The 1981 Select Committee also suggested that financial incentives should be given to poultry producers who wanted to experiment with more humane systems, and I concur with that. The Select Committee pointed out that the Brambell committee also recommended phasing out the battery system.

The joint working party of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health and the egg industry considered whether greater risks were attached to free-range or battery eggs. It concluded:

"Initial thoughts that the problem"—

that is, salmonella—

"may be more closely associated with free-range eggs are now difficult to support in view of the information available in incident one where salmonella enteritidis exposure occurred in the contents of two eggs not in the shell."

It goes on:

"We ought to be very careful about blaming the free range system for having a higher rate of incidence."

I concur with that.

The Select Committee made its recommendations on information available within a narrow context, but there is no scientific basis for suggesting that free-range eggs are more at risk from salmonella contamination than battery eggs. There is significant evidence to suggest that the battery system is an inhumane way of producing eggs and should be phased out in line with the recommendations of the 1981 Select Committee's report.

The Select Committee dealt with cuts in research and I wholeheartedly concur with its recommendations. However, since that report was published I have received correspondence from scientists working in research centres in Bristol, one of which is faced with cuts. Let me quote from one letter, from a gentleman whom I shall not name because I did not ask his permission to do so. I do not want to embarrass him, particularly at a time when people working within various Government institutions in the public sector are often threatened for speaking out even when to do so is in the public interest. It says:

"Quality and safety are foremost amongst the considerations of the scientific programme and, as you may know, the Laboratory houses the United Kingdom's leading group working on the problem of eliminating salmonella infection from eggs and poultry. However, since Government and AFRC policy on food research, especially on commodities such as meat, milk, eggs, poultry, etc. is one of contraction and retrenchment to ill-defined 'generic' research, it seems inevitable that such necessary 'public good' work will not take place. Clearly, the fragmented, introspective sectors of the agriculture and food industries are not capable of taking the broad 'public good' view, if left to themselves, and they obviously need strong direction and support from Government acting through the country's R and D agencies."

It is clear from the evidence that the Select Committee received that, far from receiving clear support and direction from the Government, Britain's agricultural and food research institutions are going through a period of cuts which is undermining the basis of research into food quality and safety.

The letter goes on:

"To take the opposite view, as is present policy, and in effect to throw responsibility for the nation's health and safety on to commercially-minded organisations, is clearly as dangerous as it is ineffective."

The Minister read from evidence to the Select Committee given by the chief veterinary officer about Dr. Mead's research programme at Bristol. However, he failed to read on to the point where I challenged the chief veterinary officer to say whether any commercial firm had signed a contract to pick up Dr. Mead's research. His answer was clearly no. That had not happened. Even if it does happen, it is irresponsible for the Government to throw open research which is so concerned with the public good to the whims of private industry without adequate funding or without ensuring that information will remain widely available. The package of cuts proposed by the AFRC puts at risk programmes such as that on meat identification which is designed to identify meats such as horse and kangaroo in meat products. To end such

*[Mr. Elliot Morley]*

programmes in the run-up to 1992 when there will be much more open access to such products seriously puts at risk people's health.

Another environmentally-friendly programme that will be put at risk as a result of the cuts is on the replacement of pesticides in crop control by the use of nematode worms. Green issues seem to be the order of the month, as dictated by the Prime Minister. The irony is that the Prime Minister visited that programme and saw it in operation, but now it has received the kiss of death and is to be ended. That has happened in the approach to 1992 when all our European rivals are giving more funding to their agricultural research and development. In contrast, we are giving such research less funding and throwing it open to the whims of a fragmented industry which is in no position to pick up such research programmes.

The Select Committee has given a balanced and well-considered report. The Minister has boasted today about the Government's 17-point programme, but it is fair to point out that the Government have done more in the course of the Select Committee's inquiry than has been done in the last decade in poultry research and salmonella control. That in itself underlines the value of the Select Committee and the important role that it has played in this whole affair. I also recognise what was said by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), that the Select Committee had to go to certain lengths to compel the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South to come before the Committee. I hope that that has now set a precedent so that when Select Committees are trying to do their work for the benefit of the whole community they are given the support that they deserve from all hon. Members.

As regards the Government's policy on agricultural research and development and the cuts, I hope that the Government recognise that they are making mistakes. They have arrived at the stage where the cuts are biting so deep that they are putting the consumers' health at risk. I hope that they will decide to turn away from the ideological blind alley that they are in, and will put the needs of the consumer first.

6 pm

**Sir Hal Miller** (Bromsgrove): I follow very closely the remarks of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), particularly in relation to the lack of difference in liability to salmonella between free-range and battery eggs. He has done us a service. He followed my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) in supporting a research programme, although it was not clear from his rather general remarks which particular direction he wished the research to take.

I join with others in congratulating the Select Committee on Agriculture and its Chairman on the selection of their report for debate. It is only the second report of the Agriculture Committee to be debated, but only one in 10 is debated. Thanks to research done in a publication on the new Select Committees, in a chapter by Geoffrey Lock, I find that up to the 1982-83 Session only six out of 193 reports were debated. Those reports contain 4,400 pages and cost £5 million to produce. In that period there were 80 overseas visits and 180 visits in this country. Since the 1985-86 Session, only six departmental committee reports have been debated, two from the Select Committee on the Environment, and seven concerned with House of Commons matters, occupying the attention of some 150 hon. Members who have put over 100,000 questions. I mention this not because the work of the Select Committees is part of this debate but to put the report into context.

I cannot say that I congratulate the Liaison Committee on choosing this report for debate because, as I have listened to it, the argument seems not to have advanced much since the matter was last debated, on 19 December. I have referred to my notes for that occasion. What I have heard convinces me that the Select Committee has performed a valuable role in ensuring that some of the measures mentioned by my hon. Friend the Minister are pushed forward or have been put into effect, despite the claims of Opposition Members, but nothing has been added to the argument.

I hope that I shall not be misinterpreted—I have come to praise the report, not to bury it, but my praise is perhaps fainter than some of the Select Committee members would have wished. I welcome the recognition of the work done by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in introducing codes of practice, the market support scheme and measures of control and monitoring, although I shall return to that in a question to my hon. Friend the Minister shortly, and I welcome even more warmly the recognition that the risk to healthy people from eating eggs is slight indeed.

Why, then, did I suggest that my praise might be slightly muted? I venture to disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), the Chairman, when he said that he believed that the function of Select Committees was that of a post mortem body—a felicitious turn of phrase, as my hon. Friend the Minister said in his comments on the report. I believe that the best reports anticipate problems, look forward and present possible solutions, but this report has been largely retrospective. Perhaps it has not been retrospective enough. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare is that rare species, a gamekeeper turned poacher. I have been refreshing my memory about some of the things that he said when he was at the Ministry of Agriculture on the subject of consumer protection and the poultry industry. I would not, of course, wish to embarrass him by referring him to his speeches of 7 November 1980, March 1981 and July 1981, but he certainly took the view then, if I may summarise his comments, that we should not go too far in introducing monitoring and regulations. There are certain passages which, as a good Conservative, he would still own, out of particular interest is the one of 7 November 1980.

**Mr. Wiggin:** Another Whips' Office brief.

**Sir Hal Miller:** I am quite capable of doing my own research.

My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare, when he was a Minister, was talking about consumer protection, with specific reference to eggs and the marking of egg packs and the codes thereon, and I agree with what he said. He stated:

"In discussions with Brussels my officials have been seeking amendments with a view to achieving the changes that would be in the best interest of those most concerned. In addition, they will seek some relaxation of the present very restrictive regulations regarding the information that can be put on egg packs."—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1980; Vol. 991, c. 1649.]

There are other, similar passages. Why, then, are my praises muted?

**Mr. Wiggin:** I am deeply impressed by the profundity of my hon. Friend's research. It seems to go beyond that normally carried out by a Back Bencher, but I will not go into that. Will my hon. Friend accept that even the severest critic on the Opposition Benches acknowledges that the problem of salmonella enteritidis inside whole eggs did not come to anyone's notice before 1982, by which time I had happily been translated to other spheres?

**Sir Hal Miller:** Of course. It was only out of natural admiration for my hon. Friend, perhaps tinged with slight envy as I myself have never held ministerial office, that I wished to refresh my memory of the wisdom and authority of his utterances in that post. He is correct to say that the incidence of this particular salmonella came to our notice after he had, unfortunately, left the Treasury Bench, to the regret of many of us, including myself.

I wish that the Committee had felt able to give itself the time to look a little more widely and to take account of what is happening in our partner states of the Community, because it is believed that this disease is widespread and has perhaps a greater incidence in certain other member states than in this country. That raises a matter to which the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred briefly—the question of imported eggs.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** If my hon. Friend has read the evidence taken by the Select Committee, he will know that those points were raised and questions were asked about egg imports. He is right that there is a serious problem in some parts of Europe, and we do not want to put our egg producers out of business only to import eggs from a place where we cannot control the standards of production and hygiene.

**Sir Hal Miller:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and happily compliment the diligence of the Committee, but its recommendations lack a specific course of action with regard to the important matter of imports. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reassure the House.

I would have wished the Select Committee to look a little further ahead, not merely in regard to the research to which it drew attention, but in terms of how some of the measures that it recommended should be implemented. I wonder whether there are adequate vets to carry out all the proposed functions, and whether any consideration was given to the proposals by the veterinary colleges, whose authoritative research would have been welcomed and respected. It might have been possible for the Select Committee to take more account of the role of local authorities, and not just of the number of vacant posts for environmental health officers about which we hear so much from the Opposition.

I would have hoped for some reference to the slaughter policy and compensation to farms affected by zoonoses orders. I hope that the Committee will forgive me if I ask my hon. Friend the Minister about the scope of a zoonoses order. Will it apply to an entire farm or to an individual poultry house? That is a significant point for many producers. I should be grateful if the Minister would let us know.

There is also concern about how the monitoring and inspection measures are to be paid for. In the case of other animal diseases the Government contribute towards the cost of monitoring and inspection. Egg producers are anxious about that aspect.

In conclusion, in whose interest has the debate been? It is not clear that it has helped the housewife, although the report and the work of the Select Committee brought about a response from the Ministry and was very useful. However I do not think that the housewife is better informed as a result of today's debate. I am particularly concerned that caterers have still not reacted positively to the measures that have been taken. Down on the farm, the position is still serious. Large producers are still experiencing prices some 15 per cent. below break-even, and there is concern that the recently determined slaughter compensation prices are inadequate and will undermine the confidence of suppliers, particularly in the matter of chick placings. Those suppliers will be concerned about the viability of customers who might be exposed to the incidence of disease, which could lead to a serious shortage of eggs and consequent high prices. The smaller producers face retail sales down by 20 per cent. and sales to catering firms down by 60 per cent.

I am still left wondering why the Liaison Committee chose this subject for debate. I cannot see whom it benefits, except perhaps the Opposition, who have nothing to offer —the idea that they had any interest for the consumer is laughable to those who remember their commitment to the coal producers or any other producing interest and their total disregard of any interest held by consumers of any product of nationalised industries. In that context, I must tell the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that the article in *Farming News* provides the answer. It says:

"Every night the members of the Labour party interested in agriculture (all three of them) must go down on their knees and praise the Lord for salmonella, listeria, Professor Lacey and BSE. These plagues have come as manna from heaven to a party which is still waiting for its policy 'revue' before it knows what it is supposed to think about agriculture."

6.16 pm

**Mr. Geraint Howells** (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Many years ago I was a member of the Ponterwyd young farmers' club. One wintry evening I was chosen to speak on behalf of the club at a public meeting of the young farmers' movement. We were not told the subject until we reached the hall. On the platform I was given a piece of paper which said, "You are given three minutes to speak, if it is your wish, and the subject is eggs." Being a young man, I found it very difficult to find any words on the subject, but I said, "If you eat a boiled egg or a fried egg for breakfast, you will lead a healthy life and you will be able to work on the farm for the rest of your days."

Forty years later I am confronted with the same problem. We are confined to saying a few words about eggs. But I have a little more to say this time and I shall speak for longer than three minutes. First, I should like to endorse the sentiments expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House on the excellent way in which the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and his colleagues dealt with the situation, their urgency and the way in which they presented their report. I shall go a little further than the hon. Members who have paid tribute to the hon. Gentleman by saying he did an excellent job on television when the industry was at a crossroads and when the Government were in troubled waters in regard to eggs. The hon. Gentleman gave an assurance to producers and consumers that he would look into the matter and make

*[Mr. Geraint Howells]*

recommendations to the Government. Personally and on behalf of my colleagues I should like to thank him for what he did.

Tonight, what has been missing from the debate is a sense of proportion. A few unguarded words from a junior Minister caused great havoc in the industry and panic among the buying public.

The Government must restore confidence in the industry and reassure consumers that they can eat eggs without fear. It is vital that they do so, for two reasons. First, eggs are an important part of our daily diet. They are cheap and easy to prepare. It follows that the egg and poultry industry must be encouraged, and be protected from unfair competition and unforeseen costs resulting from the need to introduce new and safer production methods. Unfair competition will arise unless and until the high standards that are to apply in this country are matched throughout the EEC. Raising standards will cost a great deal of money, and may mean a number of producers going out of business. Consequently, imported eggs will be at a lower price. There must be safeguards against that both for the sake of the consumer and to protect the industry's future.

The industry's future cannot ultimately be left to market forces because, clearly, they will operate against the best interests of consumers. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the industry survives in good shape. It is the Government's responsibility also to ensure that the level of funding available for research and development is adequate. The agriculture industry as a whole has been apprehensive about research cuts, and many parts of it fear that important areas of research will be starved of necessary funds. A great deal of work and money is necessary to ensure the eventual eradication of salmonella in eggs. If we are to succeed, cash limits should have no part to play in that objective.

Sufficient money must also be made available to provide monitoring facilities, because the industry should not be expected to pay for them. The Select Committee has done a worthwhile job, and its recommendations should be accepted by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. At the same time, it must be remembered that the egg industry has gone through a traumatic period. Even today, egg sales are down by 15 per cent., with producers losing £20 million since the beginning of December, and the national flock being depleted by about 2·5 million birds.

Monitoring and improved production methods will be extremely expensive, and many smaller producers may feel unable to carry on, so the Government must be prepared to be more generous with compensation, and more understanding of the higher costs involved in developing the industry along the right lines. The health of the consumer must always be a priority, but that cannot be achieved without a positive Government commitment.

I make a final appeal to the Government not to dismantle the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food because of what has happened. The Ministry has served the farming industry and consumers well over many decades. I read with regret that the Labour party intends dismantling the Ministry; I read in the press that the Labour party is proposing a new Ministry of Food and Farming.

**Dr. David Clark:** I wish to make the position plain, because I do not think that there is any deep disagreement between us. We believe that all food production ought to fall within the responsibility of one Ministry—the Ministry of Food and Farming, say. It is imperative that, from the plough to the plate, food production is in the hands of one Ministry. Also, the consumer must be protected by an independent food standards agency. However, I emphasise that we believe still in having one Ministry covering both food and farming.

**Mr. Howells:** I listened to the hon. Gentleman's comments with interest. I shall not comment, because it is now up to the agriculture industry to decide whether, after hearing what the hon. Gentleman had to say, there is to be a change in the nature of the Ministry.

**Mr. Ryder:** Perhaps I may be of assistance to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) because, by happy chance, I have a copy of the press statement of 17 February issued by the hon. Members for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook) setting out their views on the subject, which stated:

"The Foods Standards Agency would be independent of Ministers but responsible to Parliament."

If the agency is to be independent of Ministers but responsible to Parliament, which Ministers will answer questions about it?

**Mr. Howells:** I am very sorry for raising a thorny issue. We had better leave it at that for the time being.

I have a further question for the Minister. Will he give a helping hand to the agriculture industry, which has been financially clobbered because of present Government policies? Unless something is done, many small farmers will go out of business. Please give a helping hand before it is too late.

6.26 pm

**Mrs. Ann Winterton** (Congleton): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), because we share a common concern in respect of many matters that he has raised in previous debates. I echo his remarks concerning the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which has served the country well. A very good case would have to be made for dismantling it—and it is not a case that I would anyway support.

During my lifetime, I have followed the advice that the hon. Gentleman gave to young farmers all those years ago, because I was brought up on the maxim, "Go to work on an egg". Unless I had a lightly-boiled egg for breakfast every morning, I would not have the strength to stand up and face you, Mr. Speaker, in my efforts to participate in debates.

Putting frivolity to one side, we are debating a serious subject. When the Select Committee on Agriculture was appointed at the beginning of this Parliament, it could not have foreseen that it would be catapulted into the public eye by the subject matter of the inquiry on which it reported in the middle of the salmonella crisis just before Christmas, caused by the unclarified statement of a former junior Health Minister.

I shall address myself to one or two points arising from the Select Committee's report, which was published last week—not least, the package of measures introduced by

my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There is no doubt that urgent action was needed not only to restore public confidence but to prevent financial disaster among British egg producers, who would otherwise have been put out of business or placed in serious financial difficulties. I reiterate my earlier remark concerning the importance of our domestic egg industry and the benefits that it brings to this country, which would have been jeopardised if egg producers had been forced out of business by last December's crisis.

I was often dismayed by those people who commented publicly about the so-called strength of the agricultural lobby, saying that consumers' interests were being overridden in the interests of egg producers. My belief is that consumers' best interests are virtually the same as those of producers—because unless producers heed consumer demand there will be no market for their goods and they will be put out of business.

The fact is often overlooked that farmers and their families are also consumers. Generally they are not in the business of producing food that they would not expect their families and neighbours to eat. They have been somewhat maligned in some press comments.

I do not know what advantage it is to the consumer to put egg producers out of business. As we know, imported eggs have many problems. No Government could control the standards of their production and few guarantees could be given. It would not serve this country well for eggs to be imported. We must watch out for that.

It is also true that no food can be made absolutely safe or sterile. Cast-iron guarantees cannot be given. We found in our report that many of the food poisoning cases that we have heard about were directly due to poor storage, cross contamination and unhygienic practices in private domestic kitchens and in catering establishments. Much work needs to be done to tighten up standards, especially in catering establishments.

Salmonella enteritidis is behaving in every way identically to other salmonellas. There is no reason to believe, and no evidence to suggest, that its incidence will not grow to a peak and fall back, as other salmonellas have done, and then be replaced by another strain. I am not in any way being complacent, because one case of salmonella enteritidis poisoning is one case too many. I speak as someone who has suffered from acute salmonella poisoning, although I hasten to add it was not enteritidis. Some years ago, on my return from India I was extremely ill. I lost a lot of weight so that the buxom woman hon. Members see before them was a mere skeleton. I would not wish that condition on even my worst enemy.

Many of the problems about food that are highlighted in the media these days are due to the policy of successive Governments of providing cheap food. The subsidies that have been given to the producers, although not to egg producers, first took the form of deficiency payments and then, following our entry into Europe, the CAP. All those have been indirect subsidies to consumers to provide a steady supply of temperate foodstuffs at moderate prices, and to iron out the highs and lows of food production that can never be predicted, depending as they do on our unpredictable weather. Egg production has always been unsubsidised, but some of its overheads depend on the policy of the CAP, in the cost of cereals.

This cheap food policy has also been responsible for the development of our intensive livestock and agricultural systems. Farmers have always worked within parameters set by the Government. Therefore, both after and during the war when temperate foodstuffs were in short supply, the agricultural community responded magnificently to the challenge to produce more. It was no fault of theirs that the bureaucracy that is Europe was made impotent to act by the political pressure maintained effectively by the small and inefficient farmers of France and Germany.

Our agriculture industry, including egg producers, needs not a kick up the backside but a pat on the back for its achievements as good custodians of the countryside, and for producing our supplies of temperate foodstuffs, thereby saving on our balance of payments. That subject is very much in the public eye, and being debated generally at present.

The difficulties that have faced our egg producers have been typical of those in an industry that by its very nature is fragmented. We know that 30 million eggs are consumed each day and that 68 per cent. of the flock is held on 400 holdings. The remainder are dispersed among 40,000 smaller enterprises, many of which supply eggs directly to the public at farm gates or through a local outlet. The big five retail chains are supplied by the largest egg producers. Stringent checks are made on the quality of the product. It should be said that the food chain in this country is far superior in every way in its high standards. It compares very well with the much lower standards of other European countries.

However, there is a genuine cause for concern that, through the Government changing the policy on research and getting the private sector to take up near market research, certain projects will fall through lack of funding. It is very difficult to unravel the difference between research into the public good and research that has an imminent commercial application. That difficulty is heightened because of the fragmentation of the egg-producing industry.

I suggest that somehow the egg producers must get together on research so that it can be funded by the industry as a whole, possibly through a levy. It is not for me to suggest the means, but it must be funded by the industry as a whole rather than by one or two major companies. It is obvious that developments on, say, a test for salmonella enteritidis to be used on the farm should be readily available to all those selling eggs to the general public, including small producers. Such a test and such an assurance would greatly restore confidence in the quality of the product.

I believe, too, that national standards must be set by the Government. All hon. Members will have experienced the diversity of ways in which regulations are implemented by local authorities' environmental health officers and meat inspectors. There is no set standard to which they must adhere. That mistake must be addressed. Such a measure will be unpopular because it will cost taxpayers money. Indeed, consumers must realise that they will be expected to pay more for a higher quality product.

The priorities of my parents' generation were having a roof over their heads, clothes to keep them warm and good food. There were no other competing priorities in those days such as mortgage repayments or repayments on luxury goods. Many of those, such as washing machines, which are often of foreign manufacture, or video recorders, are considered no longer to be luxury goods.

**Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop** (Tiverton): Before my hon. Friend, who was a distinguished member of the Select

*[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]*

Committee, leaves the question of paying more for the best possible inspection standards, could she share with the House its thoughts on section VII of the report, which the Minister completely ignored? However much we pay for inspection of UK production, is it not the case that if imports are not properly inspected the consumer will not get the protection, however much is spent on inspecting our own output?

**Mrs. Winterton:** My hon. Friend makes a very good and valid point, which I could not better. He is absolutely right. In my remarks about the standards of food production, I was also saying indirectly that if people do not want eggs produced from the battery system they must pay more for eggs produced in a different way. There is a cost for all of this.

My hon. Friend makes a valid point about ensuring that the production standards of food, anything else that is introduced into this country are as high in the exporting countries as they are here. More often than not, the standards of this country are far better than those of our European counterparts. But times have changed. Surely good food must be considered as one of the highest priorities in household expenditure.

Many people have tried to calculate the risks of eating an egg contaminated by salmonella enteritidis. It has been compared by some as having the same risk as being struck by lightning. Indeed, the risks to people walking down Oxford street doing the shopping one afternoon must be far greater.

Although the scare about the wholesomeness of eggs for normally healthy people has been an over-exaggerated storm in an egg cup, many lessons from it will have to be learned by the Government, and the report sets those out in a clear and unambiguous way. I recommend the report to hon. Members and respectfully suggest to those who hold power in their hands that its constructive criticism and recommendations will be ignored at their peril. The Government will emerge with credit if, for once, they listen to wise counsel and act on it.

Unlike the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), I do not expect a change of policy to be announced after this debate, but the Government should reflect on the recommendations of the report and bring forward measures to effect the necessary change.

6.40 pm

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): Little did I know when I wrote to the Chairman of the Select Committee on 6 December last asking that we investigate the statements made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) the amount of media attention that the subject would attract. Nor did I envisage the sort of political shock wave that would be created. This has become a high political issue, though I do not kid myself that I had anything to do with it.

I am surprised that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South is not in her place for this debate. The Select Committee report opens its introduction with the comment by the hon. Lady:

> "We do warn people now that most of the egg production of this country, sadly, is now infected with salmonella."

That was why the Select committee met. It resulted in 400 pages of evidence and a report containing many recommendations. Ministers have stood at the Dispatch Box on many occasions attempting to answer questions put by hon. Members in all parts of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) criticised the Government strongly on some issues, yet the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South is not in her place for this debate. That reflects the fact that the hon. Lady not only held the Select Committee in contempt but appears to hold this House in contempt. The least she should have done was to appear. Although it is not cricket to criticise people in their absence, I regret that she is not here because one would have expected her to turn up today.

I enjoyed being a member of the Select Committee and I echo the comments that have been made about its Chairman, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). He was fair and he represented the Committee well when he appeared on television. He presented the case excellently today. He was not entirely fair to two of the witnesses. Dr. Lang and Professor Lacey. Their view differed greatly from that of the Chairman, but they had every right to express it and it would have been better had he not criticised them so much today.

We produced a unanimous report, and I appreciate the support that was given by Conservative Members. It is easy for Opposition Members to criticise the Government of the day; it is our job to do that. It is more difficult for Government supporters to produce a report which is in some ways critical of the Government. Another reason why that proved possible was that Labour Members on the Select Committee took a responsible attitude. We were all after the facts and we were not interested in scoring political points. We have reached a conclusion that gives almost a good clean bill of health to this country's eggs.

The egg producers' representatives, as distinct from the egg producers, did not do their cause any good. They were, and still are, divided. The Minister criticised a producers' organisation. Neville Wallace, the director-general of the British Poultry Federation, did not do his case much good. Those representatives gave a complacent view to the Select Committee. They suggested that there was really nothing wrong with egg production, when we knew that there was a problem. The view that people could continue to eat raw eggs, as advocated by Mr. Wallace to the Select Committee, was rather irresponsible.

Nor did the representatives of the Retail Consortium do themselves any good. When, last week, we debated food in general, I referred to that body, as a result of which it sent me a scathing letter, and I gather it sent a copy to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare. It claimed that I had misquoted the consortium.

I was also sent a copy of a letter that the consortium had sent to the Government complaining that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South had said that all or most egg production in this country was contaminated with salmonella. In fact, she referred to "egg production." Here was the Retail Consortium, supposedly a responsible body, spreading the rumour that most eggs in this country were contaminated with salmonella. If those concerned claim that egg sales have gone down, they must, at least in part, accept responsibility for that.

Reference has been made to imported eggs, and that whole issues concerns me. The chief medical officer of health pointed out that in Spain, for example, between one in 1,000 and one in 100 eggs were contaminated. That compares with one in 12,000 in the United Kingdom. It

would, therefore, be dangerous for us to reduce our production and import eggs from a country such as Spain. Indeed, in view of the figures given by the chief medical officer of health, it might be wise for the Government to consider stopping the importation of eggs from Spain at this time.

I have been doing some research recently, talking to food companies which test employees at various times—for example, when they begin work with the company, when they take ill with symptoms of food poisoning and when they return home from holidays abroad. One company which has been carrying out such tests for a decade informed me that three quarters of all cases of salmonella poisoning among employees in its factory concerned employees returning from holidays abroad. I have looked into figures produced by another company which has been carrying out similar tests for six years. In that case, only one quarter of its employees so suffering had returned from holidays abroad.

Clearly, much information is available in Britain, and the Government should be studying it to discover the reasons for the food poisoning epidemic. I apologise for using the word "epidemic"; the report urges us not to use it. We must have tighter standards Europe-wide—most people who go on holiday abroad visit EEC countries—otherwise we shall not get to the bottom of the increase in food poisoning in this country.

Much has been said about the role of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but I shall not dwell on that today. That Department has been found wanting in many areas, but at least we have a Minister from that Department before us today and ready to stand at the Dispatch Box to answer our questions. It is noticeable, however, that there is not a Minister on the Front Bench from the Department of Health.

The Department of Health seems to think that it was not involved in, or concerned with controlling, the outbreak of salmonella. In fact, that Department was probably more guilty, so to speak, than the Ministry of Agriculture. I appreciate the way in which spokesmen for the latter have not tried to suggest that the criticisms levelled against it have been ridiculous.

On the other hand, the Secretary of State for Health has objected to such criticism. As I pointed out in an intervention, the Select Committee received evidence to the effect that as far back as February 1988 the Hull district local authority's medical officer of health, Dr. Dunlop, realised that there was a major problem with raw eggs and stopped raw eggs and undercooked eggs being given to patients in hospitals in his district.

No action was taken by the Department of Health, nationally, until July 1988, and only then did the Department give guidance to National Health Service hospitals. It did not give any guidance to the general public until almost a month later. That, in itself, represents criminal neglect of the situation—there is no doubt about it. If one health district knew in February 1988 that there was a problem, why did not the Minister know? I suspect that he did know, yet he took no action whatsoever.

I come now to the famous statement that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South made on 3 December. We all know that that was a problem, but, as has been said already, it should have been corrected the following day. The Secretary of State for Health came to the Dispatch Box—on 6 December, I think—to pacify the country, and the chief medical officer was put on television to calm the situation.

Let us look at the facts. During the week ending 3 December 1988 there was a drop of 15·5 per cent. in egg consumption, compared with the corresponding period in 1987. After the Minister had been to the Dispatch Box the drop increased to nearly 30 per cent. Following his appearance on television the week after that, consumption had gone down by 49 per cent. Such was the assurance from the Minister.

I do not think that it was right for him to appear on television and use the word "ridiculous". I get the feeling that he is becoming a little remote from this place. My wife's favourite film star is Humphrey Bogart. *[Laughter.]* I am talking not about "Casablanca", or even "The African Queen", but about the captain in "The Caine Mutiny". That gentleman seemed to accept responsibility for nothing. He used to play with marbles and put the blame on everybody else. He said that it was ridiculous to blame him, even though he had people counting how many spoons of ice cream were being taken.

That is how the Secretary of State has been behaving—and not only in respect of this matter. Those of us who saw him respond on television to the comments of the British Medical Association on his White Paper on health will remember his saying, "Of course, you have to remember that the doctors opposed the concept of the National Health Service." What he forgot to tell people was that the Conservative party had fought the concept of the National Health Service root and branch. I am greatly concerned—actually, I have to admit that I am not really concerned—about whether the Secretary of State's reputation will ever recover from the crisis arising from salmonella in eggs.

The main purpose of this report was to satisfy the general public that, having looked into the situation, we could tell them whether there was any danger in eating eggs. We came to the conclusion that there was a slight risk for certain groups, but our recommendations will mean that the British public can turn the clock back to the time when they could eat hard-boiled eggs, soft-boiled eggs, raw eggs, fried eggs, scrambled eggs—any kind of eggs they liked—without fear of food poisoning. If the recommendations of the Select Committee are carried out, the general public will be able, once more, to eat eggs with confidence.

6.54 pm

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): I enjoyed working on the Select Committee with the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew). Although I do not agree with the tenor of all his comments, I think it is clear that Members on both sides of the House, together, have been able to produce an effective report.

I should like to make two general points in introduction which I think have not been made earlier. First, the general public have only a vague and ever-changing apprehension of the nature of risks that they face. Very often the major aspect of change in risk is not some objective shift but rather the amount of media coverage that the risk is given. It suits us that matters within our own control—such as whether or not we choose to smoke—do not get quite the prominence of matters in respect of which we can feel that

*[Mr. Tim Boswell]*

someone else is to blame. In a sense, that is perfectly reasonable. I do not see why people should have to face uncovenanted and unacceptable risks.

In another context I suggest that perhaps one day we should give some consideration to the establishment of a national health risk assessment machinery rather like the National Radiological Protection Board in a narrower area to tell the general public about the risks that they face. However, in the absence of such machinery, as paragraph 101 of the report indicates, it just is not possible to eliminate all elements of risk and it is just as irresponsible to over-emphasise risks as it is to play them down.

The only time we become immune to risk is when we are dead. In the meanwhile, we have the problem that our grandmothers tended to teach us about. They worried tremendously about germs. There are germs all around us. We do not succeed in eliminating them, but equally they do not succeed in eliminating us. What is important is when circumstances change.

In all these public health matters, the real issue for the Government is the management of risk, keeping it at acceptable levels and, if possible, reducing those levels, and in laying the facts before the public.

The second general point that I want to make concerns the nature of the Select Committee's comments on the Government's response. It is a law of nature that if a Select Committee inquires into the actions of the Government it is more or less bound to be critical. I do not think the reasons are particularly political. I do not think there is some deep interest, although obviously the Opposition have a natural interest in drawing the tenor of a report away from uncritical support of the Government. It is simply that Governments are fallible. Governments always get something wrong, and, by the nature of their general duties, Select Committees sometimes have to criticise their actions. That does not mean that this Select Committee report constitutes what the media have presented as a "savage attack" on the Government. It is a balance of risk that the Government present; it is a balance of criticism that the Select Committee presents.

A Select Committee's greatest luxury is to be able to criticise with hindsight. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) not only joined us in the use of hindsight but seems to have second sight as well. In earlier exchanges, he referred to the work of the Research Consultative Committee in 1985. When I asked him about it, he, quite accurately, but irrelevantly, referred to the general increase in the incidents of salmonella enteritidis, and phage type 4 in particular. I have no quarrel with that, but the fact remains that if one looks at the figures for 1985 —or rather the figures for 1984, which was the last year whose figures were available to the Research Consultative Committee in 1985—such is the changing nature of the disease that typhimurium was responsible for half the cases that year and the whole complex of enteritidis, not the particular strain only, accounted for only 14 per cent. of the total number of cases.

Furthermore, it could not have been known by the Research Consultative Committee in 1985 that eggs were the problem because, even in 1988, the public health laboratory service said that the evidence remained scanty. I think that the hon. Gentleman was being less than fair to the House, and indeed to me personally, in developing the point as he did. We all know that this is a changing situation in which everybody has been to some extent perplexed and at odds. I feel that the Committee had to make some allowance for that changing situation and the way the scientists have viewed it. As the report, in paragraph 20 and elsewhere, makes clear, eggs were a new dimension in a new variant, a new special type, of the multiple problem of salmonella. We did not know the risk a priori and we still do not know the full story. Hence the importance which various hon. Members have attached to further research. I welcome that, although the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who is absent now, perhaps over-emphasised some of the cuts in agricultural research. I speak as a member of the Agricultural and Food Research Council. The hon. Gentleman should study the transcript of the press conference at which some of those matters were discussed recently.

As our knowledge has increased, the Government have had to alter and tailor their advice. That is bound to lead to charges of confusion and inconsistency. As the position changed, the Government response had to change. In conclusion on the general matters, it is reasonable for the Select Committee to criticise the specific timing, but we cannot fail to recognise that the Government, like the consumer, have a problem.

That brings me to the specific points. We need to remember that the debate takes place on the expenditure that the Government incurred on the egg market intervention scheme. We all welcomed the fact that the final cost of the scheme was only 20 per cent. of the forecast. Clearly there was a need to intervene because of the massive drop in market confidence in eggs. Even though that has been partially repaired, long-term market damage has taken place and it has had a knock-on effect on other farmers, particularly cereal farmers. For example, all the efforts that the Ministry put into set-aside to reduce cereal surpluses have been wiped out by the reduction in agricultural markets because of the reduction in the demand for eggs. Faced with a specific and definable problem, much easier than the general scientific problems to which I have referred, the Ministry of Agriculture got its act together. It was very much in the interests not only of the public and consumers for it to do so, but of taxpayers as well, otherwise there would have been more cost to the taxpayer for cereal intervention.

Three other points ought to be emphasised because, perhaps through haste, they did not appear as much as they should in the report. The first, referred to by several hon. Members, relates to imported eggs. I attach considerable importance to imported eggs because salmonella is at least as big a problem in some Mediterranean countries and probably generally in western Europe. It is unlikely that it will be picked up by a few random and token samples at ports, even if samples are taken. From 1992 there will be an effective free market in eggs across national frontiers in western Europe. Therefore, the answer must lie in building on the working party which has been established to lick the problem at European level.

I hope that the Minister will make reports to the House after tonight on further follow-up action that he is taking in the domestic market and on the European initiative because we need to cut off the problem at source so that all eggs are salmonella-free, wherever we get them.

The second point relates to broiler breeder flocks. We naturally wanted to confine the report to eggs, but we had interesting evidence from Hull, which has been referred to in the debate, that there was a specific problem with double yolk eggs that are taken off broiler breeder production and consigned to direct consumption. That may be taken into account in the new provisions for monitoring under the code of practice. Broiler flocks do not normally cause a problem because chickens are cooked thoroughly before eating, thus killing the bug, but I do not think that eggs should be transferred from broiler flocks to direct human consumption.

The final specific point involves catering establishments. It is obvious from the evidence that part of the problem of food poisoning, though not the original source, lies in the kitchen. A single family cook may be just as prone to make mistakes as a caterer. The difference is that in one case damage is confined to a family and in the other hundreds may go down with the disease. I am particularly concerned about sandwich bars, if for no other reason than that I am fond of sandwiches. Sandwich bars should be effectively monitored by local authorities, even if that means that they will need more resources.

On the general lessons of the report, the references in paragraph 32 to effective control at all points in the food chain, from the farm of origin all the way to the kitchen, are important. There are many gateways and pathways through which salmonella may come. It is important to close and restrict as many as we can. Some are in the farmer's hands, some in the trade and some in the kitchen. We must have resources, the right pattern of regulation and incentives to comply with the regulations.

The history of zoonoses and protein processing orders, as presented to us in evidence, suggested that the position was far from ideal in the past. Of course, legislation was generally, though not always, in place, but it was not working effectively. For example, the Protein Processing Order had no power to stop the sending out of food from a source that was known to have been infected. There was no compensation under the Zoonoses Order. That put considerable strain on the professional farmer. If he suspected that he had a problem, was it wise to raise the issue? It also put a considerable ethical strain on his veterinarian as to whether the problem should be reported under the order. Of course, it should have been reported, but whether that was done on the proper scale is perhaps another matter.

Government Departments are always conscious of another problem. While it was uncertain that one could point the finger at an individual farm, as soon as the Ministry cracks down and says, "Though shalt not sell," it is involved in litigation with producers. One needs to draw a contrast with the practice under public health legislation which for some time has enabled the payment of wages to infected persons who are taken out of food factories because they are carriers; they may be paid until the infection is stamped out and they can go back to work.

**Mr. Martlew:** Is it not a fact that in 1983 the Government changed the regulations and people who are still salmonella positive are going back to work?

**Mr. Boswell:** I do not think that that has been investigated. It may be appropriate for the Minister to comment on it in his reply. If it is the case, and if the incentives are inappropriate, we should consider the matter again.

As so often in these matters, the Treasury is the uninvited guest at every Whitehall table. Once again it has held the purse strings and has starved the regulatory machinery of resources. The result in this case, though not always, is that the cost to the taxpayer has been more than would have been necessary if there had been adequate resources from the start. This must not happen again. The Government must find the resources for regulation so as to restore confidence in the industry. The events after 3 December show clearly what happens when the Government move from a smooth top gear into overdrive; a measure of supercharging goes into the system and things go much better.

We are all conscious of the extreme sensitivity of the public to allegations of risk. The counterpart is the extremely vulnerable state of consumer confidence in many foods. It is not always justifiable, but that vulnerability is now established. It is the peculiar and special responsibility of Ministers of the Crown to inform the public clearly about what is happening. Never is that more so than when the responsibility crosses departmental boundaries. Once again hindsight comes cheap. One major lesson to be learnt from all these events is that Ministers at their own level must consult each other and they must speak as a single voice. In this case I fear that careless talk has cost the taxpayer and the egg industry a pretty penny. It has also, sadly and unnecessarily, cost one ministerial life.

7.9 pm

**Mr. Martyn Jones** (Clywd, South-West): It is not surprising that our Select Committee report on salmonella in eggs is welcomed by the Government with the same sort of enthusiasm to be expected from the Ayatollah Khomeini on being presented with a bound volume of "The Satanic Verses" in Farsi. Apart from the obvious embarrassment that any Government would experience from having some major blunders of several Departments exposed to the public gaze, we are, I believe, experiencing, too, the exposure of the fundamental flaw in free-market Toryism. Later Victorian society was not the laissez-faire heaven that the Government would have us believe, but it was a period when the increasing complexity of society and the increasing evils of free-market theory were beginning to become so evident that they had to be controlled. Food and water were the first areas in which social planning and collective provision were considered necessary.

The report and the Supplementary Estimate to which the debate refers expose a catalogue of errors, many of which arise from the ridiculous assumption that the state has no role in the production of anything. In a sense, the report should have had a wider brief, because one of our problems in Committee was that of avoiding expanding the remit to take in areas which perhaps were the real cause of burgeoning public health problems—for example, the poultry meat problem that has been around for some time; the uncontrolled growth of new methods of food preparation, such as cook-chill and the perhaps dangerous combination of that with microwave cooking, or, to be more exact, reheating; the reduction in the numbers of public health officers employed by local authorities; and the appalling cuts in research which cannot pay its way in

*[Mr. Martyn Jones]*

purely commercial terms. All those areas require close examination, but they were not unfortunately included in our remit.

As the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said, the report was unanimous in its conclusion. I believe that the report's main areas are valuable assets to the safety of the consumer and to the guidance of the producer. As we are now in the Chamber, I am sure that it is in order for us to stress areas of political dissent, some of which I have already mentioned, such as cuts in research and the role of the Ministers involved.

It was amusing and puzzling to witness the antics of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) after she had made her statement. In fact, she became the very model of ministerial discretion only after resigning from her ministerial post. Could that be because she was told to be quiet by the Secretary of State? If so, why? If that was her own idea, was that for an egotistical or, dare I say, a literary reason?

The Minister said that it was not possible to eradicate salmonella enteritidis, but I am told that Sweden has already done that. I remind him also that there is a part of the British Isles—Northern Ireland—which has managed to stay free of salmonella enteritidis.

**Mr. Ryder:** Sweden has had a slaughter policy for many years, but it has not eradicated salmonella.

**Mr. Jones:** I am sure that the Minister's assumption is right, but I am sure that it does not have enteritidis phage type 4. I was trying to make a point that salmonella is a term that was used rather loosely by many people giving evidence to the Committee. As a Committee, we have been looking at enteritidis phage type 4 because that is the one that is rapidly increasing in Britain.

It is possible that we can eradicate enteritidis phage type 4 in Britain. All that would be required to do that would be for some of the balance of the £19 million allocated to repairing the damage to the egg industry—some £16 million to compensate for the destruction and disinfection of the few tens of flocks which have already proven to be infected—to be put into the immediate initiation of research into finding a quick immunological test for specifically salmonella enteritidis phage 4. The technology is there, and it was used for salmonella pullorum eradication. The difference, of course, is that salmonella enteritidis is near market only for consumer health, whereas salmonella pullorum is a chicken pathogen and directly affects the profitability of the producer. Near market research is a nonsense when we are considering public health and food production.

I shall quote from an article on Government cuts in research in the *Farmers Weekly* of 24 February 1989. It said:

"Agricultural research and development is in danger of collapse. About 2,000 scientists, almost one in three, face redundancy, work on environmental pollution and public health will disappear and ADAS is fighting for the survival of its R&D.

The latest Government spending cuts strike at the heart of agricultural science and have triggered a massive reorganisation as beleagured scientists try to salvage a coherent research programme from the wreckage.

The Government plans to increase private funding of R&D by reducing the financial support it provides. But the speed of the attack has left the agricultural industry floundering and unable to react fast enough to save many endangered projects. At a time when many of our European competitors are stepping up research spending, Britain has embarked on a programme of cuts and closures.

Reductions in Government spending on agricultural R&D are not new. But the cuts looming now are not the penny-pinching of a cost-conscious Government. They represent a profound change in political motives and will have an impact that far outweighs the sums of money involved.

Even after pruning another £30 million from its annual budget over the next three years, the Minister of Agriculture will still be spending £200 million a year on scientific research. But the figures hide a massive shake-up in the way those funds are shared out.

ADAS will lose more than a third of its budget, while the Agricultural and Food Research Council will lose £10 million (nearly 25 per cent.) and divert more of its money away from its own research stations and into the universities.

The effect is to leave more and more ADAS and AFRC scientists fighting for a share of the Government's shrinking purse and the private sector's near-stagnant spending. Confidential documents leaked to Farmers Weekly show the enormous extent of the damage. ADAS R&D could shrink by two-thirds while the AFRC is considering axing as many as 1,150 jobs. The omens are not good.

The political logic behind the cuts is persuasive. The Government argues that if private industry profits from the results of scientific work, then private industry should be prepared to pay for that work."

What industry will pay for research into consumer safety when all that that will do is to decrease that industry's profitability? That is, however, what free-market monetarism means. We are supposed to believe that the Ministry will enforce legislation. But that implies state control—the testing and the sampling of farms and producers. Who will do that? Will it be the veterinary service? The Government are closing two veterinary schools—Cambridge and Glasgow. Will the industry pay? I doubt it.

How can the Government claim to be turning green but at the same time believe in free market capitalism—the dogma of which implies the exploitation of any market to its cost-effective limits? That is an especially obvious nonsense in a complex 20th century situation of public health.

What further delights of free-market choice have we to come? Will there be more listeria and clostridium botulinum cases? Will we see bovine spongiform encephalopathy spread to humans and become an epidemic? Will we see a reduction in standards of water quality—so that the Government can sell off a monopoly with more liabilities than assets—resulting in an epidemic of cryptosporida or enteric viruses?

The free market is a 19th century myth, and to apply it to 20th century food production is bordering on insanity. The report has illustrated that fact graphically.

7.17 pm

**Mr. Paul Marland** (Gloucestershire, West): In strict response to the subject of this debate as to whether the cost of this intervention scheme was good value for the taxpayers, I must say that I believe that the money spent was essential and gave good value to the taxpayers and to the consumers. Apart from anything else, it stabilised the egg market. If there had been panic slaughtering of chickens, there would have been a massive drop in production and we should not only have had imported eggs, with all the dangers that that implies, but the price of home-grown eggs would have soared.

I believe that it was the Government's responsibility to find that money because it was as a result of a Minister's blunder that the matter blew up in the way that it did. In

my view, the Government were liable and it was right that they should come forward with the money. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) agrees with me. He said that £3 million was expensive, but had there been a panic slaughter of, say, 25 per cent. of the chicken flock, there would have been a massively increased surplus of cereals. I have it on reliable authority that the extra cost of storing those cereals and buying them into intervention would have been £110 million, rather than the £3 million that the hon. Gentleman criticises.

**Dr. David Clark:** To make the matter quite clear, when the Minister introduced the claim in December—the hon. Gentleman will recall this as I believe that he was present—we supported the Minister, who had no alternative, because we feared the import of eggs and poultry from countries where conditions would not be so good as those in this country.

**Mr. Marland:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. It is helpful to have that cleared up. I wanted to make the point about the £110 million as against the £3 million. Fair is fair—I will accept the hon. Gentleman's point if he will accept mine.

There is no point in reiterating what has already been said about the report. I confirm that we on the Select Committee considered its contents very carefully. Like others, I am grateful for the remarks that have been made about the effort that we put in on this and I add my words of good will and my compliments to the Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), whom I think one can describe as being in most cases fair and firm. I hope that our report has brought some sense of order to the situation and will help to get things into proportion and serve as a useful background document to any further consideration of salmonella in eggs or micro-organisms in food generally. The report attempts to show the way forward.

The report highlights the fact that Ministers have a responsibility to be measured in their actions and in their responses to any situation. I do not believe that since 3 December Ministers have done anything wrong. The hype and hysteria and the genuine desire of people to know what the situation is have focused a great deal of attention on the whole subject, which in itself has demanded instant attention and cried out for instant action. But instant action in this situation is not possible—we have to find out the facts before the Government and Ministers pontificate on the subject. People are confused and they want a guide as to what is safe and what will happen in the future.

The Government's action and speed of reaction to the correct information have been highlighted and complemented in the lead article in this week's *Farmers Weekly*, which gave the Government eight out of 10 for the way in which they responded to and handled the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Such a high score from a magazine not usually disposed to write complimentary things about the Government is a great credit to my hon. Friend the Minister. The magazine's only reservation is one that I share—it felt that if farmers found that their animals were suffering from a notifiable disease and informed the Ministry they should have 100 per cent. compensation for slaughter. I agree because it is all too easy to slip an animal into the market if one thinks it is showing any signs of a notifiable disease before one has to notify it. It would be sensible to give 100 per cent. compensation and I hope that my hon Friend will consider that.

I emphasise again that the Government need a steady hand when dealing with these emergencies. We have seen the damage that hype and hysteria can do. We have also seen, with other measures that the Government have taken to try to give guidance to the public, that if things are dealt with quietly and steadily they can be effective. The introduction of seat belts and warnings against smoking, alcohol and AIDS, for instance, have been handled gently and steadily and people have gone home, considered what has been said and acted accordingly. I do not think that hysteria is the way to deal with such matters.

For all their self-righteous indignation, members of the Labour party—with the exception of those on the Select Committee—have contributed little of value to the debate. I do not remember their ever acting in the consumer's best interest. Throughout this whole episode they have fed the nation's worst fears with scurrilous remarks which have absolutely no foundation. Saying that the Ministry of Agriculture is in the pocket of the farmers is about as accurate as saying that the Department of Energy is in the pocket of the coalminers. The nation deserves a steady hand, and I believe that that is what we have both at the Ministry of Agriculture and at the Department of Health.

We need full details of research, and perhaps more research. A review of Government research and the publication of that information would be most helpful. With the benefit of hindsight, if the Government publish this information for goodness' sake let us try to do a better job than we did with the publishing of Sir Donald Acheson's advice on what to do about eggs. If ever I saw a diabolical advertisement, that was it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Scaremongering."] That is a matter of opinion.

As the Select Committee report states, we need an information and education campaign for cooks, whether private or commercial, male or female. In a recent *Which?* report published earlier this week in most of the national newspapers all manner of dangers were revealed. It spoke of dog hairs in the kitchen, cats on the washing up, dirty dishes left in the sink, inaccurate defrosting of food, wrong storage of food that is not defrozen and the inaccurate setting of refrigerator temperatures, all of which can induce salmonella in food.

I know of a friendly vet in Gloucestershire who has done some experiments on listeria to see whether and how it is controlled by cooking. He injected listeria into meat and then took two similar samples. He put one in a conventional oven and cooked it in the normal way. This killed 99 per cent. of the listeria, as he found when he tested the sample afterwards. He cooked the other sample in a microwave oven. When he tested it, he found that only 25 per cent. of the listeria had been killed. This is very important. In their own best interests, the public should be told these things and how to handle a microwave oven. I also know an intelligent grandmother who proved the point by putting her grandchild's milk in the microwave oven to heat it. The top part of the bottle of milk was nice and warm, probably a little over body temperature, and the bottom was still stone cold. Luckily she knew what to do and fed the baby the milk only when it reached a steady temperature. But that proves that microwave ovens need careful handling.

This is not a finger-pointing exercise, but I believe that the people of this country want to know the truth. I

*[Mr. Marland]*

wonder if schools could have more of an input into teaching young people how to go about cooking. Years ago we used to learn domestic science, but sadly that has now been dropped from too many schools and the children learn something else. Boys as well as girls should be taught. We are moving into new systems of food production which necessitate different handling of food in the kitchen. There must be a new regime of food preparation and a new awareness of the dangers of prepared foods. Changed circumstances necessitate new guidance. Many supermarkets are being thoroughly responsible in highlighting the way in which their customers should store and defrost food, but we still need more information—information rather than direction. I should not like to see the banning of green-top milk or soft cheeses, wherever they come from, because we could be banning shellfish next. Conservative Members do not want to live in a nanny state —we want information, not direction. The Opposition like direction and nannies, but that is not how it is with us.

The problem should not be underestimated. People both within and outside the House want information and guidance. Being a practical person, I intend to do what I can to get information to feed to my hon. Friend the Minister and the Department of Health. I am doing that by having a public meeting in my constituency on 22 March. I have invited a local doctor, a representative of a supermarket chain, with whom I came into contact at Gloucester chamber of trade and commerce, a microbiologist from the public health laboratory in Gloucestershire Royal hospital, egg producers from Day Lay in Monmouth and an environmental health officer. I, of course, will be in the chair. I hope that we shall receive some interesting information from the meeting and I shall pass it on to my hon. Friend the Minister. I know that we can all depend on him and his colleagues to do the right thing with it.

7.30 pm

**Mr. Calum Macdonald** (Western Isles): It is with great pleasure that I join with other colleagues who served on the Select Committee in complimenting the Chairman on his deft, sensitive and, happily, at times lighthearted handling of the Committee. I also thank and compliment the clerk who served the Committee, his assistant and the advisers and others who served so expertly and did a tremendous job behind the scenes to produce the report. It was with great satisfaction and some pride that I served on the Committee and participate in tonight's debate.

The Select Committee report is very important, not just in its subject matter, which clarifies the position on salmonella and eggs, but in establishing the powers of Select Committees. The Committee handled a politically sensitive topic in a unanimous way. I also pay tribute to the courage shown by Conservative Members who served on the Committee; they did the Select Committee system a great service.

Rather than go over the ground of the report, I shall comment on the Minister's opening speech this afternoon. His speech was empty, and his various excuses to try to explain away the report's criticisms were unconvincing. The Minister cited the difficulty of achieving Utopia on earth as an excuse for some of the Government's failures and incompetences. When a Minister starts explaining his failures by saying that there is no such thing as Utopia, it is a sign that he is in trouble.

Another excuse used by the Minister and other hon. Members who have spoken was that it was not fair to criticise the Government using the benefit of hindsight, and that certain matters could not have been anticipated before the Government acted. However, some of the report's most telling criticisms cannot be excused or deflected by talking of the benefit of hindsight. There was no hindsight involved in the Ministry's failure to prevent eggs from farms deemed responsible for food poisoning outbreaks from entering the food chain. It simply failed to take the necessary action. Likewise, it is no use saying that it is only with hindsight that one realises that the Department of Health should have issued advice to the public at the same time as it issued advice to the National Health Service. The vulnerable groups concerned were at large in the public as well as in NHS hospitals.

Paragraph 60 of the report deals with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Government's failure to take the statutory powers necessary to prevent feed found to be contaminated with salmonella from being sold. That does not involve hindsight, either of the Committee or of the Opposition Members who have criticised the Government. As the report states,

"the action should have been taken several years ago."

The Government cannot hide behind the excuse of hindsight.

The third excuse that we have heard from the Minister and Conservative Members is to concentrate attention on what the report describes as skilful handling of the intervention package. The Opposition gave credit where credit was due and agreed that the intervention package was handled skilfully. The Minister chose to dwell on that at great length in his speech. However, to use that as an excuse for the earlier failures——

**Mr. Ryder:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, the motion before the House today deals with the intervention package, which is why I dwelt on it.

**Mr. Macdonald:** I think that the Minister dwelt on that topic with a great deal of relief and loving attention, thereby hoping to deflect some of the report's criticisms. For the Government or their Back-Bench defenders to try to use that argument to exempt the Government from criticism is like a motorist who has knocked down a pedestrian claiming credit for skilfully administering the kiss of life afterwards.

We must consider—as does the report—the earlier problems and failures that led to the crisis which necessitated the intervention package. At least the Minister is here to defend his Department. It is a cause of great regret that no representative from the Department of Health is present, even to listen. The report covers that Department's failures and shortcomings as well as those of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It would have been sensible for a Minister from the Health Department to be present to hear some of the comments made by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the failure of the Health Department and the Secretary of State for Health's inadequate response to the report's criticisms of him. He has tried to brush off some of the criticisms as being ridiculous and preposterous.

When I raised the question of the Secretary of State's responsibility in an earlier debate on a similar topic, the

Secretary of State tried to deny any failure on his part or that of his Department. He said that there was nothing wrong in the way that his Department had handled the difficult task of explaining to the public what was meant by the then junior Minister's statement on 3 December 1988. The Secretary of State said that the appropriate person to handle the matter was the chief medical officer and that no blame should be attached to him or to the Department for the way in which the affair was handled.

That still strikes me as somewhat mysterious. If there was nothing wrong with the way in which the Department of Health handled the fallout from the 3 December statement, one wonders why the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South was allowed to resign. If, on the other hand, she was right to resign, surely the Secretary of State must carry some of the blame, because he was her superior.

This is where I differ from the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He rightly attacked the cavalier attitude of the Secretary of State to the criticisms made of him in the report, but he was wrong to insert a wedge between the responsibility borne by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South and by the Secretary of State, because the responsibility for the crisis and failure of communication was shared by both. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North said that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South should carry a political health warning, but, although her original statement was undoubtedly wrong, as was her refusal to correct it, the Secretary of State was equally wrong in his handling of her statement. Hereafter he, too, should carry a political health warning.

One of the things that strikes me about the comments that the Select Committee saw fit to make about the Government's handling of the salmonella problem was how much they parallel criticisms that we made in an earlier report on Chernobyl. Then, as now, we found a slowness to act and delays in taking vital decisions. Then, as now, we found confusion and lack of co-ordination between Ministries. On both occasions we found a failure to inform the public in time or adequately. Perhaps if the Government had taken our earlier criticisms to heart they would have avoided falling into the same mistakes on this occasion—but they did not, and they still do not.

The Minister mentioned the salmonella control programme being undertaken in Sweden. I asked the Minister a parliamentary question about that this week. I understand that the Ministry sent some officers to Sweden to examine its salmonella eradication and control programme. I understood that a report had been prepared on the programme and on its success or otherwise, and I asked the Ministry to deposit that report in the Library so that hon. Members could have the benefit of some of the information on which Ministers rely when making statements. Unfortunately, the Ministry responded that it would be inappropriate to place the report in the Library for the benefit of hon. Members. After all the problems and travails that the Ministry has undergone because of its failure to be open, such secrecy is deplorable.

As I have said, many criticisms parallel to those that have been made of the Government on this occasion are to be found in earlier reports such as the one on Chernobyl. There is, however, one vital difference. One of the causes for the Government's mishandling of the affair has been what some have termed their cosy relationship with the producers. This is not a broad-brush criticism; I do not say that the Government enjoy a cosy relationship with all producers. I sometimes regret that they are not more sympathetic to some producers. But if we contrast the Government's intervention package after the salmonella egg scare with their handling of the rescue package after Chernobyl, the cosy relationship with the egg producers can clearly be seen.

Tonight, the Minister said that the Government were determined that there should be no half measures about the intervention package for eggs, but when it was a question of compensating the hill farmers who were affected by the Chernobyl fallout the Government took the line that the farmers would have to accept some rough justice. The contrast is obvious——

**Dr. David Clark:** Before my hon. Friend leaves Chernobyl, and in order to emphasise his point about obsessive secrecy, may I ask him whether he is aware that the Ministry of Agriculture is holding a public meeting tonight in Cumbria to explain to the farmers in the restricted areas the results of the aerial survey? The only trouble is that the Ministry has not supplied copies——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker):** Order. By decision of the House, the debate must be confined to salmonella in eggs. Has the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) concluded his speech?

**Mr. Macdonald:** I have not. I agree with my hon. Friend, who has cited another example of the Government's deplorable lack of openness.

A group of producers in Scotland who do not enjoy such a cosy relationship with the Government are the fishermen, who have been affected by the quota cuts in haddock and cod. Another group are the hill farmers, who will lose out under the sheepmeat regime. When these cases have been brought to the Ministry's attention, it replies that it will have to assess the effect on their incomes retrospectively—no question of rushing in with an intervention package of £19 million to help fishermen or hill farmers in Scotland.

The lesson to be learnt from this episode is that ordinary people who do not possess the economic clout of the large producers—fishermen, small hill farmers and ordinary consumers—cannot look to the Government for protection. They can look only to the Opposition for protection and support.

7.48 pm

**Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop** (Tiverton): Earlier in the debate, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) alluded, in a witty and informative speech, to the proceedings before the Select Committee that produced this report. In one respect he was in error. He said—I think that I quote the substance of his comment accurately—that if a Member of this House appeared before a Select Committee and did not answer its questions, there was nothing that the Select Committee could do about it.

**Mr. Wiggin:** I said that.

**Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop:** I am sorry, it appears to have been the Chairman of the Select Committee. However, I think that hon. Members will find that it was also said by my right hon. Friend. The comment was not correct.

This House sets up Select Committees by an Order of the House and empowers them with their terms of reference. If a Select Committee's inquiries fall within

*[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop]*

those terms of reference and if it finds it cannot continue its inquiries to the point of the production of the report, either because a Member of this House refuses to attend or because a Member of this House does attend, but refuses to answer the questions that the Committee puts to him which are within its terms of reference, it makes a special report to the House stating those facts. The Leader of the House is then, by convention, bound to move a motion from the Dispatch Box ordering the hon. Member concerned to attend the sitting of the Select Committee at a time notified by its Chairman and there to answer to the satisfaction of the Committee—not to the satisfaction of the House—the questions that the Committee addresses to that hon. Member. The position is not obscure; it is clear.

Select Committees are chosen by the Select Committee of Selection, not by the normal channels. The House, which sets up the Committees to do a job for it, grants them the power to do that job. It is perfectly true that the Chairman cannot issue a witness summons to a Member of either House, as he can to anyone else. The remedy that applies to a Member of this House, which does not, of course, apply to a Member of another place, lies in a special report. It is then the duty of the Leader of the House, who moves the motion in the first place setting up the Committee, to move the motion in the name of the House directing the hon. Member to attend and to answer the questions put to him or her. It is as well that that should be put on the record.

I read the report carefully, as soon as it come out. My judgment is that the Committee had discharged admirably its duty to the House. It would have been easy for it to produce a report lacking in precision or lacking in scope. It avoided both of those pitfalls and the whole House has reason to be grateful to the Committee and its Chairman for their industry and also for their lucidity, both of which can be seen in the report.

May I also commend the Committee's use of heavy type, which makes it easier to identify the recommendations from the general text. I want to focus on section (vii) of the part of the report which is headed "Countermeasures". It is of crucial importance, and I was disappointed that my hon. Friend the Minister, in responding to the Committee's report on behalf of the Government, ignored it. It is an important section and is headed "Imported Eggs". It says:

"S. enteritidis is not confined to Great Britain, but the Government's present powers do not allow it to prevent the importation of infected eggs as readily as it can ban imported protein."

May I mention in passing that the treaty of Rome allows importation bans if they are bona fide for the protection of health? If we are not talking about the protection of health, we are not talking about anything at all. It is clear to me that bans on infected food fall within the bona fide protection of health provision. I imagine that that would be so even after 1 January 1993, which is so often referred to as 1992, as I must say for the avoidance of doubt. Importation bans are a necessary protective measure.

I now come on to a part of the report in heavy type.

"We recommend"

said our Committee, because it is a Committee that reports to the whole House,

"that MAFF study how far imported eggs are contributing to the present problem; and whether any tighter restrictions are needed."

The report then goes back into normal type and the Committee tells us:

"Since the UK is not alone in the European Community in having a problem with poultry-borne salmonellas"—

and here the report continues in heavy type—

"MAFF should press for Community initiatives to prevent the trade of infected products; and should hold similar discussions with other trading partners."

There are good precedents for such a step. For a long time, we have been concerned that two EEC countries in particular—Holland and West Germany—have been sending pork meat products to this country that are so lightly cooked that they have caused outbreaks of disease in our pigs, when discarded sandwiches and food, inadequately recooked, have found their way into the diet of pigs. There is nothing new in saying that we need to intervene in the EEC to raise the standards in other countries. However, the last observation in bold type that I quoted does not remove the necessity for the first.

Unless and until the other EEC countries adopt measures and enforce them—the one does not necessarily, alas, entail the other—which will result in salmonella-infected eggs not being exported to the United Kingdom, we are perfectly entitled at the moment, as I read the treaty of Rome, to ban them at the port of entry. However, in practical terms, that could be done only if the eggs were inspected, because nobody will know whether they are infected unless they are inspected. It is here that we come up against the difficulty that unless and until we have a national inspection scheme, funded nationally on the Estimates that we are discussing today, we shall not have effective control over imported eggs. As this excellent report says, the only way in which one can tell whether an egg is infected is by penetrating its shell and testing what is inside. That is not in dispute. There must be, therefore, extensive sampling of imported eggs.

Such sampling would be far too much of a financial burden to impose on inspectors paid from the rates, which are rigidly controlled by the Government. That is why it must be a task adopted by central Government and charged to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or to the Department of Health. I said that in last Monday's agriculture debate, but it is wholly relevant to the debate today. Effective import controls to prevent the ingress of disease will not be achieved at bargain-basement costs. All the money that the Department is spending on controlling this disease will not achieve the confidence in this product of the consumer unless the market is protected from the infection of salmonella-bearing imported eggs. I do not believe that many consumers notice whether they are buying imported eggs. If they get salmonella poisoning from eggs, as far as they are concerned they are getting it from eggs, and eggs are eggs. It is no good asking them, "Are you sure that it was not an imported egg?" They will attribute it to a failure of the measures taken by the Government and the industry.

Let me say how glad I am that my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare and his Committee also focused on the importance of hygiene in the catering industry and in the home. People do not smell their own breath. If they get salmonella poisoning from an egg, the last thing that they will believe is that it is because they cracked the egg on a dirty draining board in case it leaked out, and that from that draining board—which had previously had raw meat on it and had not subsequently been cleaned with disinfectant or boiling water—the egg

picked up salmonella. They will be convinced that the salmonella must have been in the egg when they bought it. They may have beaten it with an egg whisk which had been lying on the draining board before being used. Why? Because the draining board is a convenient place to wash up.

**Mr. Marland:** It is where the cat sits.

**Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop:** Very possibly it is.

These are important considerations. I do not suppose that I am the only Member to receive letters from constituents who applaud free-range eggs but decry the Government for not preventing salmonella poisoning. What has become clear from the report, if it was not clear before, is the significantly increased risk of salmonella in free-range eggs, which are exposed to the droppings of wild birds which may themselves be infected.

Apart from that, as the report points out, if the eggshell is dirty with the faeces of the hen that laid it—which is less likely in the case of battery hens, because their conditions are designed in such a way that it does not happen—there is a greater likelihood that the eggs will be contaminated at the moment of breaking.

The report makes useful reading not only for Members of the House of Commons but for women's institutes and mothers' unions, so that the message about home hygiene —whether it relates to eggs or to many other forms of food —is at last really appreciated. It may not be glamorous, but it is necessary if the public expenditure that we are discussing today is to achieve its final objective.

Finally, let me draw attention to the cost of inspecting flocks. If blood tests are to be taken, that could well be very expensive. I imagine that a separate needle will be required for every bird, for the same reason that separate disposable needles are now used when different people are given blood tests or injections by their local general practitioners. If the test on one bird is not to give a false result resulting from the test on another, the procedure is likely to be very costly.

If the cost is borne by our producers, whose eggs will be priced out of the market, the United Kingdom produced eggs or the imported eggs which do not have to bear the cost? As the imported eggs carry a much greater risk of infection, is it in the interests of the consuming public for the cost of the tests to be borne from central Government funds, or should it be borne by the producer, with the result that people must eat untested imported eggs?

I think that the question answers itself, as important questions so often do if we put them clearly and logically. The message that must reach the Treasury from the debate is that a significant amount of increased public expenditure will be necessary if we are to protect the integrity of the food chain—from the food delivered to the producer to the birds producing the eggs, and subsequently to the shops where the eggs are sold and the homes or catering establishments where they are consumed.

Catering establishments are not just cafeterias. As I queued for 10 minutes yesterday to pay for my petrol at a motorway service station, I watched fascinated as for the whole of those 10 minutes the door of the refrigerator containing sandwiches was left open while a girl put in packets of sandwiches, removed the prices and re-priced —I hope that that was what she was doing—the sandwiches already inside. The door of the refrigerator, a cabinet, was open for all the time that I was there, and the House will be interested to learn that there were egg sandwiches within. The final part of the food chain may be in a café or restaurant; it may be in a home; but it may also be in the self-service cabinets that are now to be found all over the place.

If we want value for money from the additional public expenditure involved in preventing the consuming public from becoming infected with salmonella, those are some of the aspects that we shall have to watch.

8.6 pm

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (Antrim, East): I am happy to have the opportunity to congratulate the Select Committee and its Chairman on the speed with which they acted to limit the damage done to egg producers in the United Kingdom, and particularly in Northern Ireland, as a result of the crisis caused by the ill-chosen remarks of the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health. That reported, headline-grabbing comment created unjustified fears among consumers and dramatic falls in egg consumption, to the loss of those throughout the United Kingdom whose livelihood was directly associated with egg production.

We should not forget that egg producers are also egg consumers. They have young children and elderly relatives who could be vulnerable, and they are unlikely to engage in any egg production practice that could threaten their livelihoods, their own health, that of their loved ones or that of consumers. I welcome the report and its recommendations. I feel reassured, as will my constituents, by the fact that no evidence was found to support the assertion that most egg production was infected with salmonella, whether that was taken to mean most eggs or most flocks.

Hon. Members have referred a good deal to food hygiene. If consumers cook eggs thoroughly for vulnerable groups—recognising that there is a small risk with uncooked eggs—and follow the chief medical officer's advice, I am confident that any risk of illness can be avoided. Experts agree, however, that salmonellas are impossible to eradicate, so it is important that every housewife—indeed, every individual who cooks in a kitchen or prepares food for sale—recognises the dangers that can be caused by the careless storage or handling of food.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** Does the hon. Gentleman not feel that there is a part to be played by education and that young people at school should be taught in home economics about the necessity for hygiene in the home? Sadly, that subject is not included in the national curriculum.

**Mr. Beggs:** I thank the hon. Member for that very constructive intervention. Having been a teacher for many years, and having encouraged every boy in the first three years of his attendance at secondary school to gain experience in cooking and domestic hygiene, I feel that as adults those who have not had that experience will be greatly disadvantaged and perhaps—I hope not—there could be some risk to health due to the absence of first-hand knowledge of domestic hygiene. It is to be hoped that the Government will encourage an education programme not just for young people but to promote greater public awareness generally. I know, for example, that many people deliberately order cracked eggs for

*[Mr. Beggs]*

baking and cooking. That is fine if they receive them fresh and use them immediately, but carelessly stored eggs provide an excellent medium for the growth of bacteria and people who allow shells to get damp, and so on, are creating a risk for those who may use food cooked with such eggs.

Reference has been made to the large number of eggs imported into Great Britain and the risk from foreign eggs. I shall not mention the sources that have already been mentioned, but I take the opportunity to remind the House that no case of salmonella enteritidis has been found in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, because the majority of eggs produced in Northern Ireland are exported, particularly to the rest of the United Kingdom, the salmonella scare had a very serious effect on Northern Ireland egg producers.

First, there was the effect on egg consumption in Northern Ireland, which fell dramatically. Despite the fact that no cases of salmonella were found in Northern Ireland, the publicity—much of which was well-intentioned—carried on after the damage was done, continuing to make the situation worse, and this had a significant detrimental effect on local consumption. Secondly, the scare in the rest of the United Kingdom resulted in a very substantial fall in demand. Indeed, the fall was so great that production in Great Britain was able to meet demand and there was no need to import eggs from Northern Ireland, so producers there were left with eggs that they could not sell. Local producers in Northern Ireland thus lost heavily as a result of the scare and, despite the Government's advertising programme and reassurance that the salmonella danger was greatly exaggerated, demand is still well below normal.

The intervention package introduced to help producers by taking eggs off the market and culling egg-laying birds did not have a great take-up—first, due to the short period of operation and, secondly, due to the fact that producers were not likely to kill young birds. Had the scheme been for older birds, the take-up would have been much greater.

Although there have been no cases of salmonella enteritidis in Northern Ireland, I am pleased to assure the House that there is no complacency and that the industry there has a working party involving the union and the Department of Agriculture, working together on codes of practice to tighten up the already high health standards in Northern Ireland. I hope that hon. Members will acknowledge that the large quantities of eggs exported from Northern Ireland to Great Britain are not "foreign" eggs but very pure eggs and that Northern Ireland has the highest possible health standards and health record as regards our farm livestock and the food products that we export. Indeed, an opportunist might say that Northern Ireland egg producers should be aggressively marketing their eggs at a premium here on the mainland because I believe that people would be willing to pay a premium for the purity of the eggs supplied.

Since the scare, I have not altered my own habits—confident in the knowledge that the eggs produced locally in Northern Ireland are absolutely free of salmonella infection. I continue to eat hard-boiled, scrambled or lightly fried eggs. For those who have not tried it, an excellent tonic is raw eggs—provided that they come from a good source—with a little brandy to give people a lift if they are feeling low. I shall probably need exactly that after I have finished here this evening.

'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and I am satisfied that after all the public discussion since the salmonella crisis erupted poultry meals will no longer be included in layers' rations. Myth or no myth, in my opinion such recycling within the food chain is offensive. I do not want ever to eat any such product, no matter how well sterilised the previous product was before it was fed to any farm livestock, and I hope no former animal protein will be included in livestock feed.

Northern Ireland producers have still not recovered from the damage done and I am disappointed that the Government did not take the opportunity to emphasise and re-emphasise widely that eggs produced in Northern Ireland were salmonella-free. Nevertheless, I commend all those responsible for the report and trust that the Government will act quickly to implement all the recommendations put forward so that full consumer confidence can be restored.

8.18 pm

**Mr. David Curry** (Skipton and Ripon): I join my colleagues in congratulating the Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), on the way in which he handled our meetings.

This report raises three essential issues to do with the way in which the Government handle crises. I would like to focus upon the inter-relationship between when the problem is dealt with at an administrative level and when it emerges at the political level. We have to look first at the handling of the pre-crisis within the Ministry of Agriculture—the crisis I am talking about is the great debate of December—and the co-ordination of the response across two Ministries because two Ministries were centrally involved in this. Finally, we need to examine the crisis management during that short period in December and what followed it.

The key to the first issue, the pre-crisis situation in MAFF, is at what point the doubts being expressed about health and the safety of the product should be translated from the administrative to the political arena. Ministers do not walk into their office on Monday morning and say, "Well chaps, how many prosecutions have there been under the Zoonoses Order since last Friday?" They have to deal with such a crowding of events that they must depend upon being alerted when events which have been rolling on in the Ministry begin to emerge as a problem which warrants political attention.

The first question that the report asks is whether those warnings were effectively coming through to Ministers. Were the people in the Ministry who had been dealing with those matters for months, if not longer, alert to the political liabilities that were building up for Ministers? Under the British system we have ministerial responsibility. It is entirely right that a Minister should at the end collect whatever flak is appropriate. However, it is also important that there should be an effective upward flow of information. If the job of civil servants is to protect their Ministers, their job must also be to warn their Ministers of any problem.

I deduce from my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare and from the evidence given to the

Select Committee that the first time that the discussions reached a ministerial level was as late as November. For example, there had been no ministerial meetings with the industry before November. Before November there had been no plans to make codes statutory rather than voluntary. It must have been obvious before that that this was a sensitive issue and we are correct to criticise the slow pace at which matters evolved within the Ministry.

It is right to ask why that might have been. One reason must be because, in a sense, the Ministry of Agriculture is a Ministry apart. It spends a great deal of its time dealing with Brussels and the problems of the common agricultural policy. It has not been at the forefront of the great reforming drive of the past few years which has hit the headlines. It may not have become accustomed to dealing with politicised issues as may have become the case in other Departments.

It is equally true to say that there has probably been a weary déjà vu about problems of surplus and mountains affecting the Department. There must have been a weary repetition of the sort of problems that were constantly brought to the Minister's attention. Therefore, when there were warnings, whether they came from the Department of Health or internally within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, they were not acted upon urgently enough, or they were not understood or they were not pressed hard upon Ministers.

It is also true to say that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is still fairly producer-oriented. I do not accuse Ministers. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) was present earlier. Over the past few years the way in which the Ministry goes about many of its problems has changed fundamentally. However, the Ministry's origins mean that basic concern with producer interests is still deeply rooted within the Department.

In addition, the Government have set their stamp upon the notion that they are a deregulatory rather than a dirigiste Government. Therefore, I do not blame civil servants if they are reluctant about recommending to Ministers measures which might have a dirigiste stamp about them when they know that the inclination of their political masters is to move in the opposite direction.

That brings me to another difficulty that the report highlighted. Even if it had been agreed that action should be taken and measures enforced, the legal basis for that was inadequate. There were no prosecutions under the Zoonoses Order. One or two show trials would have been useful if only pour encourager les autres. That was not possible, and I am sure that that was because the advice would have been that there would be a danger of a judicial review and a defeat because of the legislation in train.

When the problem emerged in the political theatre, the action was prompt. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister because it was he who took the issue by the scruff of its neck, after which we saw rapid and effective action. My reproach is not directed towards the political level but towards the inter-relationship between the administrative and political levels.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was not the only Department involved. The Department of Health was involved. What do we know about inter-departmental communications? At what level were contacts made? Again I deduce from the evidence given that there were no ministerial contacts between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry of Health at any early stage, but there must have been contacts between the Departments at other levels. At what level did they take place? They must have been at a senior level. There must have been such contacts. The Department of Health's anxiety must have been expressed within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. So we come to the problem of the transmission of that concern at the point at which Ministers say, "Hello, we have a problem. We had better look at this. There is something here that does not feel quite right." I realise that in a sense that is a matter of political intuition, but it is a legitimate subject for concern.

Then we come to the crisis management of the famous events of December when my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) made her comments about the safety of eggs in a pre-arranged television interview. I am a professional journalist; a television reporter. I paid my subs to the National Union of Journalists only a few days ago. What would I do if such remarks were made to me? This is a matter for conjecture, but I would get hold of a Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to corroborate the statement. I do not know whether those involved were successful in getting hold of the Minister, but I know jolly well that they would have chased him. That is what I would have done. That would have been my immediate reaction.

What does the Minister do? If he has any sense, he says, "Hold your horses. Let me find out what she said". He then gets on to his Department who gets on to the Department of Health. The telephone wires go berserk. I am sure that the whole matter was conducted in a civilised way. It is merely my hypothesis that this was most likely to have happened. Representations would then have been made to discover what was said and to find out what was to be done.

The Department of Health then has a problem. It has a choice to make. One possibility is that it can go straight in front of the television cameras and say, "This is not true. This is wrong. We deny it. We argue with the statement." My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was on his way to Montreal at that point, so we are talking about an argument between junior Ministers. A public dispute between junior Ministers is not an edifying spectacle. Therefore, it is entirely correct that at that point the focus should have been upon seeking clarification of the remarks to try to nip things in the bud by retraction or some sort of explanation of the remarks.

Was such a clarification sought? I surmise that it must have been. Was it refused? I suspect that it must have been denied at that point. That failure to clarify meant that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the producers were then put in the position of refuting an allegation. There was no requirement to substantiate the allegation. That is contrary to everything that I have learnt, even as an amateur of the principles of English law where one is innocent until proven guilty.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health came to the House and told us what the situation was. The Government's chief medical officer was sent in to bat. In the absence of a clarification from the author of those remarks, we had a drama involving Hamlet without the princess. That was the key to the problem. When, later on, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South said that she stood by her remarks we

*[Mr. David Curry]*

were going downhill all the way. The crisis management was extremely difficult in any case, but it got beyond control at a fairly early stage.

When we got over that hump and reached the position when it was necesary to put measures in place, we saw crisis management at its best. The Government acted responsibly and quickly and, as it proved, economically. That floor was put under the industry, albeit at a late stage, because of events, and it prevented what was a defeat from turning into a rout. From the figures that we have had today, we know that consumption is now significantly down. But that package was opportune and well constructed and it turned out to be economical as well. In congratulating the Ministry on doing that, our report is quite justified, just as it is justified in its criticisms where they have been made. I am sure that everyone will recognise the essential equilibrium of the balance at the heart of the report.

My conclusion is that, while we need not shift furniture around, we must make sure that the Department has an effective mechanism for the vertical transmission of information within it and also that, where Departments have to co-ordinate, they do so in an effective manner. The least good remedy would be to create yet another institution which would require co-ordination with yet more bodies.

The lessons from this experience are to make sure that those Ministries and other existing bodies operate effectively and that we do not attempt to solve a problem simply by an institutional rearrangement because, in the end, it is efficiency of the people that matters, not the geography of the institutions. It would be an entirely wrong appreciation of the problem if we went in that direction instead of recognising that it is the quality of the people that is essential to this debate.

The report is both apposite and balanced. I am pleased that we have been able to sign it, despite one or two reticences at an earlier stage in the procedure, and I am happy to join in the congratulations to the Committee's Chairman who has made such a good job of representing us here in this Chamber, as he has done throughout the debate.

8.31 pm

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones** (Ynys Môn): I congratulate the Chairman and members of the Select Committee in performing such an admirable public duty, the speed with which it conducted its affairs and presented its report and for its service not only to the House but to the public generally, both producers and consumers. I would also like to compliment the House on the responsible way in which, for the most part, this debate has been conducted, in that we have tried to draw the lessons from the whole salmonella affair.

I detected at an early stage that panic was setting in, following the remarks of the then junior Health Minister, because I went to a restaurant in the capital city of Wales, Cardiff, shortly afterwards and from the menu I saw that, for the first time ever, I could order a mixed grill with or without eggs. That showed me that the retail side of the trade in restaurants was panicking. What was remarkable was that the people who were actually buying the eggs were not panicking as much as people who were buying them in the restaurants. Although the retailers were not prepared to buy eggs from producers, very often the consumer was perfectly happy to buy them.

One could see immediately the remark was made that producers would suffer. I declare an interest in that my son keeps a few hens. As he had decided that there might be a few pennies in it for him, we decided to carry out an academic exercise. We bought a little book and worked out a profit and loss account. My son suddenly realised that there was not a lot of money in eggs, that the margins were extremely low and that he would have to have a very large flock of hens before he could get a return and pay himself a decent wage. So he and I both knew, as soon as that remark was made and because we were aware of the very small margins for most egg producers, that they would be in deep financial trouble very quickly.

What was required at an early date was that confidence in eggs should be restored. The problem was that the Department of Health consistently refused to contradict the statement of the junior Health Minister. All that happened when the Secretary of State for Health came to the House was that he repeated over and over the view of the chief medical officer. Unfortunately, the public was still left with the view of the junior Health Minister and, unless there was a retraction of her statement, the public would still believe that there was a problem. Until there was an adequate retraction of that statement, we would continue to have problems.

When the Secretary of State for Health came to the House to respond to a private notice question a few days after the event, he adopted a rather cavalier approach to the whole affair, and I am afraid that the House itself in many ways adopted a cavalier approach. The House should remember that what we say here amongst ourselves is reported out there and that the people out there are concerned about things that go on.

When the Secretary of State appeared before the Committee to give evidence and was asked about the junior Health Minister's statement, he said:

> "The statement on the Saturday interview, the material statement if you like, I do not actually have an opinion on because as I said, personally reading it I think it is ambiguous."

The public did not think that it was ambiguous; the public thought that it was a real problem. The Secretary of State was armed with briefings and with all the up-to-date information. He may, therefore, have considered that the statement was ambiguous, but the public did not think that it was. The Minister failed at that stage to contradict the statement; it might have breached collective responsibility. Yet his duty to the producer and the consumer should have meant that at that stage he put the record straight. So collective responsibility within the Government took precedence over the duty of the Government to present information to the public.

I want to compliment the Minister of Agriculture on the way in which he eventually handled the crisis. There is no doubt that market confidence had been lost and that, in view of their small profit margins, egg producers faced financial ruin. The Minister acted properly because he put a floor into the market. He acted responsibly and in the way one would expect a Minister to act, bearing in mind that he was trying to respond to a crisis which was not of his making. The industry itself was pleased with the way in which he eventually reacted.

What lessons do we learn from the crisis? In the way that the political side of it was dealt with, it should have been realised that the unfortunate remark, which was only later and partially retracted in a letter to the Select Committee, should have been retracted earlier, and the Minister should have been able to handle the affair at the Dispatch Box. We could then have ensured that the crisis would not deepen, as eventually it did. The Government should have accepted that responsibility.

The crux of the matter is underlined in paragraph 111 of the report, which says:

"We believe the public is entitled to expect the Government to take, and be seen to take, all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of food."

That clearly is the case and we need to underline it. But do we need a new Department to deal with this? My own view —I speak for no one else on these or other Benches in this regard—is that we probably do not. It is not the structures that are important, but the way that people in the existing Departments respond.

I take the point made in the report that there needs to be greater liaison and co-ordination between Departments. I feel pretty sure that the lesson of the debacle will have been learnt in both Departments and that from now on there will be more liaison and more discussion to ensure that it will not be repeated in future. I commend the report to the House because I believe that it is a responsible report and we should all learn from it.

8.39 pm

**Mr. Ron Davies** (Caerphilly): I begin by replying immediately to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), who concluded that he did not consider that there was a need for any structural change in the organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That gives me the opportunity to reply to the specific question raised by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), who asked what Labour policy was. The Minister will be desperately anxious to hear my answer because tomorrow morning he will have to reassure his advisers that, in the event of a forthcoming Labour victory, they will still be employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am happy to reassure him that we propose to retain the integrity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. However, we propose to establish a food protection agency, an independent body answerable to the Cabinet Office. In direct reply to the question that the Minister asked my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), of course the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be responsible for replying to parliamentary questions in exactly the same way as the Secretary of State for the Environment replies to questions on the Countryside Commission.

I turn to more general matters by saying how much I have enjoyed the debate. I have been present throughout the debate and heard all the speeches. There is no doubt that it has been a full debate and, by and large, it has been a well-informed debate in which nine members of the Select Committee and hon. Members representing all parts of the United Kingdom have spoken. It has been noticeable that there has been agreement across the Floor of the House on several points, which I shall identify, because the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), may draw some comfort from them and may wish to discuss them with Chairmen of other Select Committees. I hope that the Minister will note them because there are some matters which he should consider within his Department. I offer them not as partisan criticism but as an honest attempt to assist the Chairman of the Select Committee and the Minister.

The first matter of agreement is the way in which all hon. Members have congratulated the Chairman of the Select Committee on the presentation of his report and hon. Members on the Select Committee have commended him on his chairmanship and on the way in which he conducted proceedings. The report is a splendid example of good English. It was easy to read and to understand and that has assisted our deliberations.

Secondly, we all recognise that there is a potential hazard in egg consumption. We recognise that the hazard is minimal, but if public confidence is to be maintained the highest standards must be seen to apply and in that respect the Government carry a major responsibility.

Thirdly, and following from that, if we accept that the Government have taken steps to ensure that the highest standards apply in Britain, many hon. Members have expressed a very real fear that imported eggs which will substitute for the disturbed market in Britain may well have been produced in less favourable conditions than those which apply to British egg producers. Obviously, that puts British producers and consumers at a disadvantage. The Minister has been asked several times what he intends to do about that. The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) gave the Minister a direct challenge. I do not expect the Minister to respond this evening, but I urge him to listen carefully to the real concerns that have been voiced. If he is to ensure that the protection that he is extending to domestically-produced eggs is successful, parallel measures must apply to imports. That point has united the House this evening.

Fourthly, Conservative and Opposition Members recognise that the cuts in research during the past 12 months were ill-advised and the Government have to reconsider the extent to which they are withdrawing funding, or the way in which they attempt to define market-led research and identify what research is in the common good.

Fifthly, at the beginning of the debate the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) spoke about the service which had been done to the Select Committee system generally. I add my personal congratulations to the Chairman of the Select Committee on the way in which he conducted the affair of the missing hon. Member, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). No doubt we shall talk about her later. Clearly, a precedent has been established that hon. Members can be required to attend Select Committees. I am only sorry that the Committee did not come to the House and request the House to resolve that the hon. Lady be required to attend and answer to the satisfaction of the Committee. Having read very carefully her responses to the Committee and the questions that were asked but not answered, I felt that she was deliberately refusing to co-operate with the spirit of the questions. She has done the Select Committee system a disservice. To some extent, at least, that has been balanced by the way in which the Committee—with the sole exception of the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry)—unanimously agreed to support the Chairman's request. That bodes well for the Select Committee system.

*[Mr. Ron Davies]*

Finally, the Minister must accept criticism in the report directed against the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health. It is quite clear that when the Select Committee was reaching its conclusions partisan considerations could not have been uppermost in its mind because it had a Conservative majority. I am confident that it was not concerned with scoring political points but rather was concerned to learn the lessons of the events of the past 12 months, to ensure that the Government were aware of how the House of Commons perceived them and that the Government were sufficiently aware to prevent them from happening again.

As for the substance of the report, there is evidence that throughout the 1980s the Government were aware of the existence of a problem of salmonella enteritidis associated with eggs. They were certainly aware of hazards to human health posed by salmonella and therefore alarm bells should have been ringing during 1988 as the number of reported cases rose inexorably and dramatically. The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) raised that matter with my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields, who pointed out the evidence on page 1 of the report showing the marked increase in salmonella infection.

It was the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South who unleashed the storm with her now infamous statement that "most of the egg production of this country, sadly, is now infected with salmonella".

It is my personal regret that she is not present this evening. By her absence, she has shown further her lack of concern for the proceedings of the House and for the damage which she caused the British egg industry and to her Government. I wish to put on record that I wrote to the hon. Lady this afternoon, letting her know that I intended making some remarks about her conduct. *[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has so perceptively noticed, she is not present. I understand that my hon. Friend has been engaged on other Commons business and has not been fully aware of our proceedings. If he wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to give way to him shortly, but first I wish to place on the record one particular point. I refer to the conduct of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to place different interpretations on the statements made by the former junior Health Minister last December. However charitably we may do so, there is no mistaking the impact that her statement was bound to have on British consumers, which was the point made by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn. Here was a Government Health Minister who deliberately and consciously cultivated the art of publicity, and who decided, deliberately and consciously, to draw the attention of the British public, via the media, to what the Government perceived to be health problems. Whether they were associated with smoking, diet, AIDS or hypothermia, the hon. Lady deliberately drew those matters to public attention by the use of colourful, extravagant language.

The hon. Lady, speaking as a Government Health Minister, said that

"most . . . production of this country, sadly, is now infected".

She did not say "some" production or "part" of the production, but "most" production. In her words, the majority of production was infected with salmonella. Last year saw a massive rise in salmonella poisoning, and the public knew that it could kill. The public knew that there had been a dramatic rise in the incidence of salmonella poisoning throughout 1988 and it was small wonder that in December 1988, in the light of the junior Minister's statement, the public reacted as they did, and small wonder that the market for British eggs went through the floor.

In the early weeks of last December, the British egg industry suffered a 50 per cent. drop in consumption and, at times, an 80 per cent. drop in sales. Catastrophe loomed, redundancies were announced, and a whole industry was threatened. The Government had to act, and act they did —in a way that has brought commendations from the Select Committee. While we may have had our differences with the Government when their rescue package was announced and while, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields made clear, there were points of detail that we challenged, we unequivocally supported the Government's rescue package. The package won the commendation of the Select Committee and all right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken this evening have also commended the Government on the way in which the package was designed and on the way in which it operated to put a floor in the market.

Nearly £20 million was allocated from public funds with the objective of putting a floor in the market. That £20 million was the immediate and minimum sum that the British public were asked to guarantee as the cost of the then junior Minister's gaffe. We know now that it was a gaffe. The Select Committee concluded:

"We found no evidence to support Mrs. Currie's assertion . . . That statement should have been immediately corrected. It was a failure of Government and not just of a single Minister, that it was not corrected."

The Government could not respond. They were ill-prepared to deal with the crisis. They failed to respond to earlier warnings. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health had inadequate arrangements for monitoring public health standards and they fought a semi-public battle for their respective empires. Most critically of all, they did not understand the salmonella problem. Inadequate information existed—and still exists—about salmonella's nature, extent, origins, method of transmission, and effects.

Unbelievably, the Government had cut the very research programmes that would have produced the answers. The Bristol research unit was to be closed. Staff of the state veterinary service had been cut by 20 per cent., and routine inspections of our food manufacturing industry by environmental health officers were a thing of the past. Against that background, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food could not respond adequately because it would have been forced to acknowledge its ignorance. If the Ministry had done that, it would have been compelled to acknowledge also the actions that were perpetuating that ignorance. Here was a disaster waiting to happen, and it did so in the form of the junior Health Minister.

We understand now that the junior Minister was not the innocent victim of the National Farmers Union machine or a valiant battler against the secrecy of the Whitehall battalions. She was neither of those things. She was a silly woman, petulant when exposed as such, and arrogant in her dealings with the Select Committee. Had it not been for timing even more inept than the Ministry's own handling of the matter, when the hon. Lady revealed

that she stood to gain £100,000 from selling her inside story for publication, she might never have appeared before the Select Committee. If any right hon. or hon. Member had any doubts about the propriety or constitutionality of a Select Committee summoning a Member of the House of Commons to appear before it, they would have been dispelled by the histrionics displayed by the hon. Lady up to and on 8 February. It is to the greater credit of the Select Committee's Chairman and members that they resisted that provocation.

The Government are culpable on two counts. If two Cabinet Ministers knew of the inaccuracies of the 3 December statement, as they should have done from their briefings, they should have acted swiftly, unequivocally and emphatically in requiring a retraction and public apology from their errant colleague. Statements in the House distancing Cabinet Ministers from junior Ministers were inadequate. The decision to put up a paid public servant to try to distance the Whitehall machine from a public political statement was also inadequate. There was only one way in which that sin of commission could have been corrected—by the Minister responsible for making a public statement acknowledging that she was wrong, that her statement was wrong, and that the advice that she gave the British public was wrong.

The Secretary of State for Health's refusal to ensure that his junior Minister took the appropriate action and his public refusal to dissociate himself from his junior Minister and to dismiss her make him complicit in that sin of commission—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that I am striking a chord with my hon. Friends. I am not inviting my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to intervene, but if he wishes to do so, I shall be happy to let him. It is clear that neither of the Ministers understood, and certainly did not indicate, that their concern for their political and office interests was more pressing than their concern for the public good.

During the mounting crisis, the Minister of Agriculture signally failed to take preventive or remedial action. He could have introduced routine monitoring of laying flocks, but he did not. He could have prevented the sale of eggs from flocks that were known to be contaminated, but he did not. He could have commissioned further research to gain greater understanding of the problem, but he did not. He could have closed processing plants that were known by him to be producing contaminated feedstuffs, but he did not. Nor did he prosecute persistent offenders as the law empowered him to do.

The Select Committee stated:

"It is a severe criticism of MAFF that a public health problem in eggs was required before they saw fit to act".

That is the conclusion that I invite the House to endorse. The Select Committee report concluded:

"We welcome those steps which the Government has taken during the course of our inquiry and expect that, with full implementation of the above recommendations, public confidence can be restored in the safety and purity of eggs."

I hope that it can be. I must say, however, that I place rather less faith in the Government's proclamation than does the Select Committee.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Would my hon. Friend accept that the steps taken by the Government have been directed exclusively at poultry farmers? The manufacturers of poultry farming equipment have suffered grave losses and a lack of orders and are facing redundancies, yet the Government have consistently refused to do anything for that industry, which they have damaged in addition to the poultry farmers.

**Mr. Davies:** Yes. My hon. Friend mentions the consequences on manufacturing industry, which might be a constituency matter, resulting from the recession in the poultry industry. Far be it from me to encourage others to litigate, but I believe that legal cases are outstanding against the former Health Minister.

**Mr. Cryer:** That does not help now.

**Mr. Davies:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I assure him that if the roles were reversed and I was standing at the other Dispatch Box and my hon. Friend was in his usual place below the Gangway, I should invite him to the Ministry in Whitehall place first thing tomorrow morning. I should say to him, as I am wont to do in these matters, "Bob, you just come along to the MAFF office at 9 o'clock in the morning and present that case to me, tell me how your constituents are suffering and what you expect me to do and I guarantee that the full resources of the Whitehall machine will swing into action behind your interests." I invite my hon. Friend to test the Minister when he replies to the debate to see whether he gets the reply that he now knows he would get from me if I were the Minister and not a member of the Opposition.

The Minister never fails to trumpet the 17 initiatives that have emerged from that hive of activity which passes for a MAFF press office in Whitehall place. If there was one note of discord, it was heard earlier in the debate when my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields was challenging the Minister about the effectiveness of those 17 measures.

For the sake of accuracy, let us put the Government's position on record. They recognised the problem in December and said that they would introduce a financial rescue package to put a floor under the egg industry. That has worked and we have all commended the Government for it. But then they said that it could never happen again. They said that they would introduce a package. MAFF said so in early December. By a process of planted parliamentary questions, statements to the House and speeches in debates on this and other occasions, various spokesmen for the Ministry as well as their glossy press handouts have all said, "We have acted—we have introduced 17 new measures that will all fit together to ensure that all sectors of the poultry industry, from the processors of protein to the millers of food, to the breeders of laying flocks and those who are responsible for egg production, right down to the packers and those who guarantee the freshness of deliveries to the door will be tightly regulated and never again will the problem of salmonella occur." The Minister has stated that clearly and unambiguously in parliamentary answers and press releases. When he was challenged earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields he was happy to jump up and say, "We have the 17 initiatives, we have acted, what more can you expect." He flapped his wings but he did not quite take off.

On 18 January and again on 3 March, in reply to a parliamentary question from my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields, the Minister listed his comprehensive programme for action, being his Department's response to the salmonella in eggs affair. The details were less impressive than the presentation would have us believe.

*[Mr. Davies]*

The 17 measures included five guidelines, being voluntary codes of practice, for producers. Last year, statutory codes regulating the rendering of protein feedstuffs were in force. On several occasions Ministry inspections revealed that they were producing and distributing salmonella-infested faeces. On many occasions those plants were reinspected, but nothing was done. On a third inspection, 50 per cent. of those reinspected were found still to be producing infected feedstuffs.

The Ministry is empowered to prosecute. The regulations do not say that the Ministry should send an ADAS adviser for a quiet chat. They do not say that the Ministry shall simply advise. We hope that the Ministry will advise in advance, to prevent a problem arising in the first place, and I appreciate that a prosecution might not be undertaken in the first instance. But those concerned must be told, "People are dying from salmonella poisoning. A whole industry has been threatened by your actions. If we come back a second time and you are still producing infected feedstuffs, we will prosecute." I cannot understand how, on a third occasion, such plants could be found to be breaking the law yet there is a refusal to prosecute.

That happens with a statutory code. Now the Minister is saying that, of the 17 initiatives, five are voluntary codes. If he does not enforce a statutory code, what confidence can we have that these voluntary codes, without the backing of law, will be enforced? We can have no confidence at all.

Thus, five of the measures are merely guidelines. Five are orders, but they will have statutory force. We are now well into March and there is no sign yet of those orders. They have not yet been laid before Parliament. All the intitiatives of which the Minister has spoken and all the information that he has been trailing, through planted questions—and all the information that he gave to the Select Committee about these brave initiatives—have yet to appear. The five with teeth have not yet been laid.

How on earth can we, in debating the Select Committee's report, form a judgment when we do not even know what the orders will contain? It is all very well for the Minister to say, "We shall introduce orders to do this or that," but we are entitled to reserve our judgment until we see them and find out if they get the approval of Parliament. Until the orders have been debated and we have been able to assess their efficacy—indeed, until we know whether they have the approval of Parliament—we cannot assess their worth.

Of the 17 new initiatives, therefore, five are voluntary codes and five are orders which have not yet been laid before Parliament. It is not an impressive record, and it does not get better. Three of the 17 initiatives are changes in administrative procedures. The Government of the day have been empowered since 1975 to make such changes. Throughout the 1980s, when the problem of salmonella was building up—and critically last year, when the Government were receiving all the information from their advisers about the build-up of salmonella, about the 17,000 who had become ill and about people dying—the Government, and in particular the Minister, had no need to wait for a junior Minister at the Department of Health to blow the gaffe.

The Government did not have to wait for the floor to fall through the industry or for warnings from any of the independent bodies that have been maligned in this debate. They had the powers to act—by the stroke of a pen. Without recourse to Parliament they could have taken action.

The 17 measures are not adding up to much: five voluntary codes, five orders not laid, and three administrative measures that could have been taken previously. In addition, one order was in force in February, and one campaign has been launched to educate the public in the hygienic handling of food. That is not bad—we have got one out of 15 so far. The more observant of my hon. Friends will recall that we are dealing with 17 initiatives, not 15. That leaves two that still have to be accounted for.

Every day for the past week I have been to the Vote Office asking for a copy of the Zoonoses Order—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover asks, "What is that?" *[Laughter.]* That is what I heard, and I know that my hon. Friend would deprecate any suggestion that we should use anything but the most proper language. I asked the Vote Office for a copy of the Zoonoses Order; I asked the Library for a copy; I asked the Minister's own press department for a copy. They all said, "We do not know what the Zoonoses Order is."*[Interruption.]* Yes, that is what they said. Actually, they said, "We would like to give it to you, Mr. Davies, but we do not know what it is."

Just before this debate I was fortunate, through a friend who is also a friend of the Minister, to obtain a photocopy of the Zoonoses Order 1989, No. 285, which is not available to any other Member of the House or, incidentally, to the poultry industry which is supposed to be applying it. Apparently the order was made on 28 February, to come into force on 1 March. If we were charitable and assumed that the one-day debate did not reflect any degree of urgency on the Minister's part, if we were charitable and assumed that the Ministry actually knew what it was doing and had laid these orders as part of a carefully programmed campaign, we could believe what we have been told. The fact of the matter is that the Zoonoses Order 1989, No. 285, is not required; the Ministry already has power, under the 1975 legislation, to implement what it is now legislating for.

If we were to have any confidence in the Ministry's handling of the situation, if we were to believe that the Minister had learnt the lessons of the events of 1988, we could reasonably expect the 17 initiatives announced by the Ministry to amount to a little more than a few promises and one botched order that the people responsible for implementing it have not yet even received. So much for the Minister's much-vaunted 17-point initiative. That order—the only one with teeth—has not yet been tabled. It was supposed to be implemented on 1 March—a week ago—but it has not yet been tabled. Copies are not available, and no one in the poultry industry has yet had sight of it.

Hon. Members on the Government side are shaking their heads as if to suggest that what I am saying could not be true. I invite them—*[Interruption.]* If they are so unconcerned about these matters, it would be understandable that they should not appear for agriculture debates, but if they have come along to lend support to the Minister I should have thought they would at least have satisfied themselves as to the credibility of what the Minister is

doing on their behalf. I challenge them, so that they may so satisfy themselves, to go to the Vote Office—if they have sufficient confidence in their own Minister, if they believe in these 17 initiatives—and ask for a copy of the order. If they will not do so, we can only conclude that they assume that MAFF has not yet learnt the lessons of 1988.

If there is one conclusion to be drawn from this debate and from the Select Committee's report, it is not about the vanity of one junior Minister in the Department of Health, or even about the rivalry of two senior Ministers in the Department of Health and in the Ministry of Agriculture. It is about the inability of a great Department of state to respond to the conflicting pressures of producers and consumers. That presents a challenge to the Government. It is a challenge that they, and they alone, must meet because the health of the British consumer is at stake.

9.14 pm

**Mr. Ryder:** With the leave of the House, may I say that I greatly enjoyed the brief exchange between the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) when they were considering together the prospect of a future Labour Government in which the hon. Member for Caerphilly was a Minister and the hon. Member for Bradford, South was not. It is inconceivable that if a Labour Government were elected the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Bradford, South would not be part of that Administration. I can see it now—Foreign Secretary, the hon. Member for Bolsover, the man who has never travelled abroad up to now. On second thoughts, it would be the hon. Member for Bradford, South who would be Foreign Secretary. After all, he has great experience of representing people in two Parliaments.

I have greatly enjoyed the debate. It has fully matched the fluency and clarity of the report by the Select Committee. I have already spoken in the debate. It is unusual for the same Minister to speak twice on an Estimates day, so I shall be brief.

At the start of the debate I stressed that I was not giving the Government's official response to the report. That will come later and doubtless there will be future opportunities to debate the question. We have heard well-informed and perceptive speeches from several of my right hon. and hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) and for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). We had a balanced and authoritative opening speech from the Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). I have also been struck by the obvious interest and knowledge of several Opposition Members. The Select Committee is fortunate to have them as members.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and the hon. Member for Caerphilly queried that 17 measures, already announced by the Government, have been introduced. The hon. Member for South Shields alleged originally that only two of those measures had been introduced. In an intervention I pointed out to him that that was not the case. We have introduced far more. Some are still to come, but I read out to him at least five or six that we have introduced, and there are others. If he will put down a series of questions I shall be delighted to set out in detail precisely what we have done.

The hon. Member for South Shields was concerned about eggs that were allowed to enter the food chain from farms implicated in food poisoning outbreaks. I understand his concern. However, the position is not straightforward. In some cases the link between a farm and food poisoning was unclear. In others the owner followed the state veterinary service's advice to improve hygiene and reduce the risk of salmonella. Some slaughtered their flocks voluntarily and in some cases subsequent bacteriological examination yielded negative results.

Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton, were concerned about imports. The port health authorities are sampling imported eggs. I understand that up to now they have all proved to be negative. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry observed, such sampling is difficult. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton recognised in his informative speech, salmonella enteritidis phage 4 is an international problem and must be tackled at source on an international basis. That is why, as a Government, we welcomed the establishment by the EEC standing veterinary committee on 7 December of a sub-committee to look into this specific issue. My right hon. Friend the Minister has also initiated bilateral discussions with our EEC partners as well as with our United States counterparts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry inquired about eggs from broiler breeder flocks. If we had reason to believe that there was a problem in a broiler breeder flock, and eggs were being sold from that flock for human consumption, we would, of course, put restrictions on the flock to prevent the sale of eggs for human consumption.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), who is not in his place, mentioned that the chief medical officer said in his evidence to the Select Committee that the level of contamination of eggs from Spain was between one in 100 and one in 1,000 and that, therefore, there was a risk to us from importing Spanish eggs. I understand that the chief medical officer was quoting an article from the *Lancet* that reported the levels detected in one or two flocks in Spain. We do not know whether that data is representative of Spanish flocks or eggs as a whole.

The hon. Member for Carlisle asked, too, about the proportion of food poisoning cases resulting from people returning from overseas. I understand that up to October that was 14 per cent. in 1988.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), whose contributions to these debates I always enjoy, talked about the relative merits of free-range versus battery eggs. As I believe the hon. Gentleman knows, there is no conclusive evidence to show that one system is any safer than the other.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove inquired about restrictions. Each case will be treated on its merits. Ministry veterinary surgeons will sample where salmonella infection is suspected on a house-by-house basis. If any birds in one house prove positive, all birds in that house will be slaughtered. If none is positive, none will be slaughtered. The veterinary surgeons will envisage killing out an entire farm only if all the birds are together in a single flock or if each separate house is found to contain infected birds.

*[Mr. Ryder]*

The hon. Member for Caerphilly enjoyed himself, as he always does, when making his reply and teased us about the Zoonoses Order of 1989. I shall clarify matters for him, because he seemed uncertain about the nature of the order. Ministers have signed an order which came into effect on 1 March providing for compulsory slaughter and compensation where salmonella infection is confirmed in a poultry flock. As well as providing new powers, the Zoonoses Order of 1989 re-enacts the Zoonoses Order of 1975 and strengthens the requirements to report the results of tests that identify the presence of salmonella. The reporting requirement applies to any identification of a salmonella organism by a serological or any other examination either in a laboratory or elsewhere.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** I am grateful to the Minister for confirming that that order has now been implemented. Will the Minister tell us when he intends letting us have a copy?

**Mr. Ryder:** If the hon. Gentleman has had any difficulty in obtaining a copy, I shall gladly take the first opportunity to put that matter right.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare and the members of his Committee for providing a clear and fluent report that has enabled us to hold such a constructive debate. I look forward to hearing his concluding remarks.

9.25 pm

**Mr. Wiggin:** With the permission of the House, Mr. Speaker, I understand that it is customary for there to be a very brief winding-up speech by the proposer of the business on a day such as this. I start by thanking all hon. Members for their kind remarks, which I take as very much a tribute to all the members of the Select Committee who contributed to the report.

I have considerable sympathy for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary concerning his remarks on the subject of secrecy in relation to food safety. The very thin dividing line between sensible caution and starting a scare poses a hard problem for him. Whatever happened on this occasion, it was not done properly and I hope that the lessons are seriously learned. He also mentioned the interesting problem of appointing to various committees the professional consumer. I hope that he will be very cautious before going too far down that road. We are all consumers and the concept that on every committee there has to be a consumer rather troubles me.

I hope that my hon. Friend and the hon. Members for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) will forgive me if I treat their exchanges on governmental and Opposition lines as being just that and, in my capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee, leave them to settle their differences.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)—I have to say how much nicer his constituency sounded when it was called Oswestry—unquestionably made one of the outstanding speeches of the afternoon. He pointed out that the Select Committee, as it progressed, had helped to establish parameters for all Select Committees in all their activities in the future. I am grateful for that acknowledgement. He also used the most splendidly delicate words in criticising his colleagues. I hope that if I ever have to be criticised it will be by him, since no one uses the English language better or to greater effect.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): Well, where is he?

**Mr. Wiggin:** He rightly concluded his remarks by pointing out that laws on the safety of food and feeding stuffs must be enforceable and must be enforced.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who is, I know, an expert on birds—indeed, we have enjoyed his knowledge and company on foreign travel, when he has entertained us greatly with his deep knowledge—touched on the very difficult question of free-range eggs and batteries. I refrained from interrupting him, but I have to point out that there is no way in which human beings can adjudge the happiness or otherwise of the hen except by the very reasonable indicator of how many eggs it lays. Anyone who has ever studied this matter will find that, amazing as it may seem to us, the battery hen in its controlled environment produces rather more eggs than are produced by most other methods. However, it is not the job of the Select Committee to adjudge this most tricky matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) was almost alone in his criticism of the Select Committee report, although my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who unfortunately has just left the Chamber, also voiced on Thursday some critical comments. I have to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove that his attempts to cross-quote my remarks during the time that I was Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture were rather fruitless in that all his quotations were from things said before the discovery, or even the start, of this particular problem of enteritidis in chickens, which did not start until at least 12 months after I left the Ministry. I am particularly sorry about his changed view, since his earlier, rather enthusiastic support for poultry producers seems to have vanished.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) made some particularly kind personal remarks, which I much appreciated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), who has been a most assiduous supporter and attender of the Committee, rightly made some important comments about hygiene in the kitchen. It is a recurring theme that hygiene in the kitchen is just as important as anything that might take place on the farm or in the production chain.

The hon. Members for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), who are all members of the Select Committee, represent a new and extremely energetic entry on the Opposition Benches. I respect their political comprehension and am acutely aware of it because they helped to maintain an important balance on the Committee. I congratulate them on their assiduity, and I am sure that, shortly, they will all be Front Benchers.

In his—as usual—learned dissertation, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) mentioned the problems that will come for producers if animal health restrictions are imposed and no compensation is given. If that were to happen, farmers, producers and advisers would not come forward voluntarily to report disease, so

it would be passed on. I accept that point. I was pleased about my hon. Friend's appointment to the Agricultural and Food Research Council, to which I am sure he will make a great contribution. He will also help our contacts with it.

In his usual enthusiastic way, my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) praised the intervention scheme—although I suspect that his remarks will prove as fatal for the microwave oven industry as those of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) were for the egg industry. If he finds that at his meeting in the Forest of Dean he encounters a number of Japanese gentlemen protesting about what he said, it will be his own fault.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who is always an expert on constitutional and procedural matters, referred us to the Standing Orders on the referral of Members to appear before Select Committees. May I remind him that the Standing Order that might have been invoked on this matter was passed in about 1688. He wondered whether an hon. Member, appearing as a witness before a Select Committee, had to say or contribute anything, but, happily, the sanctions that existed in 1688 no longer exist. I wonder whether he has pursued the matter to its intellectual end. When Sir Leon Brittan appeared before the Select Committee on Defence in similar circumstances, he refused to answer many questions without having sanctions imposed on him.

As to the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton that women's institutes would read the Committee's report with interest—the mind boggles. One imagines that, after tea and the singing of Jerusalem, the president would read excerpts from the Select Committee report about salmonella in eggs. I think that the eggs in Devonshire are different from those in my part of the world.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) rightly made some valid points about the suffering of producers in Northern Ireland, despite the fact that they have a clean bill of health.

With his usual assiduity and fresh approach, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) discussed the political executive interplay in an interesting speech which I am sure will be carefully studied by Ministers. The press department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is unlikely to be as wide awake on Saturday afternoons as he expects. The real world may be a little different from his suggestion.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) rightly commented on the narrow profit margins in the production of eggs. The evidence shows that that problem still prevails throughout the industry.

This has been an extremely worthwhile debate. I know that we are under pressure of time. I wish that we could have these debates more often. At the end of a fairly lengthy, and yet energetic investigation, it is helpful to be able to debate such matters on the Floor of the House without the constraints of secrecy entailed in the preparation of a report, and to receive valuable contributions from hon. Members who are not on the Select Committee.

With an important festival—associated with traditional fare—ahead, may I wish all those involved in this extraordinary matter a happy Easter?

*The Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates) and the Order [28 February].*

## Overseas Students (Funding)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

9.35 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar):** I am grateful to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee for this opportunity to debate our policy on overseas students. The House has seen the evidence given to the Select Committee by officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. So hon. Members already have a good idea of what we are doing in this area, why and how we are doing it, and what we aim to do in the future.

The Government are committed to bringing more students from overseas to study in Britain. In the current financial year we have spent more than £110 million to assist more than 22,000 foreign students to study here. Only four years ago, the figure was just over 17,000 students for an expenditure of £79 million.

Government-funded schemes have already helped to increase the number of overseas students studying in universities in Britain. By 1987 there were more overseas students on degree or postgraduate courses in the United Kingdom than in 1978; and 1978 was the previous peak year, before full-cost fees were introduced. At the level below degree courses the decline has not been reversed, but in the past 10 years there has been a marked improvement in higher education in developing countries—indeed, our aid programme has contributed to that improvement.

Before 1980, there was an indiscriminate subsidy for all overseas students. Now we target our expenditure to achieve pre-determined objectives. We have gained the flexibility to take on new objectives when they arise. For example, two years ago, the Overseas Development Administration set up the Sino-British friendship scholarship scheme, jointly funded with the Sir Y. K. Pao foundation and the Government of China. The FCO recently set up schemes for Hong Kong, and the ODA has introduced schemes for black South Africans.

We have also been able to respond to the challenge of glasnost, with scholarships for Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union financed in partnership with the Soros foundation and Oxford university. We plan more scholarship activity in eastern Europe over the next three years. We particularly aim to respond to the requests that we have had from eastern Europe for help with business studies courses.

We aim, too, to help to meet the challenge of 1992 with more scholarships for students from European Community countries, who have been coming to British universities increasingly in the last few years. We have just launched the Jean Monnet scheme, marking the centenary of his birth, with a number of scholarships for French students.

By far the largest part of our overseas scholarship expenditure comes from the aid programme. The vast majority—more than 85 per cent—of the students who receive assistance come from developing countries.

Recently the ODA has been targeting its technical co-operation and training programme awards more firmly on the development aid projects that it is financing. But it has also decided to route some of its money through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarships and awards scheme. That is because under the FCOSAS, like the British Council fellowships scheme, the aim has been to select the leaders, the decision-takers and the opinion-formers of the successor generation. In addition, the ODA-funded awards must be in subjects relevant to the economic, scientific and social development of the recipient country. In this way we enable students to play the fullest role in helping development at home and in benefiting Britain's relations with that country.

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Minister accept that a criticism that can be levelled at the criteria used by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is that the choice of students on schemes is based first on British interests and only second on the interests of developing countries? Would it not be better if it were made much clearer that the interests of developing countries should come first and domestic interests second?

**Mr. Eggar:** I find it rather surprising that the hon. Gentleman should be surprised that, in making scholarships avaiable, we should not give a degree of priority to British interests, which is a key objective. All scholarship schemes financed by the Overseas Development Administration are discussed with host Governments and are agreed by the ODA and the Government concerned. I have already said that the ODA is increasingly focusing its scholarship expenditure on courses and degrees that are relevant to the particular development aid that it is giving the country concerned, so the scholarships are carefully co-ordinated.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend accept that members of the Commonwealth are especially glad to receive scholarships not only in technical subjects but in administration at Government level? A Malaysian Minister said to me years ago that if someone goes to a British university it will affect him throughout his life. He said, "My wife went to an American university. She starts the day with coffee and reads the New York *Herald Tribune*. I went to a British university. I start the day with tea, I read *The Times* and my interests are wholly those of the Commonwealth and Britain." It is extremely important not to exclude the administrative layer.

**Mr. Eggar:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Only this afternoon, I had an interesting discussion with the Peruvian Minister of Health who was here for the ozone layer conference. He told me that he had done a postgraduate degree in medicine at Manchester university and that there were close contacts between that university and the health sector in Peru since his return. My hon. Friend's comment applies not only to Commonwealth countries, but to all countries. There is quite a high correlation between people who study here and those who retain ties of one kind or another with the United Kingdom. That is one of the significant justifications for our putting money into scholarship schemes.

The ODA has recently introduced a jointly-funded scheme specifically for Commonwealth developing countries. That was the personal initiative of my right hon. Friend the Member of Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) when he was Minister for Overseas Development. Known as the ODA shared scholarship scheme, it has 250 award-holders in the current year. The ODA contribution to their costs is £1·4 million and the rest is found by the participating

universities and polytechnics, which are free to raise a part, or indeed all, of the balance from private sector contributions.

We believe that private sector involvement in overseas scholarship activity is extremely important. If our scholarship schemes are to reflect British interests appropriately, their priorities must include those of industry, commerce and the financial sector. Everyone agrees that in bringing foreign students to this country we are making an investment in the future. But we look to the private sector to pay more than just lip service to that idea, which is why we have been placing increasing emphasis on jointly-funded schemes. We share the cost of funding with private sector partners and also with the receiving academic institutions—helping, incidentally, in the process, to build much needed links between those institutions and private sector companies. It is not just a matter of finance. It is also a question of involvement in, and commitment to, an enterprise that will bring long-term benefit to this country.

The FCO scholarships and awards scheme also has its jointly-funded component, made up of direct partnership with the private sector and with academic institutions. There are 17 such jointly-funded partnerships in operation under the FCOSAS at present, with 156 award holders this financial year, at a total cost to the FCO of just under £500,000. Last year, the scheme looked after about 80 students at half this year's cost. To give but one example, we have a joint operation with British Gas and Strathclyde university encouraging students from Malaysia, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Turkey to come to study engineering, applied science and business administration.

Our diplomatic missions overseas have identified further partners for joint funding. We have just appointed an adviser on overseas scholarship funding, Mr. David Thomas, whose job will be to canvass support among private sector firms and foundations and the academic institutions. I hope that hon. Members will draw the scheme's availability to the attention of firms in their constituencies and elsewhere.

Government funding for overseas students, whether directly in terms of scholarships or indirectly in terms of support, has been a growth area over the past few years. That growth is set to continue, but our expenditure will be carefully targeted through a range of programmes that will give us the flexibility to achieve properly identified objectives. Since 1980 we have replaced indiscriminate subsidy with judicious selection, and that process will continue.

9.45 pm

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Opposition welcome the opportunity to discuss the subject of overseas students in the United Kingdom. We also pay tribute to the part played by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in pursuing the matter, although we were astonished that the Government's response to the Committee's fourth report did not even mention overseas students. That was an unfortunate lapse.

It is appropriate to remind ourselves, as the Minister did, of the real value of providing education for overseas students in the United Kingdom, which benefits both the students themselves and our country. We have a responsibility within the international community, and particularly within the Commonwealth—as the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) pointed out—to contribute substantially to education in the Third world. It is also helpful in developing our commerce and trade if decision-makers in other countries have been educated here and understand our system and our way of life. It is also of immeasurable value in diplomatic and political terms.

At my university of Edinburgh—my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), unfortunately, went to another university—we were proud to have provided education for Julius Nyerere and Hastings Banda, despite their different philosophies and ways of running their countries, as well as for many others who ended up running their countries and who recall their time at Edinburgh with fond memories which can reflect nothing but good on the whole United Kingdom. It was also an enriching and educating experience for British students to study alongside people from other parts of the world—although I hasten to add that I was not there at the same time as Julius Nyerere or Hastings Banda.

This is one of the most valuable forms of assistance that we can give to developing countries, particularly in certain appropriate and relevant courses. Some of the key courses, unfortunately, have suffered from Government policy in the past few years. I believe, however, that the original 1967 decision on differential fees was wrong in principle, and I strongly opposed it at the time—not here, but as president of the Scottish Union of Students. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton was vice-president, so he has moved up a bit since then. The really harmful decision, however, was the move to full-cost fees in November 1979. This was typical of the Government's policy—in a range of contexts—of putting expenditure cuts before principle. To be fair, however, it was condemned by a number of Conservative Back Benchers.

There was an immediate dramatic reduction in the number of overseas students, from 88,000 in the 1979-80 academic year to just over 56,000 by 1984-85. As the Minister said, there has been a recovery more recently, but we still have a much smaller share of an increasing global demand and there have been significant and unwelcome distortions in the pattern of institutions and in students' countries of origin. The number of overseas students at polytechnics, and particularly at colleges of further education, is still much lower than in 1978, according to the Department's own figures which were collated for the interdepartmental group working party on statistics. In Great Britain as a whole the number of colleges of further education fell by 75 per cent. over that period. It is no use saying that it started before full-cost fees because there were only marginal reductions at that time—the spectacular reduction has taken place since then. Unfortunately, many of those courses are in subjects such as agriculture, intermediate technology and other subjects most useful and appropriate for developing countries.

The distortion between countries is equally unwelcome. For example, there have been increases in students from Germany, France and particularly the Republic of Ireland, where students coming to Britain are subsidised in the same way as British students, and decreases in the numbers from India, Pakistan, Kenya, Zimbabwe and other developing countries. Indeed, the proportion of overseas students in the United Kingdom from OECD countries has risen from 18·4 per cent. to 24·9 per cent. while the proportion from developing countries has fallen from 82·6

*[Mr. George Foulkes]*

per cent. to 76·5 per cent. There has thus been a displacement and distortion which is unwelcome to the Opposition.

As the House knows, instead of students from overseas being allowed to come to Britain freely and pay the same subsidised fees as British students, they are now mainly dependent on scholarships from various sources, as the Minister said. It is important to recall, however, that it took three years of very forceful and powerful argument from diplomatic, educational and commercial circles, as well as from the Opposition and from some Conservative Back Benchers, before the then Foreign Secretary announced in 1983 what became known as the "Pym package".

Particularly significant was the work carried out by the National Union of Students, the United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs—which I had a small part in setting up many years ago—and the Overseas Students Trust, all of which still argue strongly that there is a need for an increase in real terms in the amount spent on award schemes, and the NUS rightly wants much greater flexibility in the allocation of awards between different countries.

As I think most people in the House will know, the most powerful and comprehensive case for greater support was in the Overseas Students Trust's book "The Next Steps". I am getting like the Prime Minister in bringing visual aids into the House, but I am glad that I am not like her in other ways. The Government have accepted some of the recommendations—we welcome, for example, the small new scholarship scheme funded by the Department of Trade and Industry—but there is still no sign of the full £25 million extra that that report said was necessary. Perhaps the Minister can tell us today whether the Government accept the idea in that report that the overseas research students award scheme, ORSAS, should be extended to polytechnics. He might tell us whether they plan to set up the educational purposes award scheme for overseas students below research degree level and to expand the British Council's educational counselling service, all of which were recommended in "The Next Steps".

I pay tribute to the work of the British Council, whose vice-chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton, is with us today. I hope that the Minister will say something about those particular recommendations.

If the present Government remain in office and continue their present policy, the future will not be rosy. As my countryman Robert Burns would have said,

"And forward though I canna see—I dread and fear".

I dread and fear because the Government's market philosophy is intruding more and more into universities and colleges and the search for overseas students. Already student recruitment fairs have started up in Brussels and Kuala Lumpur, setting up stalls and displays and giving away free carrier bags. At Kuala Lumpur there was a row between certain universities and the British Council which was rightly alarmed at deposit-taking in hotel bedrooms and promises of degrees within five years to students from Malaysia with the equivalent of O-levels. Competition is likely to be fierce because for many universities income from overseas students is vital to their survival. That kind of market bazaar approach to the recruitment of overseas students was well covered in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* of 30 December.

Demographic changes within the United Kingdom will exacerbate the problem, with the number of 17-year-olds falling dramatically by about 30 per cent. by the end of the century. The two displacements that I described earlier towards universities and away from polytechnics and further education and towards developed countries and away from developing countries will be exacerbated by the market approach.

The Opposition would like to see a much better planned and co-ordinated Government approach to overseas students, with the complex and increasingly sidetracked advisory round table and the inter-departmental group streamlined so that the activities of the Department of Education and Science, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Agency, all of which have a legitimate interest in this, could be better co-ordinated with regular top level advice from academics and industrialists as well as from Government. The round table has not met for 15 months and I am told that the last meeting, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), was more like an Oxbridge seminar—as one might expect, given the hon. Gentleman's background—than a business meeting. Unless there is some speedy solution to the Government-inspired dispute in higher education, the work of all our students will be in peril and overseas students will be particularly hard hit.

I mentioned earlier the work of the Overseas Students Trust. In its report, "The Next Steps", it pays tribute to the vital support and collaboration of the Fund for International Student Co-operation in producing the report and in its work generally. It represents the kind of public and private collaboration often praised by Government spokesmen, with the private funding to the trust complemented by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office grant to FISC. It was therefore with great dismay that I heard recently that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office grant to FISC is to end. We are due an explanation from the Minister which I hope he will be able to give later in the debate. There seems to be no reason for that decision unless it be that the excellent work of the OST-FISC consortium may have caused the Government some embarrassment so retribution has to be exacted. I hope that the Minister will reconsider that regrettable decision.

The importance of overseas students being educated in Britain has never been greater. Yet throughout the important area of the far east we are being overtaken by Germany, by the United States and, as in almost everything else, by Japan. The Japanese have pledged to increase their overseas student population from 10,000 to 100,000 within a decade—they understand the value of training overseas students in their country—and after four years of that decade their overseas student population is already 30,000.

Even in the Government's materialistic terms, overseas students are a good investment. We spend about £110 million of public money on scholarships, but it is estimated that overseas students spend more than £1 billion more than that in Britain, so even in the Government's materialistic terms they are worth while. The real value, however, is not in pounds and pence—I nearly gave away my age by saying pounds, shillings and pence—but in our contribution to our fellow men. It is a moral commitment

to the countries that our predecessors exploited and which, through the world's financial institutions, we are still exploiting, and the benefit to the international community of the rapid spread of knowledge. I realise that the present Government do not appreciate the importance of those factors, but I give a pledge that the next Government will.

9.59 pm

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is grateful for this opportunity to have a short debate on the funding of overseas students. As the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has said, and as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has also said—I hope that he will forgive me for being a couple of minutes late for the beginning of his speech, for rather obvious reasons which I suspect apply to a number of other hon. Members—this is a matter that has interested successive Foreign Affairs Committees. Under my prede——

*It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.*

MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the deferred Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Supplementary Estimates, 1988-89 (Class IV, Vote 3).*

*The House divided:* Ayes 175, Noes 31.

**Division No. 118]** **[10 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Blunkett, David
Buckley, George J.
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cousins, Jim
Darling, Alistair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fisher, Mark
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McLeish, Henry
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Robertson, George
Salmond, Alex
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on market support, grants and loans for capital and other improvements, support for agriculture in special areas and compensation to sheep producers, animal health, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection, and certain other services.

MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed to put pursuant to paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates).*

### ESTIMATES, 1988-89 (ARMY) VOTE A

*Resolved,*

That during the year ending 31st March 1989 an additional number not exceeding 3,010 all ranks be maintained for the Ulster Defence Regiment.

### ESTIMATES, 1989-90 (NAVY) VOTE A

*Resolved,*

That during the year ending on 31st March 1990 a number not exceeding 68,100 all ranks be maintained for Naval service.

### ESTIMATES, 1989-90 (ARMY) VOTE A

*Resolved,*

That during the year ending on 31st March 1990 a number not exceeding 175,600 all ranks be maintained for Army Service, a number not exceeding 5,000 for the Home Service Force, a number not exceeding 107,000 for the Individual Reserves, a number not exceeding 86,181 for the Territorial Army and a number not exceeding 8,010 for the Ulster Defence Regiment.

### ESTIMATES, 1989-90 (AIR) VOTE A

*Resolved,*

That during the year ending on 31st March 1990 a number not exceeding 96,000 all ranks be maintained for the Air Force Service, a number not exceeding 8,260 for the Royal Air Force Reserve and a number not exceeding 2,460 for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

### SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1988-89

*Resolved,*

That a further supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,572,770,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges for Defence and Civil Services which will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 163, 164 and 226.

### ESTIMATES, EXCESSES, 1987-88

*Resolved,*

That a sum, not exceeding £57,374,576·39, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to make good excesses on certain grants for Defence and Civil Services for the year ended 31st March 1988, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 161.

### CONSOLIDATED FUND (NO. 2) BILL

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing three resolutions relating to Supplementary Estimates, 1988-89 and to Estimates, Excesses 1987-88, by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Major, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley.

## Overseas Students (Funding)

*Question again proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.

10.14 pm

**Mr. David Howell:** I was in the middle of a word at 10 o'clock, so to assist the *Hansard* writers I will go back to the beginning of the sentence.

My distinguished predecessor as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Sir Anthony Kershaw, showed, with his Committee, an intensive interest in the funding of overseas students, and the Select Committee was concerned, in the 1980s, about the reactions and complaints of a number of countries around the world some time after the decision had been made to abandon the indiscriminate subsidy for fees.

The Committee concluded, and the House accepts, that this is one public investment that the Government really should be anxious to make overseas. It will enable tomorrow's technicians and shapers of policy, industry and society throughout the developing world and the great markets of Asia, which will be the dominant centre of the global economy in the next 10 or 20 years, to come to this country. They will go through higher education in our universities and other institutions, as well as take post graduate courses. That correct view has been held by hon. Members on both sides of the House, because we have much to offer and much to gain from ensuring that there is a massive flow of overseas students coming through our institutions of higher education. We have the technical expertise and the skills to offer. Those are the heart needs of the aid and development process.

If I were pressed to say where the public and private resources could most usefully go over all the areas of overseas development, I would say rather less in grants and loans and rather more in technical assistance in training and skills and higher education provided to those who then help to shape and develop their own societies. We have much to offer. It is one of the key ways in which we can make our contribution to development in the world. We can also ensure that markets are kept open and that the climate for investment and enterprise is maintained across the planet.

We also have much to gain for other obvious reasons. One should not be apologetic. There will be benefits for out national aims and objectives, about which we should not be shy. A whole generation of people will come to our universities and other institutions of higher education. They will return to their countries and think in terms of our standards and skills, products and services. When they need them, they will look to this country. That must open up opportunities for us to compete in the markets of the world and to hold up our heads in the immensely competitive conditions facing us in the future.

That is precisely why our competitor countries, who also want their place in the sun and the 21st century, are greatly expanding their programmes to encourage students to come from overseas to their universities. It is fascinating to see the way in which a formerly closed country such as Japan, which was extraordinarily inward looking even five years ago, where one saw few overseas students, is now opening its universities and higher education to students. Japan is planning to bring in many overseas students through industry or Government support. A new Japanese empire is emerging. Not everyone necessarily welcomes it.

It is spreading, in economic terms, across the whole of south-east Asia and across eastern Asia, and it has reached many other parts of the world. It is on a scale and has a dynamic that no-one could have dreamed of 10 years ago. it has close links with Japanese standards and technical skills. It makes an ironic mockery of the pattern and history of the first half of this century, when nations such as Japan tried to grab by force, and often surrendered to force in these areas. Now these will be the dynamic and growing areas of the next 30 years. Thousands of students and would-be students are flocking to Japan's universities to learn the technical skills and patterns that will govern their decisions in later life.

**Dr. Alan Glyn** (Windsor and Maidenhead): Is it not a fact that, because of the rate of exchange, students find it much cheaper to go to the United States than to come here?

**Mr. Howell:** My colleagues on the Select Committee heard that point of view, but exchange rates go up and down. The cheap dollar has had some advantages but it is not as cheap as it was and it may grow stronger vis-a-vis other currencies. What my hon. Friend suggests has an effect, but it is marginal.

Against that background of the desire to have a healthy flow of overseas students, in the early 1980s, after the decision to remove indiscriminate fee support was taken, there was—this cannot be disguised—a substantial drop in the number of students coming here.

The predecessor Committee to the present Select Committee examined that issue and got the impression that the programme was going backwards. That Committee found, when travelling to places such as Hong Kong and Malaysia, some extremely outspoken complaints that vital links had been broken, and it was not immediately seen how they would be restored. However, the process of restoration has steadily been going on and gradually the numbers have risen again.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley gave some figures, but I did not immediately recognise them. No doubt they were right on the basis on which he used them, but it was not the basis on which figures were given by officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Select Committee.

The Committee was told on 1 March that the number of foreign students in our universities now was considerably higher than in 1978—the previous peak. We were told that, the number is now 45,600 students in universities, whereas the previous peak was 38,900.

That is the good news. The less good news is that we were told that whereas in 1978 there were 22,000 in polytechnics, that had declined to 15,000. It was suggested to the Committee that that reflected, among other things, a changing pattern of demand from the developing countries. It was pointed out, for example, that a number of polytechnic and post-school institutions had developed at a great rate in the developing countries, in newly industrialised economies and in various parts of Asia, so that the demand for such educational places in this country had fallen.

It was pointed out that the demand for places in universities had risen and had apparently been met. The previous concern was that our universities were no longer providing places for thousands of people from overseas who would go home and carry with them what they had learnt here—the values as well as the skills—and apply it to the development of their societies, industries and commerce. That concern must now be less because the numbers have not only picked up but have overtaken the previous numbers.

Those were all matters to which the present Select Committee returned briefly when looking at the Estimates a year ago, and the Committee commented on them in its fourth report. As is customary, a reply came from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, making observations on our report, but there must have been a slip-up because, although our report mentioned the finance of overseas students, the reply did not. This led to an exchange of letters—"Dear Geoffrey", "Dear David", "Dear Kenneth", "Dear David", and so on —all of which are printed in the Select Committee minutes of evidence, which have just been published. From these there flowed our decision to have a brief hearing, at which the numbers I have just given were elucidated. This indicates that things are on the mend—changing and improving.

The Secretary of State for Education wrote to the Committee. He was aware of our concern about overseas students and, in particular, about the question of what was happening all these years after the removal of the policy of indiscriminate subsidy for all overseas students. In his letter he said that he could see no grounds for any reconsideration of the policy. However, if one listens closely—this certainly applies to anyone who listened to some of the excellent evidence that was given to the Select Committee—one can hear the distinct sound of gears being shifted. I believe that there is some change of emphasis. Indeed, my right hon. Friend has confirmed that that is so.

With the transfer of funds from the Overseas Development Administration to the scholarship award system under the FCO, we are witnessing a definite shift, which I think is welcome. I do not fully understand the precise intentions of the strategies, but it seems to me that it is a realistic recognition of the fact that the overseas students in our universities need to come not only from the least developed and poorest countries. This is not just a development programme in the most narrow sense; it is also a programme designed to forge links with, and open up opportunities in, semi-developed countries with the newly industrialised economies that I have mentioned. We have been told that we have more students from Hong Kong than ever before. We have more also from some countries—mainly in eastern Europe—where we have done very little business and had very little influence for half a century. These countries, in an intellectual and political sense, are miserably undeveloped. They will not like me for saying so, but by our standards they are. Anything that we can do to seize the new opportunities and move through the new doors and windows that must now be opening in the frozen Communist bloc, which has been virtually cut off from the trading system of the world for more than half a century, must be good.

If this change of Government policy, this shift of resources, together with the development of the FCO special award scholarship, leads in that direction, and if the expansion of the partnership between Government and the private sector in the provision of resources leads to more scholarships and awards for people from what, a long time ago, we called the iron curtain countries, that will be a very good thing.

*[Mr. Howell]*

In general, of course, the private sector is beginning to play a more vigorous part—working with the Government and indeed taking its own initiatives—in bringing people here for higher education. That must be a good thing. Of course, in that respect we are only following France—which does this on a major scale—Germany and Japan. The familiar pattern is emerging everywhere: the public sector and the private sector mobilising themselves to work together towards goals that are partly to do with public policy and partly to do with the expansion of commerce. They are working together, in new and very successful ways, to achieve what, just a decade ago, were believed to be social goals that could be pursued only at the taxpayers' expense.

All in all, there is a changing picture—perhaps "change of policy" is too precise—in the approach to bringing overseas students here. The numbers overall—and, again, we could have a debate about the precise basis—reflect a substantial rise in those coming to the universities, and a fall in those coming to the polytechnics. It is a pattern which is less alarming than perhaps it seemed a few years ago. The complaints may not have gone completely in Kuala Lumpur or even in Hong Kong but the justification for them is less. It has to be conceded that there is vigour and life in the programme, although I believe that some of my colleagues on the Select Committee will still rightly insist that we should keep an eye on the subject and that we could do better.

10.29 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the Chairman of the Select Committee, has given what one might call conditional approval to Government policy. He was right to point out that it is not yet clear that the results of the cuts of the early part of the decade have been entirely restored in all sectors. The polytechnic sector is the obvious example. It is notable and disappointing that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not see fit explicitly to deal with that in its response. I hope that in future, as a matter of principle and of expressing support for the concept of paying for students to come to this country, support will be visible in responses or documents initiated by the FCO itself.

The general view has been clearly evidenced by what has been said. Funding of students to come here, particularly from the Third and Fourth worlds, is one of the best signs of our commitment to development and one of the most positive ways in which we can give specific, up-to-date and pertinent help. My intervention in the Minister's remarks was to suggest that the Government should look more and more to ways in which we can use this policy to assist in our overseas development programme and less to benefit our own domestic prospects. I hope that I am not misrepresenting the right hon. Member for Guildford when I say that I inferred the same from his speech. I am not suggesting that the policy should disappear, but I have a general concern that we do not adequately balance and prioritise between those two naturally complementary policies and that we tend always to put our interests above those of the countries from which the students come.

I wondered whether the Minister would take the opportunity of this debate to deal more specifically with certain matters. The minutes of a recent Select Committee meeting confirm that the Government plan to phase out the FCO's country and territory support schemes. That is what officials of the FCO said, and there is concern about the implications. For example, I should like to know that support for Cyprus, and for other territories and countries where there are no universities, will be continued to the same financial extent.

I understand that there is to be a transfer of schemes rather than the removal of schemes. None the less, the funding criteria are different. If the proposal is that there should be a transfer, as it were, from the specific budget introduced for countries such as Cyprus and Malaysia in 1983 by the then Foreign Secretary, now Lord Pym, to the main FCO special award scholarship budget, some of the advantages of the selective scheme for countries and territories with which we have a particular relationship will be lost. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's comments on the timetable and on the commitment to Malaysia, Cyprus, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. I understand that there is no doubt that the commitment to Hong Kong will remain.

A second specific matter with which the Minister might deal is whether it will be possible in the near future to extend the ORSAS scheme to polytechnics. The point was made from the Labour Front Bench that at the moment it is not possible. Here I declare an interest—there is no university in my constituency, but there is a polytechnic. That is not, however, why I raise the matter. It is because there is much growth in polytechnics in technical subjects such as engineering which seem to be beneficial. I therefore hope that ORSAS will be extended to polytechnics.

When I and two colleagues from the Conservative and Labour parties visited South Africa, we found that the scheme for funding the education of black South Africans was especially welcomed. If I can attract the Minister's attention, I would urge the Minister to consider whether it is possible to expand the black South African scheme further as it is much appreciated and needed. When my colleagues from the House and I were talking to church, political and educational leaders in southern Africa and especially in South Africa, it was notable that one of the ways in which we could best assist was in the training and teaching of members of the majority black South African community. I therefore urge the Government to give favourable consideration to the expansion of that scheme as I am sure that it has great potential.

Speaking perhaps more from the point of view of my educational responsibilities than from a foreign affairs interest, one of my concerns is that some of the changes in the totals of overseas students in institutions here look as though they may fundamentally affect the security of the overseas student programme within some institutions. For example, I note that the projections for University college, Cardiff—I am aware that the University of Wales has had financial difficulties—are that whereas in 1986-87 there were 1,442 overseas students, by 1991-92 the figure will be down by 368. I wonder whether it would be appropriate to look again at the way in which a large number of university institutions—I am not talking about polytechnics—will lose quite substantial numbers of overseas students. On the face of it, that does not appear necessarily to be justified. I understand that within the educational debate in Britain there are sometimes arguments for rationalising courses, but that does not necessarily mean that so many

institutions should be affected by reductions in overseas students. Overseas students do not just contribute their particular training needs and experience; but they add to the dimension of that university or institution of higher education. I can say that as someone who spent a year studying abroad and benefited greatly.

The Minister did not allude to the concerns expressed about the recent announcement of the imminent 10 per cent. increase in fees. I understand that one of its implications will be that from next year universities will be free to set their own student fees and that there will therefore be much more of a free market for fee setting. It would be helpful if the Minister could comment on the expected consequences of that as at present there is a fixed regime and a more competitive scheme would clearly have many more unpredictable consequences.

I have a further concern, based principally on constituency experience, that there are still often inadequate support mechanisms for people who come here. That has various manifestations. I am concerned that there are disreputable institutions purporting to be good institutions of further education which have not yet been dealt with by the Education Reform Act 1988. To be honest, some institutions—especially language schools—fleece their students. No approval, either implicit or explicit, should be given to such institutions. I am aware that that is not the principal destination of the category of people about whom we are talking, but not insubstantial numbers of foreign students nevertheless end up in clearly disreputable institutions. That problem needs further attention, not just from the Minister's Department but from the Department of Education and Science. I am not being critical of that Department as the problem has not been ignored, but there are still such institutions recruiting unjustifiably.

The other problem brought to our attention in our mail and from the advice centres, especially in urban areas which have large numbers of ethnic minority communities, including large numbers of overseas students, is that sometimes it would be beneficial if the Home Office were less restrictive in its rules forbidding any sort of work experience. People who come here to study for a university degree or to take a higher education course would often benefit greatly from being able to combine some work experience with their studies. I am not suggesting that they should come here and then have a series of jobs, but they could do some form of work linked with their course, whether it be a sandwich course or some other type. I do not expect an immediate response, but I hope that the Minister, his colleagues and Home Office Ministers will consider the rules which, at the moment, often inhibit people who could benefit greatly from a slightly broader mix of experience, both academic and practical.

I hope that the Government will continue the course that the Chairman of the Select Committee has encouraged them to follow, and will increase the budget for overseas students and the number of countries and programmes which benefit from it. That is one of the most obvious ways of being seen to be committed to the proper and long-term development of less advantaged and less prosperous countries. We owe it to those countries to give of our academic and economic richness. I hope that the programme will be substantially expanded in years to come.

10.41 pm

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): In tonight's previous debate the Select Committee on Agriculture congratulated itself on the fact that we could discuss a report which had been published only last week. We should express some satisfaction on the fact that we are debating now a subject on which the key document before the House was published only yesterday.

This has been, and continues to be, a helpful debate on what I regard as a vital subject. I wonder whether the Minister has considered why we are having it. Perhaps the principal reason is that the Select Committee's previous report was ignored by the Foreign Office in its reply, which I regret. I hope that the Minister will tell his departmental colleagues that they should not behave in that way.

I have long experience of departmental Select Committees and served on the Crossman Select Committees in the 1960s, when we had some pithy debates on Government action. In 1979 and 1980 I played a major part with Lord St. John of Fawsley, the then Leader of the House, in setting up the current family of Select Committees which I believe in passionately. They play an important part in the life of the House.

I hope that the Minister will tell his officials that, in future, they should learn to understand that Select Committees can bite—this one in particular is prepared to make its teeth meet. They should not impose a discourtesy on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee such as they did on this occasion. I make that comment as a warning and I hope that the Minister will tell his officials that the Select Committee members will not tolerate being treated like this in the future.

I especially want to applaud the specific foreign policy and developmental objectives which are set out in paragraph 3 of the paper presented to the Select Committee by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In view of some of the comments, most of which I strongly agree with, it is right to begin by applauding the Foreign Office's general objectives, which are to

"win influential friends overseas by enabling future leaders, decision makers and opinion formers from all walks of life to study in the United Kingdom . . . help the development of manpower skills and resources in developing countries . . . promote the security and prosperity of the United Kingdom by cultivating good political and commercial relations with other countries."

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) earlier made an intervention on precisely this point. I warmly support what she said. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) made the same crucial point. It seems to have been included in the Foreign Office's objectives.

Travelling abroad and observing the political and commercial life of other countries, one often discovers that —surprise, surprise—the people are using the methods and equipment of the countries in which they were trained. Educating such people is the best investment that we can possibly make. I well remember, in a previous incarnation, visiting Malaysia a few years ago. I vividly remember the resentment and ill feeling there.

I rejoice that the overall trend of expenditure on overseas students is increasing so dramatically. I congratulate the Foreign Office and the other Departments concerned on the figures, which are clearly set out on page 7 of the Select Committee's minutes of evidence. They are worth repeating to the House. The

*[Mr. Michael Jopling]*

amount spent on overseas students has risen from £79·65 million in 1985-86 to £111·41 million in 1988-89. At the same time, the number of award holders has increased from 17,918 to 22,757. That is a commendable increase, of which the Government are entitled to be proud.

I asked the Minister's officials a question in the Committee which proved difficult for them to answer then. After the public expenditure survey committee, last autumn, when the figures were discussed by all the Departments concerned—the ODA, the Foreign Office, the British Council, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Trade and Industry—the figures for the trend over the next few years must have been clear. An official helpfully told the Committee that, for the Foreign Office's part, we could expect an extra £10 million, involving an extra 1,000 students, in the next two or three years, over and above the 1988 figures.

It would help the Committee and the House to know the precise projections of expenditure and the number of award holders that may be expected in the next few years —the figures, in short, which are covered in the PESC and the White Paper. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) asked a specific question about this; he had an advantage that I did not enjoy when I was in the Select Committee—a copy of the White Paper before him. The answer that he got was not very clear. I do not criticise that, but if the Minister could give us a clearer one it would help the Government's case, if nothing else.

A matter that I raised in the Committee and which has been mentioned by hon. Members this evening is the proportion of award holders who come from developing countries. That number is of crucial interest to the House. In general, we believe that the bulk of the effort should be directed towards these students. We were again given a most helpful answer, which is on page 12 of the Select Committee's report, and we were told that £93 million out of the £110 million goes to students from developing countries. We were also told that about 18,000 of the 22,750 students come from developing countries. That sounded fine and I was delighted to hear that figure.

However, the figure was somewhat blurred when, in reply to the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, we were told that some of those students come from Hong Kong. I do not regard Hong Kong as a developing country and I wonder whether my hon. Friend will be kind enough to give us figures—and I have to put this in vague terms myself—for the amount of money and the number of students who come from real developing countries, rather than from countries such as Hong Kong. It is important that we should know the proportion that goes to the students for whom we believe help is most needed. I am not saying that we should not help students from more developed countries, but I am sure that we would like most of the help to go to the countries that need it most.

My final point is one that we discussed with the officials in the Select Committee and concerns the priorities given in developing countries to assisting people in training for the basic and essential vocations. I hope that the Government will do all that they can—in a tactful way, of course—to channel students who come here from developing countries into those studies that are most appropriate to the countries concerned. I do not need to lecture the House on the fact that developing countries need, above all, to develop their basic industries, agriculture, education system and infrastructure, rather than some of the more fancy pursuits and studies which some students may be tempted to pursue. It was made clear by the officials that that is difficult and must be handled tactfully. I take that point, but I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to tell us that every effort is made by our posts abroad, who handle these matters in the front line, to channel the studies of students who come here into the pursuits and studies that are most essential for the development and future prosperity of the countries from which they come.

I have mentioned various points that I would like to have spoken on at greater length. However, if my hon. Friend would reply to them, I should be most grateful.

10.53

**Mr. Ted Rowlands** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I wish only to underline a few of the points that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) has made forcefully. He began by drawing the House's attention to the objectives that were stated in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office memorandum. The first was to "win influential friends overseas". I must tell the Minister that the Government's actions in the early 1980s did anything but win friendship overseas. The impact of the nature of their actions, the lack of consultation and the alienation and resentment they incurred in communities that naturally had friendships with Britain and, normally, with our Government was drastic.

In the Select Committee, we had to spend some time in looking at the patchwork of support, outlined in annex A, which is now given to students and which is, in some respects, an admission of the disastrous impact of the bull-in-the-china-shop policy that was followed in the early 1980s. Since then, we have rightly spent a good deal of time repairing the damage created by those early absurdities and the failure to consult, or to achieve a sensible evolution of policy rather than its destruction. In terms of objective number one—"win influential friends overseas"—we have, I hope, learnt the lessons of the early 1980s. The patchwork of available schemes includes the fee support scheme—known in our parlance as the Pym scheme—a damage limitation exercise designed to repair the damage caused by the initial decisions.

My second point concerns the Government's relationship to Select Committee reports. I am a recent convert to Select Committees, having become a member of one after more than 20 years in the House. I made a deliberate choice to leave the Front Bench, on which I had spent the best part of my parliamentary career in either government or opposition, because it was the only way in which to go on to a Select Committee. Having done so, I feel that it is extremely important for Governments to accept that enormous effort and often unanimous recommendations must be taken seriously. They must not be brushed aside, ignored or—as in this case—not even answered properly. I hope that, if it does nothing else, the debate will underline again the demand from those who serve on Select Committees that Governments should care about how they and their recommendations are treated.

My third point is this. Although it was the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale who actually

asked the question, we all wanted to learn not only how we were making good the damage of the early 1980s but how we compared with France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and others. The distinguished official appearing before us replied:

"I fear we do not have to hand any up-to-date figures, and if you really would like those I think we would have to offer to do that afterwards."

That is in paragraph 36 of the report.

We emphasise that we wish to follow that up. Almost all the Committee's members looked rather surprised that no such comparisons and monitoring were taking place. Miss Pestell went on—rightly—to point out the difficulties of making such comparisons, but I think that it is widely recognised that we are involved in a competitive game. Like the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, I believe that we should ensure that students from poor Botswana are given the best possible support, as well as those from Hong Kong and the developing nations in which our distinguished Chairman has a particular interest.

We must believe passionately in giving support to the poorest countries. Students from Botswana should feel that Britain is still a home to which they can come to obtain skills and further their education, and a country such as ours has an intrinsic moral duty and responsibility to help. I was astonished that we were not watching our competitors, and that the information requested, quite properly, by the Committee had not been provided. I hope when the Minister replies he will reaffirm the commitment to produce a further submission to the Select Committee, so that we can have some further knowledge of these comparisons.

I should like to make a personal point, which illustrates something else that emerged from the evidence. No one wants to make comparisons with the early 1980s, but it is valuable, I think, to note that different types of students are coming to this country seeking different types of courses at different levels of education, and we cannot go back to the situation as it was between 1978 and 1981.

I am rather glad that things are changing. I once had the dubious privilege of being an examiner for the Cambridge board and at Christmas time A-level papers used to arrive from deepest Malaysia and, unbelievably, from Nigeria in the midde of the civil war, when, as I used to read in *The Sunday Times*, there was genocide going on. There were students scribbling away in missionary schools in the heart of Nigeria answering four A-level questions on the British constitution and history such as "Discuss the future development of the English parish council". I am delighted that, gradually, the Malaysians and Nigerians are developing an examination system free from nonsense of that kind. One detects the evolution of education systems in Africa and Asia and the removal of the nonsenses that occurred, as when I used to examine young A-level students on the English local government system. I am glad in some ways that the nations concerned are freeing themselves from that sort of curious relationship.

When I was "Minister for decolonisation", as I used to call myself, I preached the concept of re-engagement of relationships in modern terms, and I think that within the whole area of education of overseas students we can re-engage in a very modern sense with a large number of students from a large number of countries in different parts of the world.

11.2 pm

**Mr. Peter Temple-Morris** (Leominster): I have great pleasure in following the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). Such is the camaraderie of the Foreign Affairs Committee that I have to say that I agree with virtually every word he has said and certainly would not take him to task on anything.

Many figures have been bandied around tonight and, generally speaking, I have the feeling that we have lost out in terms of our potential in this field in recent years, and we are not attracting now those people that we could, and indeed should, have attracted. We are doing very well and all the figures commend themselves but, if one takes 1979 as a high water mark of successive Government's historical legacy, colonial legacy and everything else, it was an indiscriminate policy of subsidy, of benefits to every student, but there were many people who came here at that time who have subsequently gone elsewhere. Our eastern friends, as many hon. Members of the Committee know better than I, have gone to the United States; many middle easterners have gone to the United States; many Africans have gone to all sorts of odd places—if I may say so, respectfully—even to East Germany and the Soviet Union. That seems to me to mean that we have something to answer for, bearing in mind our potential.

I would like to say a few words, as have right hon. and hon. Friends, on the importance of this matter politically and economically. On the political front—and I say this after a lifetime of frequent contact with foreigners, to put it mildly—the country of education is usually the second country for life. That is an important fact that one must take hold of.

The other side of the coin is social obligation, a point made by the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. I am pleased with the Government's southern Africa programme and may that continue. It is something that hon. Members on both sides of the House would support.

There are always two dimensions—the social and the political. Any Government must follow both sensibly. Let me give two examples, the second of which may be familiar to some hon. Members. My first example concerns developing countries. Temple-Morris's French is not very good. When he went to Algeria he was struggling. In Paris he understands better what comes back from his somewhat imperfect French. To cut the story short, it was a great relief, when the conversation turned to offshore gas, suddenly to find three, four or five young gentlemen who all came from Manchester—the polytechnic as well as the university, which has a bearing on the figures presented to the Select Committee—speaking with somewhat Lancastrian accents, or perhaps even worse, but something that I could understand better than the French. That will mean something to various colleagues of mine who have been to different parts of the world. Young men return to their own countries and not only speak English and respond to things British but buy British equipment.

My second example is an extreme one in relation to the most developed countries. After a heavy day during the Select Committee's visit to Washington we had a mixed tea party with the Senate foreign relations committee. Out of some five senators who attended, no fewer than two were

*[Mr. Peter Temple-Morris]*

Rhodes scholars. That was not in any small way why they took the trouble to attend. We do not want to miss both sides of the equation.

The policy of successive Governments up to 1979 was one, to use a disparaging term, of indiscriminate subsidy, or, to use a somewhat more encouraging term, of special terms for overseas students. At that time I said, and do so again, that I was unhappy with the decision that was taken. I lobbied Lord Pym during 1982-83 and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarships and award scheme were welcome. The selective basis is almost universally accepted, but it is the amount of money being spent on that basis that is important. I often wish that the Foreign Office, for all its eloquence before the Select Committee and in my general contact with it, had a budget to match its aspirations.

It is the Overseas Development Administration's budget that is providing the funds. In 1988-89 there was £83 million for 13,500 students, dwarfing anything that the Foreign Office is doing on the more political front. At the moment the Foreign Office budget is £16 million direct, going up next year to £20 million. But most of that increase of £4 million will again be ODA, not Foreign Office money.

There is a mistake here. I do not deny that those in command are, through the most elegant creative accounting, doing a good job within their power and ability. But I somehow get the impression that they have not got their head; that they cannot quite get out of the system that which they should do and that which the issue commands. We still have not got away from the slightly doctrinaire syndromes of 1979 and thereafter, which we must do.

Being doctrinaire on the other side for a moment, I would commend private sector involvement. There is nothing new in this. In my university days, many of our old companies with middle east interests had schemes which were far more imaginative and productive than those that we have at present. I hope that we can involve industry. I hope that the Foreign Office will preserve its dominance and its influence in the overall system, but there is much work to be done. The Department of Trade and Industry is now entering the stream. It is now coming in with—I can never resist referring to this—its peculiarly vulgar writing paper that it has decided to take on, and it is regaling everyone with the fact that it is to introduce its own schemes. If it can do so, all well and good, but British industry must be made to see the possibilities, and, from odd bits of evidence that we had, it seems to be a slightly uphill struggle. I hope that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can lead the DTI on this. When it comes to available money, the DTI's budget is far greater, even though at present its commitment is far smaller. I hope, nevertheless, that we can work together because there is much to be done, and our efforts in this direction will, in the end, prevent many people from going to America or elsewhere when they should be coming here.

As regards the future, the Foreign and Commonwealth budget—it always comes down to that—is very small. It must be fought for and, in my view, it is never fought for quite enough. Never has so little money been poured into the land of such great opportunity. That is something with which I dare say my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State would thoroughly agree. So we must try to be behind him in his efforts, because I feel that the Department is trying its very best. I still think that what is at stake is comparatively unrecognised. We have enormous potential. Our country has much to give, and much more to give than at present it is permitted to give.

We must, therefore, have sufficient funding, and anything that can be done to that end I will certainly do.

11.11 pm

**Mr. Ian Taylor** (Esher): Confining my remarks to just a few minutes makes me feel a little like people in Nigeria sitting examinations under the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) must have felt trying to work out how to answer a question on the British rate support grant in four minutes. It must have taxed their ingenuity. When I came to the Select Committee and looked at the complex list of Government support schemes for overseas students in the United Kingdom, the rate support grant seemed almost a doddle. The complexity of the various schemes seemed to test not only my colleagues and myself but also some of the officials who were endeavouring to explain them to us. That is why there were one or two difficulties about the answers to some of the questions that we put, but I am sure that all will be resolved in due course with supplementary memoranda.

One aspect to which I should like to draw attention today is grant transfer between the Overseas Development Administration and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the various criteria listed. I have no time to go into detail, but on page 17 of the minutes of evidence dated 1 March 1989 this was raised in questions which I and my colleagues asked. The criteria are clear—that ODA money is still being disbursed under the FCO programme to developing countries, and there is no leakage. Nevertheless, the criteria are worth examining in detail. For the sake of brevity, however, I merely draw attention to the comments made by the officials and reported on page 17 of the report.

The other interesting aspect is that, although the number of overseas students in the United Kingdom receiving Government support in the year 1988-89 given in the evidence is roughly 22,700, the total number of overseas students receiving higher education in this country is about 57,000, a figure given in a written reply to me on 6 March. So there is a very large number of overseas students in this country—and I welcome this—who are not dependent on Government grants. I hope that the number obviously attracted directly by institutions of higher education in Britain will continue to grow.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) mentioned the political importance of encouraging students from countries with which we want to foster a long-term political relationship, and where for the first time we can determine the selection procedure for such students. This is particularly the case with various eastern European countries to which he referred. I entirely endorse his remarks. Given that we have stated that there are political objectives in the criteria that we use for FCO grants, we should use them in our long-term interests. I especially believe that eastern Europe, where there is an enormous thirst for British education, is vitally important.

The British Council is doing a first-class job in eastern Europe, which will improve now that it has been voted extra funds for that purpose, but although the British

Council is taking education to people in eastern Europe, some students must be brought to the higher centres of learning in Britain. I hope that the Government will consider increasing funds for that purpose. We should be making a long-term investment by bringing future leaders of other countries to this country, and the Foreign Office should recognise that financially more than it does at present.

I have tried to confine my remarks to the required time by not covering the many other matters to which I had hoped to refer.

11.15 pm

**Mr. Bowen Wells** (Hertford and Stortford): I shall make four brief points in the time that remains.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), I am very concerned about the transfers from the ODA budget to the FCO budget. I am particularly worried about the reason given by officials in evidence to the Committee—that the ODA could not select the candidates that it considered most appropriate to come to Britain to take up scholarships under its TCDC programme, and therefore it was transferring them to the FCO so that the FCO could select the right people for Britain to try to influence in terms of future relationships between Britain and other countries. Clearly that is a political, not a developmental, objective.

The evidence has shown that the Foreign Office and the ODA want to continue that practice, so there will be a serious reduction in the ODA budget. It seems to be quite wrong that the British administrators of the ODA's TCDC scheme are not influential in selecting the candidates to take up British scholarships. I ask the ODA to reconsider the position whereby British scholarships are awarded at local universities, thus depriving those who benefit from the scholarships of the experience of coming to Britain and benefiting from learning about its culture and its objectives, and making friendships which are likely to last a lifetime and influence their purchasing and other loyalties in future.

It is clear that we have a major task in offering scholarships to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We are not providing anything like sufficient money to promote scholarships from those countries to Britain, which I consider will play a crucial part in developing peaceful and productive relationships between Britain and the Soviet Union in the advantageous circumstances which are developing between our two countries.

I commend the DTI scheme, which should be got under way as quickly as possible and should concentrate on management, production and personnel management techniques which are lacking in most of the developing countries.

In transferring scholarships from the ODA to the FCO it is said that they are held in the poorest countries. When we asked in which countries they were held, the countries cited were Egypt, Brazil, China and Turkey. Although China is very poor, those are not countries we would normally think of as developing countries.

When we were able to offer scholarship places in our universities and technical colleges without asking for full-cost fees, we were influencing a much larger population of students in Commonwealth countries. We now offer cut-price fees to EEC students. I strongly believe that we should restore to the Commonwealth the privilege of similarly benefiting from the EEC scheme, and that we should put the Commonwealth and the EEC on the same basis. We should certainly ensure that all our dependencies are on that basis. In that way, we shall be able to ensure the continuation of British influence and culture in many of the countries that we have traditionally supported.

11.19 pm

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): I am moved to speak by the reminiscences of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), when he recalled his student days spent with Dr. Banda and others. I recollect my own student days, when I shared a university with Mr. Tariq Ali—and also shared the occasional demonstration with him. Mr. Tariq Ali may have learnt something from those days—I know that I did. He could have bought the university, never mind needing a grant to attend it.

In the next room to mine at university there was a white South African, and two doors away there was a black Nigerian. That better sums up tonight's debate—the concept of people from two different parts of Africa bringing something to our country, and taking away something that—as I know from meeting them again—has lasted over the years. Most important of all, we learnt something from each other that might stand that continent in good stead in the longer term.

We have a good record, and we must build upon it. If there is any criticism of my hon. Friend it is that it is such a good story, but we want more of it. I hope that my few words serve to emphasise that message. It is right to target on student need rather than on just places, and to specify our aims in bringing overseas students to this country. They include winning friends and influencing people, helping developing countries, and assisting British trade. Another element, which has not been mentioned, is exporting English English. If we export English English as opposed to American English, or any other kind of English, that too will help our position in the world.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Only "English" English?

**Mr. Bowis:** I use the term English English in the broadest sense, and I would include the best broad Scots, if that applies.

Perhaps my hon. Friend will bear in mind a possible university of the Commonwealth and what that could do for English and for our relationships with other countries. My message is that, while we should certainly invite students from the Commonwealth and from Anglophone countries, we should do more in terms of trade and of exporting the English language to other countries of the world, including Francophone and Hispanic countries.

We must consider also the lands of central and southern America, of Indo-China, and of the middle east. That is what Japan does. There are few countries where Japanese is spoken, but Japan still has a reputation around the world. Similarly, we should not confine our efforts only to the English-speaking world.

I reinforce the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) concerning southern Africa. The scheme that operates there, which I have seen in action, is excellent. There are about 170 students under the present scheme. One thinks of the 2 million people in Soweto, and of those

*[Mr. Bowis]*

in the camps around Cape Town. There is an enormous need for our support and education. I hope that my hon. Friend will expand that scheme. If he sets out to do that, he will have the support of the whole House.

11.23 pm

**Mr. Anthony Coombs** (Wyre Forest): Although the cultural, economic and educational benefits for our universities of accepting overseas students are well recognised, more must be done. Although there are now 48,000 students in our country compared with 38,000 in 1978, the United States with four times our population has 342,000 students, France, with about the same population has 133,000, and West Germany has 72,000. If we are to double the proportion of 18-year-olds in higher education in the next 10 years, the proportion overseas should also be doubled.

Although the 1979 exercise was more rushed than one would have liked, its implications were good to the extent that it rationalised higher education students. The figures show that between 1978 and 1985 the number of non-advanced students undertaking GCSE, CSE and FCE studies dropped from 23,000 to 5,000. At least that rationalisation has forced greater bilateral agreements between countries such as the United Kingdom and Malaysia and China. It is interesting to note that a consortium of northern universities and polytechnics already has a significant bilateral programme with Malaysia, especially for law students. The same applies to 60 universities and polytechnics which, backed by British Petroleum, Glaxo, ICI and Shell, are developing with Taiwan the equivalent of a consular education counselling service in Taipei.

The marketing of our university student places abroad must be far more professional than at present, and the university mission services overseas must be uprated, in conjunction with our educational institutions and universities. We must also target our aid in relation to university students abroad much more accurately. We tend to look towards the Commonwealth countries on the Indian subcontinent and in Africa, but only 1·5 per cent. of overseas students coming to this country are from the burgeoning continent of south America, with its economic and political opportunities. Indeed, the number of students from Venezuela and Brazil decreased significantly between 1979 and 1985. Our universities must adopt far more modular higher education courses so that students from abroad can jump on and jump off, although to be fair that line is already taken for retraining mature students.

We should also use far more private finance. It is disappointing that there are only 17 joint initiatives with the private sector. The Department of Trade and Industry's trade-related scholarships need to be upgraded. It is disappointing that there are only 83 of them at present. It is interesting to note that the Overseas Students Trust wanted an increase of £200,000 per year to £10 million per year. There is also far more to be done on the tripartite schemes that were mentioned in the evidence to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is engaged in schemes, including those involving ICI at Oxford university and BICC with the Cranfield institute of technology. If more can be done in that way, the £120 million of public funds that are used to attract overseas students to this country can be trebled or even quadrupled by private sector funds from industry.

11.27 pm

**Mr. Eggar:** With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, could I say first to hon. Members and to members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that no discourtesy was intended to the Committee in omitting to pick up points made by the Select Committee. I assure the Committee that we shall watch this matter very carefully in future. I take the points made in particular by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling).

The evidence for our oversight is that we believe we have a very good story to tell in relation to overseas students. We had no reason, and certainly no intention or wish, to disguise from the Committee what we were doing. The general support from members of the Committee and from hon. Members is evidence of their recognition of what we have been doing in the past three years.

I shall deal rapidly with as many questions as possible that have been raised during this brief debate. I undertake to reply in writing to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the Chairman of the Select Committee, with regard to the points with which I shall not be able to deal during my remarks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) remarked on the complexity of the schemes. I agree that they are complex. We have considered ways to simplify them and have concluded that various schemes used subtly together can meet most requirements in different countries. We want to concentrate on increased targeting, using our existing schemes. Perhaps in the future we shall narrow the number of schemes but we want to continue as we are for the present.

Several hon. Members spoke about the need to expand in eastern Europe. In this financial year, ending in April, we will have spent £167,000 in scholarship schemes in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Next year we intend to spend £702,000. In other words, the amount is increasing rapidly and we intend to continue that trend.

Hon. Members commented on the transfer of ODA money to the diplomatic wing for use through the FCO scholarships and awards scheme. This is a good example of our deliberately selecting the most effective way of delivering scholarships to a number of aid recipient countries. The awards will be targeted on a number of countries of importance to Britain and on candidates of high quality who can and will make a real contribution in important areas of their own countries' development.

The ODA money—the transferred money—will be disbursed according to the provisions of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980. This transfer does not mean a reduction in ODA programmes. On the contrary, the ODA has provided funds to the diplomatic wing in addition to existing money that is being spent by the ODA. In other words, it is a use of extra money that the ODA has transferred to the diplomatic wing.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) spoke of the drop in the number of students at further education colleges. His hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) dealt effectively with that point. In most developing countries there has been a rapid increase in the

number of further education courses available, and it must be right that those courses should be followed in the developing countries. Students are then available to come and study at university or higher education level in the United Kingdom.

The reason for the delay in holding another round table was that there were comments about the structure of the round table following its last meeting. Consultations are going on with the NGOs and others to try to find a more satisfactory framework that would be more acceptable and productive from everybody's point of view.

The hon. Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) commented on the overseas research students award scheme and questioned whether that might be extended to polytechnics. That is under review now and we must await the outcome of that review.

A number of hon. Members spoke about the EPS and ECS recruitment schemes. I am told that the Department of Education and Science believes that decisions on recruitment policies should be left to insitutions. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provided a small amount of pump priming money to get those recruitment schemes off the ground, in conjunction with the British Council.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) about the need for universities to improve their marketing techniques for overseas students. The comparison between the techniques used by American and British universities does not redound to the credit of our universities.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley spoke about the fund for international student co-operation, of which, I gather, he is an ex-employee. I wish to place on record our thanks to FISC and its trustees for the work that they have done over the years. We have completed a detailed review of FISC and we believe that there is no need for that body to continue its work, and we wish to redeploy the funds directly for other assistance in the student world. The grant will, therefore, end in 1989.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House commented on the fee support schemes. We believe that those schemes have fulfilled their purpose——

*It being two hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to the Order [3 March].*

## Croft House, Holywood, County Down

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

11.35 pm

**Mr. James Kilfedder** (North Down): I am extremely pleased to have this opportunity to raise a matter of immense importance to my constituents. It is not just a local issue but a wider question involving the morality of a Government Department and the Eastern health and social services board in making a decision that runs counter to a decision and a promise of two years ago.

Two years ago the Eastern health and social services board announced that it intended to close Croft House, a home for the elderly. That decision came as a shock to my constituents and, indeed, to myself. Croft House has been a home for senior citizens for the past 38 years. A homely atmosphere and caring attention have been provided by dedicated staff. Most of the residents orginally lived in the Holywood area, where their relatives still live. As the residents are familiar with the environment, the move to a residential home was not as dramatic as it might have been had they been taken away from churches, relatives and friends who had given their lives a considerable degree of warmth.

It was not surprising, therefore, that a decision, in 1987, to close Croft House was challenged by the people of Holywood and by their elected representatives, including myself as the Member of Parliament. At that time there was no talk of a home for the elderly mentally infirm being built in Holywood or, indeed, anywhere else in North Down or Ards. Croft House was being closed because a report said that it would be too costly to make it satisfy all economic and technical requirements and that, consequently, it was too costly to run.

In its strategic plan for the period 1987-92 the board confirmed the need for residential accommodation for the elderly in the North Down and Ards areas. Protest meetings were held at that time, and eventually the board decided to replace Croft House with new purpose-built premises to provide 45 beds, on a site attached to Marmion children's home, which is in Church road, Holywood. This decision was welcomed by the people of the area, by those connected with the home, and by all who had the elderly people's welfare at heart. It was thought that it would bring the elderly people and the children from Marmion together in a very happy relationship and that that would make the elderly people feel part of the local community.

At a meeting of the Eastern health board on 26 March 1987 it was explained—I quote from the minutes—

"that . . . it had been possible to obtain a commitment from the Department of Health and Social Services to use the proceeds of this sale of Croft House together with an advance from the Department to allow a replacement 45 bed home for the elderly in the grounds of Marmion Children's Home to commence as soon as possible."

It was resolved

"to proceed with action to replace Croft House as soon as possible."

Work on the site commenced in November last year and progressed at a reasonable rate for two months, during which time the residents of Croft House, who knew that their home was to be closed in due course, came along to see the development of what they thought would be their new home, not far away.

*[Mr. James Kilfedder]*

But suddenly everything changed. In private, a proposal was put forward by officials of the board "to redesign the elderly persons' home". Those words are bureaucratic shorthand for "demolish what has been built and start again". On 26 January of this year the board agreed that the home "be so redesigned". That was to ensure that the new facility could cater for the needs of the mentally frail elderly. In other words, the solemn undertaking that had been given by the board two years ago to the people of Holywood, to the residents of Croft House, to the clergy in the area and to the public representative was broken by the board.

Suddenly, with only five days' notice, the board reversed the decision. It gave the people five days to make representations. Of course, privately officials gave instructions to the contractor to demolish what had already been built. That was before the board formally made the decision to abandon the replacement home for Croft House. Demolition was quick and sudden. The chairman of the board admitted that the community was taken by surprise. As an excuse for the quick action—the board having waited two long years—the chairman said that the matter required urgent resolution. Yet the director of social services admitted at a meeting which I attended that the issue had been considered by officials for a considerable time.

Despite the extensive and secret consideration by officials of the board, the public was not consulted and no attempt was made to postpone the building work even though for some time the officials knew that they might put forward a recommendation to the board to abandon the project and, better still, to reach a decision before the erection of the building had begun. I should have thought that there was a duty on public officials to be careful about public money.

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the action that took place illustrates clearly just how little influence the elected representatives have when serving on boards in Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Kilfedder:** It proves what I have said all along, that it is high time the Government abolished the board and gave democracy back to the people of Northern Ireland so that we might get rid of the colonial type of Government which we have, with Ministers going over from England and the people having no say. They are invited sometimes to put their views, but when it comes to the bit, arrogance overrules local wishes. I have no objection to arrogance if it is matched with intellect and compassion, but sadly that is not so.

The present case is a perfect example. The officials of the board waited until the foundation of the building had been laid and the walls erected. How much money has been spent needlessly on design and construction costs? It is impossible to discover the amount from the board. My estimate—it is a conservative estimate if I dare use the word "conservative" in that context—is that as a result of its actions the board has cost the taxpayer in excess of £160,000. The board must be held to account for the money that has been thrown away.

I have spoken to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee about the shameful waste of taxpayers' money, because it is the people who are paying. The Chairman of the PAC has promised to give the matter his attention when I submit the papers to him. I propose to give a copy of the *Official Report* of the debate to him in due course.

The board has the temerity to castigate those who criticise its decision by saying:

"To proceed with the original design and build an elderly persons' home which is not needed would be a waste of public money."

If it is not needed, I would have thought that the officials would have known that before they started to erect the building, before the contract was handed out, and indeed before they commissioned the architect to design the building. All that money has been lost for ever. However, the officials appear to set themselves up as the guardians of the public purse on the basis of their experience and their having poured £460,000 of the taxpayers' money down the drain. The board states emphatically that the elderly persons' home is not needed, despite the fact that it is to replace Croft House, which is and has always been full, and despite the fact that it was the Eastern health board on 26 March 1987 that made the decision to provide the replacement building.

The board tries to put a brave face on its inconsistency and muddled thinking by stating that there is a need for a home for the elderly mentally infirm. If that be so, the need has not suddenly become manifest to the board. Officials must have been aware for some time of the requirement for accommodation for the elderly who suffer from dementia. Indeed, the board states that there are 80 mentally frail elderly people in the North Down area. I do not doubt that there are many who need such treatment. Some may now go down to Downshire, which is far away from their relatives. However, If that is so, why was the decision not made last year, the year before or the year before that to provide a home for the elderly mentally infirm?

That is not something new. The matter has been mentioned occasionally in the House, and I should have thought that the officials were aware long ago that a home was needed. When pressed on the issue, the board had to admit that, although it says that there are about 80 mentally frail individuals in the North Down area, it could identify only seven people who were mentally infirm in the Holywood area. However, even that number is in doubt and is challenged.

I make it clear that I believe that we need a home for the elderly mentally infirm. I am in favour of proper provision for the elderly who are mentally frail, but a home should be built between the two areas of heavy population, Bangor and Newtownards, so that it is accessible to relatives from both areas. I ask the Minister to respond to the plea from the people of North Down. The Government should agree to pay for the erection of a home that would serve patients from a wide area—perhaps North Down, Ards, Castlereagh and even further afield.

What has happened to the money that was raised from the sale of Cultra House, Holywood that was used for the elderly mentally infirm and was originally a gift from a private benefactor? I understand that that house was sold for about £800,000. Have the Government pocketed that money? Has the board put that money to other uses? It should have been kept for the building of a home for the elderly mentally infirm. Is it being used for that purpose?

The chairman of the Eastern health board stated that the board's commitment to the residents of Croft House will not be prejudiced by this new decision. What does that mean? If it means the same as the board's commitment to

build a replacement home for Croft House, it is worthless. What is more, it is a callous and cruel way to treat the elderly in Croft House.

It is well that the public in Northern Ireland—even though they may have no relatives in Croft House and may not live anywhere near Holywood or North Down—should be made aware of the indifferent and appalling attitude of the board in this matter. The board has offered to accommodate the present residents of Croft House in the new building that has been redesigned for the mentally infirm. If it can agree to do this, that effectively rebuts every argument it put forward about the urgent need for a home for many mentally infirm in Holywood. If the board accommodates the residents in Croft House, there will be only five places left for new residents. At the moment, Croft House provides accommodation for 25 residents and the replacement home was to provide 45 beds—the board's estimate of need for the area. The new premises for the elderly mentally infirm will provide 30 places.

What will happen to the hapless residents of Croft House? If the Eastern health board has its way, they will be installed in the new building, together with people who are suffering from dementia. It is shocking that the board should contemplate such a thing. In its annual report of 1987-88 it said:

"An EMI home caters for demented, elderly people whose confusion makes them unsuitable for ordinary residential care. It only takes one or two to become severely disturbed for the whole house to be disrupted."

Such a situation would be alarming for ordinary, elderly residents who are alert and lively. They would be distressed and upset if a severe disturbance, perhaps even an assault—I have heard about many in such homes—were to take place. That would be a recipe for the mental and physical deterioration and collapse of the residents.

In addition, the residents of Croft House would lose their freedom. They would all be locked up—the ordinary, elderly people as well as those suffering from dementia. What is coldly and cruelly called the "race track" would be provided for the inmates so that they could endlessly walk round it—but out they will not get. The ordinary elderly people in Croft House will not be able to get out without special permission.

I am trying to calculate when I began so that I can allow the Minister enough time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** The hon. Gentleman has been speaking for 17 minutes.

**Mr. Kilfedder:** I am much obliged, Madam Deputy Speaker. That means that I have another three minutes, because I believe that the Minister wanted 10 minutes.

Another excuse put forward by the board for abandoning its pledge to provide a replacement home for Croft House is the reduction in the waiting list for Croft House from 40 to 20. Private profit-making homes for the elderly are mushrooming all over North Down, and elsewhere in the Province; all their beds are filled, and more private residential homes are being built for profit.

If people are building such places, they must have calculated that there are plenty of people to fill the beds. In the circumstances, it would be foolish for the board to believe that fewer people want to reside in one of its homes for the elderly—I do not for one moment accept that it believes that. In fact, it will be a considerable time before those 20 on the waiting list are accommodated in Croft House.

I do not have time to go through all the other facts that I have before me. I shall precis them by saying that the population of North Down and the number of elderly people continue to grow. The board admits that the number of elderly people will increase by 4,500 by 1996 and those over 75 will increase by 8,500. It admits that there is a need for places for the elderly. The state should not opt out of providing places for the elderly in residential homes.

If the Government were to increase the old-age pension so that people could live in dignity in their own homes, they might be able to manage. However, each individual needs at least £5 per week more if he or she is to meet the increased cost of living. If the Government did not cut back on the money provided for the board to enable home helps to visit the elderly, perhaps more of them could stay in their own homes. I know of instances of elderly people being provided with help for half an hour a week. That is an insult. It enables the Government to say that they provide home help, but not much can be done in half an hour.

I make a final appeal to the Government to respect the wishes of the people of North Down and to examine the situation there. The solemn promise that was made should be honoured.

In the preparation of the new premises, the contractor demolished mature trees, and pulled out hedges to provide an alternative opening that was wholly unnecessary. More work and expense was thus entailed in providing the change of entrance. The builders had to re-wire and re-route electric cable for the road lights and erect a new electric light pole. The electricity supply to private dwellings facing the development had to be re-wired. All this additional trouble and cost was required to provide an opening to a new building that was unnecessary.

I ask the Government to hold the board to account and to ensure that its promise is honoured. If that does not happen, I hope that the Public Accounts Committee will hold them all responsible.

11.56 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham):** The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) has not left me long to reply after his eloquent speech of 23 minutes. He was wide in his condemnation of the Eastern health and social services board on which there are 34 members and which therefore includes a wide spread of professional, political and geographical interests. If the hon. Gentleman and his colleague the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) feel that democracy is not working as well as they would wish in the boards of Northern Ireland, perhaps the first thing they should do is encourage their friends to take their places again on the boards and stop their ludicrous boycott——

**Mr. Kilfedder:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Needham:** I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman spoke for 23 minutes.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to make changes, he should do something about that, as it is in his power to do so. He is well aware that since the decision to build a replacement for Croft House in 1987 a great deal has

*[Mr. Needham]*

changed. He is also aware of the rapid expansion of special housing schemes and the increase in private residential homes for the elderly in his constituency.

Since March 1987, a new sheltered housing scheme providing places for 37 dependent elderly people, with a resident warden, has been completed. Two further schemes providing an additional 160 places, supervised by three resident wardens, are also at an advanced stage. In addition, the Housing Executive has carried out major adaptations to 75 homes of disabled elderly tenants in North Down and Ards. Further major adaptations to the homes of another 16 disabled elderly residents are currently under way.

Accommodation in residential homes has also increased. In March 1987, the date of the replacement decision—perhaps the hon. Gentleman will stop shuffling his papers and listen—there were 17 statutory, voluntary and private residential homes for the elderly in North Down and Ards, providing a total of 447 places. Since then, 10 further private homes have been set up, providing a further 138 places. That is the clearest possible evidence of the Government's determination to ensure that there is proper co-operation between the public and private sectors and that old people can enjoy the widest possible choice.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the present position of the people in Croft House and commented that in 1987 the proposal was for 45 new places. Only 18 elderly persons in the area are currently assessed as needing admission to long-term residential care, and only two of those are down for Croft House. I am told that in those cases application has been made only within the past three weeks, so the evidence clearly shows that there was and is a need for the board to look carefully at the need for this home.

There is an acute need to help the elderly mentally frail and it was monstrous for the hon. Genteman to suggest that elderly people currently in Croft House would be pushed together with the elderly mentally frail. There has never been such a suggestion. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that everybody currently in Croft House will be looked after and consulted individually on the future position.

There are, at present, 60 mentally frail, elderly people living in the community and a further 30 in psychogeriatric hospital care who could benefit from care in a home designed to meet their needs, which is what Croft House will become. Such a facility does not currently exist in the Ards area and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should seek to make the suggestions that he did. He should reflect on what he said about the needs of elderly, mentally infirm people in his area.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the board made a decision in 1987 and, rightly, reassessed that decision at the end of 1988. I am sure that when the hon. Gentleman puts his points to the Select Committee on Public Accounts it will wisely and sensibly come to the conclusion that it made more sense to spend £63,000—not £163,000 as the hon. Gentleman said, but he is never given to exaggeration when he does not need to be—when the cost of such a home would be £1·3 million. The need for places for the class of people to whom he referred is down to two, whereas the requirement for places for the elderly mentally infirm is 60. The board was right to make its decision. I agree with the hon. Gentleman in only one sense—that the board would have been wiser to make its decision before it let the contract and before the builder was on site.

I can understand the concern and the worry that the situation caused to residents of Croft House. It is crucial that all the residents there are carefully counselled and that their needs are individually looked after to ensure that they are properly cared for wherever they may go. As I said to the hon. Gentleman, those decisions will be taken by the board. Looking at the provision currently becoming available in the hon. Gentleman's area, I have no doubt that the residents will be found happy alternatives.

The Government are determined to ensure that elderly people who need to be in residential accommodation are looked after properly and that their condition is monitored properly. That is exactly what has happened in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and it will continue to happen while the Government are in control in Northern Ireland. We are determined to ensure that the needs of the elderly people of Northern Ireland are looked after sensitively and carefully.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Twelve o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 8 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Pol Pot

1. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts the United Kingdom is making in international fora to prevent the return to power in Kampuchea of Mr. Pol Pot.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe):** The surest way to keep Pol Pot and his cronies out of power lies in a political settlement in which Cambodians elect a government of their choice. That is a principal objective of all our policies.

**Mr. King:** In thanking my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply, will he accept that most sane-thinking people would not welcome the return of Pol Pot and his murderers to run that tragic country? What action is being taken to follow my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's proposal that the five main members of the United Nations Security Council should work towards a settlement?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I agree with my hon. Friend's condemnation of Pol Pot, which is why I expressed our objectives so clearly in my original answer. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's proposal is one of a number of ways in which we are seeking to carry forward the search for a settlement. I discussed the matter a couple of weeks ago with the Chinese Foreign Minister in Tokyo, and it is clear that discussions—for example, between China and the Soviet Union—are helping to advance the process. We have placed the topic on the agenda of the Five at the United Nations and they will carry it forward when they feel that it is appropriate.

**Mr. Mullin:** Is it not the truth that, far from attempting to prevent the return of Pol Pot, China, America and Thailand—with the active acquiescence of the Government—have spent the past 10 years supplying food, guns and diplomatic recognition to the Khmer Rouge? In what way is that designed to keep the Khmer Rouge out of power?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** Britain was, in fact, one of the first to withdraw recognition from the Pol Pot regime. The policy which we and others share at the United Nations and elsewhere on the seating of the coalition Government of democratic Kampuchea does not in any sense mean recognition as a Government or support for Pol Pot. That is not the position, either, after the United Nations General Assembly has adopted resolution after resolution condemning the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge.

### Warsaw Pact

2. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent political developments in the Warsaw pact countries.

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** The Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary have taken welcome steps to liberalise their political and economic systems. That is in stark contrast to the situation in Czechoslovakia and Romania.

The openness of all countries in eastern Europe will be tested at the negotiations just opened in Vienna.

**Mr. Boswell:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Does he agree with me that eastern Europe is far from a monolith and that countries are proceeding towards political pluralism at different rates? Will my right hon. Friend support the advance guard, castigate the laggards to whom he has referred and tailor the Government's policies accordingly?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's approach, which is why I drew that distinction in my original answer. The record of Romania for flagrant disregard of her conference on security and co-operation in Europe obligations is the worst in the Warsaw pact. I made that extremely clear when I saw the Romanian Foreign Minister in Vienna on Monday.

The performance of Czechoslovakia is also far from good. We have spoken regularly to the Czech authorities —most recently after the imprisonment of the playwright, Mr. Havel.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** I share the Foreign Secretary's welcome for developments, especially in Hungary, but will he ensure that the European Community responds as positively as it can to those developments in encouraging trade between the Community and central European countries?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** The hon. and learned Gentleman is entirely right. The establishment of relations between the Community and Hungary has gone further than those with any other eastern European country. Hungary established the first trade and co-operation agreement with the Community and is certainly the most worthwhile interlocutor of the Warsaw pact countries.

**Mr. Madel:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there would be faster political progress in eastern Europe if east European countries were allowed to opt-out of the Warsaw pact?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** The important feature is that political progress is taking place in those countries notwithstanding their continued membership of the Warsaw pact. Their membership is a matter for determination between the Governments and it is important that continued membership should not inhibit the progress that is taking place in several of those countries.

## Middle East

3. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British-Israeli relations in the light of the recent visit to Israel by the Minister of State the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave).

6. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) to Israel.

8. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave):** My visit to Israel, the occupied territories and Jordan included a constructive discussion of the peace process with my various hosts, and underlined the enduring strength of both Anglo-Israeli and Anglo-Jordanian relations.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** Did the Minister have time to discuss with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Itzhak Rabin, his plan to hold democratic elections in the West Bank to provide some suitable representatives of the Palestinian people with whom talks can proceed?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I spoke to the Israeli Foreign Minister who is Mr. Arens, not Mr. Rabin. Mr. Rabin's plan was one of the principal topics of the detailed discussions that I had and we talked through the implications of it with the Palestinians and with the Israeli Government. The Palestinians, as is well known, are extremely suspicious of moves that they see as involving them in elections that would not be properly free.

**Mr. Burt:** My hon. Friend's efforts for peace in the middle east will be warmly welcomed by all sides of the House. While true friends of Israel have never been afraid to offer home truths to that country, does my hon. Friend recognise that the same should also be true of those who are counselling the rather recently converted Palestinian Liberation Organisation? Does he agree that it should be urged to use all its influence to prevent further disturbances on the West Bank and in Gaza because true evidence of peaceful intent will be needed to convince understandably cautious Israeli public opinion?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** It is very important to urge restraint on all sides. I make a distinction between military, armed terrorist activity, which is out of the question and which I urge the PLO leaders to condemn—we all know that there are factions within the Palestinian movement which are trying to undermine the new, more moderate position of Mr. Arafat—and the intifada. I made it clear to all the Palestinian leaders that I met that the intifada should be pursued with the utmost restraint, but I believe that it is an expression of solidarity among Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza, which no single man could, of his own will, call off.

**Mr. Nellist:** No doubt the Minister is aware that I was in Israel and the occupied territories in the week preceding his visit—we probably crossed at Ben Gurion airport. Apart from the slightly dubious pleasure of being detained and questioned for an hour by senior intelligence officers from Shin Bet at the Ramla maximum security prison I spent much of my time talking to doctors on the West Bank. When the Minister met Defence Minister Rabin did he express to him the outrage felt by working people in this country about the iron-fist policy pursued in the territories? That policy has resulted in seven Israeli soldiers being injured, one being tragically killed, and 11 Israeli citizens killed, compared with more than 400 Palestinians killed and 20,000 injured. That figure includes a six-year-old girl from the Gaza Strip who was shot in the head when I was there. Did the Minister express the outrage felt by working people in this country about that occupation policy?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I congratulate the hon. Member on his escape. In the past we have made protests, and I made further protests, about the handling of the intifada. When I was there I visited Nablus, which was under total curfew. By chance on the same day the Israeli Prime Minister described the West Bank as being "liberated", which seemed a little bizarre to me.

**Sir Dennis Walters:** The United States Secretary of State was reported the other day as having said in Vienna that the time was not yet ripe for a middle east peace conference. Will my hon. Friend and the British Government do everything in their power to persuade the United States that after 22 years of illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and increasing repression of great brutality, the time for such a conference is not only ripe but over-ripe?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** It is the responsibility of all who wish to see a successful outcome that we do not raise impossible expectations of the speed with which events will unfold. We all want to see progress, but it is obvious that the United States will take some time to formulate their position and any moves, towards a conference or anything else, must be carefully prepared. I made that point to Palestinians and they were receptive to them.

**Mr. Janner:** Does the Minister accept that, unlike any other country in the area, the Israeli Government are accountable to the electorate? Even if, as in Britain, the electorate makes a most serious mistake, its views must be taken into account. In those circumstances, will the Minister consider, if and when he again visits the middle east, that it will help a Government to come to the negotiating table if a person who comes as a visitor to that country does not criticise publicly the Government who receive him within that country and in a neighbouring country?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I make the distinction that Her Majesty's Government have made it clear in the past that the intifada is being mishandled, that serious mistakes are being made and unnecessary suffering is being caused. I did not, however, spend my time criticising Israeli policy in the way that the hon. and learned Gentleman described. My host, Netanyahu, described our meetings as being a friendly non-meeting of minds. That is more or less the truth.

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** Did my hon. Friend, on his very impressive visit to the middle east, discover whether the current Israeli Government accept resolution 242? In view of our Government's justified insistence on obtaining from Mr. Arafat a pledge that he accepts resolution 242, will

they, before or during talks with Mr. Shamir, establish clearly that he pledges himself to the implementation of that United Nations resolution?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My right hon. Friend puts his finger on one of the new complexities. Within the broadly based current Israeli Government—a Government of national unity—there is, clearly, a variety of positions on that point. Mr. Shamir is on record as saying that the return of Sinai meets resolution 242. That is not the view of others in the Government and it is not the view of Her Majesty's Government. I am not sure that I am much the wiser on that point.

**Mr. Steel:** May I congratulate the Minister on his constructive visit to the middle east? In view of the depressingly negative utterances of Mr. Shamir on peace prospects, do the Government have it in mind to revive the European Community initiative?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the troika of the European Community has been conducting useful discussions and has met Mr. Shevardnadze, which was a new and welcome development. All our efforts are made within the framework of European Community policy and we are not trying to launch a private initiative of our own. We shall be discussing and mutually sharing the results of a variety of recent visits by Community leaders to the area.

**Mr. Latham:** May I congratulate my hon. Friend on his helpful, valuable and constructive visit to the middle east? Will he emphasise that perhaps the important visit and meeting recently has been between Mr. Arens and Mr. Shevardnadze? Is it not essential, if the Soviet Union is to continue to take a constructive role in middle eastern matters, that it should re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel as soon as possible?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I am especially grateful for the support of my hon. Friend. He is right to say that that was an important meeting. Mr. Arens gave me a full account of it, for which I was grateful. Although there were many positive aspects to the speech that Mr. Shevardnadze made the next day, Her Majesty's Government do not find easy to accept one or two aspects of it, such as the question mark raised by the legitimate existence of Israel being made conditional on the acceptance of the rights of Palestinians. That was not helpful—nor was talk of sanctions against Israel. However, we welcome elements of current Soviet policy, such as the steady move towards multilateral talks, the pragmatic approach and the helpful pressure which, to some extent, Mr. Shevardnadze put on Syria.

**Mr. Kaufman:** During his visit to Israel, did the hon. Gentleman learn, as I did two weeks ago when I addressed a conference of 1,000 Israelis in Jerusalem, that a growing body of Israeli Jews favour dialogue with the PLO, as was shown by the 53 per cent. in the latest opinion poll who say that they want that? Does he agree with Mr. Abba Eban, who said at the conference that I addressed, that it is a remarkable innovation for one country—Israel—to seek to nominate not only its own participants in the negotiations but those of the other side also? Does he further agree that Mr. Shamir's truculent attitude in his interview on BBC television is not only damaging to Palestinian interests but to Israeli interests, and that the only sure way of ensuring Israel security is not to suppress Palestinians by force but to talk to Palestinians about making peace?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Once again, I associate myself fully with what the right hon. Gentleman has said. I met many people in Israel who were open-minded when discussing practical ways forward and who wished for a sense of movement in Israeli policy. I also met many within the Likud who said the same thing. There is a prospect of movement in Israeli policy and the best way for those who are friends of Israel to foster that is not to talk in terms of pressure or sanctions against Israel, but to work with those who are leading the way in that direction in Israel. I took the precaution of having lunch with Mr. Abba Eban before going to Israel, although his name is something of a red rag to the present Israeli Foreign Ministry, and he said many wise things to me that were along the lines quoted by the right hon. Gentleman.

## Vietnamese Refugees

4. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other Governments in order to resolve the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** We have recently made representations to 21 resettlement countries urging them to increase the number of Vietnamese refugees they are prepared to take from Hong Kong. We have ourselves undertaken to resettle an additional 1,000 Vietnamese refugees in Britain, and have secured significantly increased commitments from other countries at the same time.

**Mr. Grant:** Given the Chinese Government's insistence that the problem should be resolved before 1997, when Hong Kong reverts to Chinese sovereignty, what timetable does the Secretary of State have in mind for dealing with the remaining 10,000 refugees in Hong Kong? Will he give the House an assurance today that there will be no compulsory repatriations of any refugees?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** Clearly, it must be the intention of us all to ensure that the problem of the Vietnamese boat people has been resolved well before 1997. It is a topic in which the Chinese Government have taken a helpful interest in some respects. They have taken back to China a number of refugees of Vietnamese origin. They are also doing all that they can to encourage boat people en route not to proceed with their journey along the south China coast towards Hong Kong because it is important to check the inflow which has threatened to overwhelm Hong Kong in recent months. It was for that reason that we introduced the screening policy and those who have been identified as non-refugees have no prospect of resettlement elsewhere. Therefore, unless they are to stay indefinitely in detention centres in Hong Kong—they are being improved as much as possible—it must be recognised that their long-term future rests in Vietnam.

**Sir Peter Blaker:** Will my right hon. and learned Friend pay tribute to the moderation with which the Government and people of Hong Kong have dealt with this difficult problem? Does he know of many countries that are nowadays prepared to allow unlimited immigration to economic migrants? Will he confirm that the screening of the economic migrants from the genuine refugees and the

repatriation of the economic migrants will be conducted in consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I join my right hon. Friend in paying tribute to the Hong Kong Government and people for the way in which they have accommodated a massive increase in the number of arrivals. About 18,000 people arrived in 1988. That has put a major strain on their resources and they have responded with voluntary as well as governmental help on a magnificent scale. As I said, they are bringing forward their programme to liberalise conditions for those who have been accorded refugee status and to move residents away from unacceptable buildings which still exist.

The screening policy has been introduced after consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is being conducted in accordance with guidelines worked out with that organisation, and it is important for us to continue doing that. The same kind of policy is now being adopted in other parts of the world, not least in the United States in relation to arrivals from central America.

**Mr. Eastham:** I note the Foreign Secretary's remarks about the increased numbers whom the United Kingdom is prepared to take. May I, on behalf of the small number of refugees who have been accepted by this country, make a special plea on behalf of families who are divided? Hon. Members will be aware of the representations that we receive from families who have been divided for eight or 10 years and who are still waiting for permission to be reunited. Will special attention be paid, in relation to the additional 1,000 whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned, to the need, where possible, to reunite families, especially those who have been divided for many years?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's humanitarian concern. The commitment of which I reminded the House represents a doubling in the rate of acceptance of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong into the United Kingdom. Since 1975, we have taken about 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees of whom 13,000 were Vietnamese from Hong Kong. Only the United States and Canada have taken more, so we have made a substantial contribution.

As for particular cases of reunification, our proposed new commitment would widen the eligibility criteria for resettlement cases, but specific cases would need to be considered by the Home Secretary.

**Sir Hal Miller:** In relation to the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many people in Hong Kong have difficulty in understanding how those people are admitted when refugees—if that is the right description; "would-be entrants" might be a more neutral term—from China, including their own kith and kin, are not admitted and, if found, are deported?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** That factor is powerfully in the minds of the people of Hong Kong. A substantial number of arrivals from what is called mainland Hong Kong are returned to China each year. That happens, I have no doubt, because of the recognition of the severe overcrowding in Hong Kong. For that reason, such an urgent case was presented by the Government and people of Hong Kong for us to do something in the face of the dramatic inflow of Vietnamese boat people. We have done something; we have introduced the new policy for screening out the non-refugees and we have enhanced our willingness to accept them.

## Cocaine

7. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what co-operation is being achieved through the United Nations to tackle the threats from international trafficking in cocaine.

**Mr. Eggar:** A United Nations convention against illicit drug trafficking adopted last December will strengthen international co-operation to combat cocaine trafficking. The United Nations fund for drug abuse control finances major assistance programmes in all the principal cocaine producer countries.

**Mr. Burns:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that it is important for the Government to seek the consent and agreement of foreign Governments to reach agreement on taking the assets of drug traffickers? What success, if any, have the British Government had in getting bilateral agreement with other Governments to put a stop to this vile trade?

**Mr. Eggar:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. In fact, we have already signed six such agreements, the last one being at 10.30 am today when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary signed an agreement with Switzerland. We are in the process of negotiating with 20 other countries and we are in contact with another 20. During my recent visit to Guatemala and Costa Rica I had discussions with the authorities about the possibility of reaching agreement with them.

**Mr. Rathbone:** While I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Government on the lead they have given internationally in controlling drug trafficking, can my hon. Friend tell us what efforts have been made particularly to encourage other European and Commonwealth countries to sign the United Nations convention?

**Mr. Eggar:** We constantly point out the need to sign to the relatively few countries that have not signed. Some 43 countries signed when the convention became available. I also had discussions with central American and Latin American Governments about the need to move towards ratification of the convention as soon as possible. With regard to other co-operation with the United Nations, next week my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I will meet Miss Joan Anstee, who is in charge of United Nations bodies in Vienna connected with the fight against drugs.

## Nicaragua

9. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied that the Nicaraguan Government are committed to introducing democracy.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Nicaraguan Government committed themselves in the Esquipulas agreement to introduce democracy. On 14 February President Ortega freely

entered into further specific undertakings to introduce democracy. It remains to be seen if those commitments will now at last be fulfilled.

**Mr. Martin:** In so far as Her Majesty's Government can exert pressure on the Nicaraguan Government, will my hon. Friend continue to impress upon them that we shall take those pretensions to democracy more seriously when the rights of opposition parties are respected in that country?

**Mr. Eggar:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The Nicaraguan Government have committed themselves, in the Esquipulas agreement and on many subsequent occasions, to introducing democracy. Their record so far has not been impressive. Indeed, it is significant that they have not succeeded in introducing democracy. That significance is recognised by the fact that President Ortega himself had to enter into specific agreements in the San Salvador agreement.

**Mrs. Mahon:** The Minister spoke of the Esquipulas agreement. What pressure did he bring to bear on the Government of Guatemala on his recent visit to central America about their gross violations of human rights and the need for them to keep to that agreement?

**Mr. Eggar:** I had extensive talks on human rights with both the Foreign Minister and the Home Minister of Guatemala. I also met the human rights procurator. We were requested by the Guatemalan Government to help them by providing assistance on human rights matters. I discussed with them the conclusion of the United Nations special expert who has recently reported to the human rights commission that in his view there is no intention by the Guatemalan Government to abuse human rights.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Since the Nicaraguan Government declared a ceasefire, they have engaged in constructive dialogue with all opposition forces, and they have allowed even the hypercritical *La Prensa* to publish freely; above all, they have brought forward free elections to February 1990, fulfilling all the requirements of the central American peace plan. Is it not extremely unfortunate that last week in San Pedro Sula, as he has done again today, the Under-Secretary of State repeated parrot fashion an out-of-date Washington line? Will he now at last get up to date, recognise the progress in Nicaragua, support the peace plan and the peace initiative, help to ensure that the Americans stop aid to Contra terrorists and ensure that all the Contras are removed from Honduras as quickly as possible?

**Mr. Eggar:** Of course Her Majesty's Government support the peace process. That is why we signed the agreements following the San Pedro Sula conference. Under the Nicaraguan constitution, the army, the police and the judiciary owe allegiance not to the state but to the Sandinista party. It is perfectly reasonable for me to point out that that is not in accord with what I understand by democracy and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not agree.

## France

10. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current Anglo-French relations.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker):** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had useful talks with President Mitterrand at the Anglo-French summit meeting in Paris on 27 February. The two Governments consult closely on a wide range of issues. There are numerous ministerial and other contacts between the two countries.

**Mr. Gow:** Was it not General de Gaulle who described the proper structure of the European Community as "Europe des patries"? Would not the general have approved warmly of the Prime Minister's speech at Bruges? Is my right hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the Bruges speech matched by that of the present President of France?

**Mrs. Chalker:** I note the comparison that my hon. Friend makes, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it quite clear at Bruges that Britain's destiny is in Europe. I am not quite sure whether General de Gaulle always saw things in quite the same way. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that we must concentrate on practical matters, working for greater unity but avoiding restrictive uniformity. Perhaps President Mitterrand might agree with that rather more than President de Gaulle did.

**Mr. Ron Brown:** Did the Minister raise the question of France's soaring rates bill, running into thousands of pounds for property owned in London? Did she mention that debt, bearing in mind that in Scotland individuals who refuse to pay the poll tax receive threats to seize their property and arrest their wages? Does she intend to have a warrant sale at the French embassy?

**Mrs. Chalker:** I am quite sure that if the French Government owe the British Government any money it will be paid. We shall ensure that it is.

**Mr. Curry:** While I welcome the recent agreement for the exchange of officials between Britain and France, does my right hon. Friend recognise that the degree of co-operation between Britain and France and Britain and Germany is a shadow of the co-operation between France and Germany? Will she take all possible steps to improve the quality and extent of that co-operation?

**Mrs. Chalker:** Indeed, Sir. I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that an exchange of diplomats at first secretary level is starting in the autumn. I hope that that will be increased and that we shall have not only diplomatic exchanges between the two countries but business exchanges, scholarly exchanges, which already exist, and exchanges between schoolchildren.

**Mr. Kaufman:** The right hon. Lady described the Prime Minister's talks with President Mitterrand as useful. Was it not indeed useful that President Mitterrand sent the Prime Minister away with a flea in her ear when she tried to enlist him in her dangerous cause to modernise short-range nuclear weapons to circumvent the INF treaty? Is it not equally satisfactory that Chancellor Kohl has given the Prime Minister the same unceremonious brush-off? Why is Britain's the only Government in NATO or the Warsaw pact who are actively planning to increase the world's stock of nuclear weapons?

**Mrs. Chalker:** I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman has been concentrating so much on the middle

east recently that he has missed something. France is currently modernising her own short-range nuclear missiles. Like us, she understands that obsolete weapons do not deter, and President Mitterrand said at the summit that NATO should modernise if the Soviets are doing so. The Soviet Union has conducted a massive modernisation of nuclear forces during the past decade and I have absolutely no doubt that France is pursuing her policy of deterrence in a sensible way, just as we are.

## Consular Assistance

12. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens detained abroad required consular help in 1988; how many of these faced criminal charges; and what was the total cost of providing assistance.

**Mr. Eggar:** One thousand, eight hundred and fifty two British citizens were reported to us as having been arrested in 1988 on criminal charges, including 441 in connection with drugs. Those detained briefly for minor offences are often not reported to us. No specific figures are available on the total cost of consular assistance in those cases.

**Mr. Evans:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that the British people are sick and tired of lager louts, layabouts and hooligans dragging the name of this country through the gutters of the world? Is it not about time that those layabouts who seek consular services paid for those services through direct debits from their wage packets, their social security payments or from their parents and so removed the burden from the taxpayer once and for all?

**Mr. Eggar:** I understand my hon. Friend's very strong feelings about this matter. A very small minority of British citizens behave disgracefully abroad and give the country a bad name while making life difficult for other British tourists in the same resorts. I have made it clear on many occasions that with regard to requests for consular services, we will put people who have got into trouble as a result of their own activities at the bottom of the list and we will help those who really need help first.

**Mr. Heffer:** When the Minister considers these problems, will he distinguish between the lager louts from Tory areas in this country and genuine people who may get into difficulties and who are in no way connected with the lager louts from the Conservative areas of this country?

**Mr. Eggar:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that we help those who need our help.

## Namibia

13. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We look forward to implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence, which is due to begin on 1 April. We are contributing a signals unit to the United Nations transition assistance group.

**Mr. Colvin:** The House will be aware of the importance of so-called linkage in connection with the implementation of resolution 435—namely the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from Angola. The South Africans have gone. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that 70 United Nations observers under the leadership of a Brazilian general are sufficient to verify the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola? Does she see any role for the United Kingdom—which is impartial with regard to Angola—as head of the Commonwealth, in the process which will lead to reconciliation in Angola and to free and fair elections in that country, which we all want to see?

**Mrs. Chalker:** The United Nation's secretary-general recommended that the United Nation's Angola verification mission—UNAVEM—should consist of 70 monitors. We have full confidence in his judgment that UNAVEM can verify the withdrawal. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of peace in Angola. It is very difficult to see how lasting peace can be achieved without internal reconciliation. We continue to be in touch with all the African leaders who are best placed to mediate in this matter and we hope that there will be reconciliation soon.

**Mr. Pike:** Will the Minister assure us that she is maintaining the closest possible contact with the changing leadership in South Africa to ensure that genuine Namibian independence can be secured and that that can be the first positive step towards further genuine moves to ending apartheid in South Africa?

**Mrs. Chalker:** Yes indeed. We shall monitor what happens very carefully, because, as the hon. Gentleman has said, we believe that a successful progression to independence in Namibia may give us further clues about the way in which apartheid can be ended all the faster in South Africa.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Will my right hon. Friend assist in the holding of an informal forum or meeting of all the parties that will be contesting elections in Namibia prior to the election process getting under way, particularly if there is considerable support from many countries throughout the world for the holding of such an informal conference as a way of achieving national reconciliation in Namibia before the election campaign gets under way? Will the United Kingdom encourage such a development and perhaps facilitate the holding of such an informal conference?

**Mrs. Chalker:** I am not sure whether the United Kingdom has the specific role that my hon. Friend suggested. We understand that there may be as many as 46 parties campaigning in the Namibian elections and I honestly do not know whether, with refugees returning to Namibia all the time, it will be possible even to arrange an informal forum such as he suggested. The important thing is that the observers who will be there—all 800 of them, compared with the 460 originally envisaged—ensure that there are free and fair elections. Another 1,150 civilian monitors will be present during the election campaign. Given those preparations, and because we so much want independent Namibia to be a success, it would not be right to prescribe a special sort of conference, which, as my hon. Friend well knows, was not part of United Nations Security Council resolution 435.

**Miss Lestor:** Is the right hon. Lady aware that two of her hon. Friends and my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and I have just returned from a conference in Madrid that was held by western European parliamentarians of all parties and members of the front-line states, at which much concern was expressed about South Africa's biased activities against SWAPO in relation to these elections? It is very important to have observers not only at the time of the elections but between now and the elections, and that many people go to observe what is taking place both before and after the elections, up until April when the process is finalised.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I am most interested to hear what the hon. Lady says. I hope that she will tell me in detail about the conference that she attended in Spain. I am well aware of the allegations. As she knows, the implementation of the United Nations plan is a matter for the United Nations secretary-general and his staff, in whom we have every confidence. We have seen the SWAPO reports and have also heard a number of other reports about what may be going on. It is important that the negotiations, which have established a joint commission to investigate these allegations, be allowed to continue. The joint commission should look into all allegations in order to ensure free and fair elections, which we all want.

## Israel

14. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Israeli relations.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

**Mr. Norris:** I join in the congratulations to my hon. Friend on his conduct during his recent visit to Israel. It would be a tragedy if the attitude of the Government were interpreted in Israel as either deliberately combative or unhelpful. The Government's attitude should be—and I understand that it is—based on the profound belief that long-lasting security for Israel will be achieved only through a peaceful solution. In that context, when Mr. Shamir refers to the occupied territories as the liberated territories, he moves back the peace process.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** It is absolutely essential that those who wish to help in this area do not contribute to the sense of isolation in Israel, which sometimes causes the problem. Those who wish to take forward the peace process must be able to assure Israel that there is no question about her security. We find it difficult to understand why a peace structure based on treaty with her neighbours, together with her formidable armaments, will not enhance her security, and why it should undermine it.

**Mr. Galloway:** Does the Minister accept that, with the possible exception of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), the whole House was greatly impressed by, and admired the skill, clarity and courage of, the statements that the hon. Gentleman made on his trip to the occupied territories? He walked there in the distinguished footsteps of his predecessor—the present Minister of State, Department of Health—and more than filled his shoes.

In spite of what the Minister said about a perceived danger of Israel feeling a sense of isolation, is it not clear that the words that he spoke in Israel and which the Government continually speak about this issue are falling on deaf ears? How many more deaths, how many more broken bones and how many more snubs to British Tory Ministers will it take before the Government decide to get a little tougher with Israel to push it to the negotiating table?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I do not want to misinterpret the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who does not seem to disagree with the content of what I am saying but wants to monopolise its expression himself. I repeat what I said earlier: I do not believe that it is a matter of exerting pressure or threats against Israel. The one thing that Israelis do not respond to is threats. On the other hand, those who really want a secure and permanent future for Israel should not be backward about trying to follow through the arguments to explain why we take a different view from that of the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

**Mr. Dykes:** At the risk of overdoing the praise, which is justified, may I add my words of congratulation on my hon. Friend's outstanding and memorable visit to Israel? He struck a balance between obvious sympathy for the historical and actual position of Israel and the need to persuade the Israeli authorities to take the peace process further.

Was my hon. Friend able to convey to the Israeli Government the essential truth that if a proper international peace is achieved, Israel will have a 1,000 per cent. guarantee of its total security in the future, as opposed to being at odds with the entire international community?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. All who have the long-term interests of Israel at heart should be saying what he said, which is that she can exist in a fortress of armaments only for a limited time. Doubtless she can exist like that for many years, but permanent peace and the freeing of all the talent that Israel now has to put into armaments for channelling into all the other things that David Ben Gurion and others saw as the real vision for Israel all depend on Israel working with her neighbours.

**Mr. Heffer:** Is the Minister aware that some of us who have consistently supported Israel's right to peace and secure borders over the years are sad that the Israelis have not responded to Yasser Arafat's declaration, thereby giving some of the more extremist elements in the PLO the grounds on which to begin activities against Israel, when there could have been serious peace discussions in the middle east?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on an important point. There are extremist factions, some of them backed by Syria, who have an interest in the failure of what Mr. Arafat has done. It seems to the Government—and, I think, the Opposition—that it was right to welcome the steps that the PLO took, because we have both been urging it to take them

for many years. If we had not responded, that would have been an incentive to the extremists, so I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

## EC Budget

15. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards implementing the measures agreed at the Brussels summit of February 1988 to control the growth of the European Community's budget.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The 1989 Community budget included CAP provision some £1,320 million less than the agricultural guideline. Own resources called up for the budget were substantially below the relevant sub-ceiling in the new own resources decision.

**Mr. Tredinnick:** Can my right hon. Friend give some indication of the inquiries being conducted by the Government into allegations of widespread fraud within the common agricultural policy? Will she give some indication also of the pressure that she intends putting on our European partners when that fraud is discovered, to ensure that prosecutions take place?

**Mrs. Chalker:** My hon. Friend will have noticed the comments of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General in the House last Thursday, and my own comments in a debate on 23 February. On both occasions, we sought to give more detail. We are working on further suggestions for seeking out fraud and stopping it. It is important not only to detect but deter. The Court of Auditors' report highlights the problems of fraud, and we shall support all cost-effective measures against fraud in the Community, wherever it may be. That is why we are making concrete suggestions to counsel for combating both fraud and the mismanagement of resources.

**Mr. Robertson:** Is the Minister aware that acceptance of the super-generous Brussels budget deal was inextricably tied up with the drive to completing the 1992 internal market? Does the Minister agree with Sir John Hoskyns who, in a speech last week at the Institute of Directors, called a social dimension to 1992

"a nonsense and Sixties-style social engineering"?

Or does the right hon. Lady prefer the view of the London ambassador for the most prosperous country in Europe, West Germany, who called for

"a European charter of fundamental social rights, including collective bargaining autonomy, freedom of association, and sex equality"?

Is the Minister on the side of the dinosaurs or of the economically powerful?

**Mrs. Chalker:** The Government have always been on the side of economic strengths. Many of the comments made in Sir John Hoskyns' speech to the Institute of Directors seemed to discourage business from preparing for the changes of 1992. If they have done that, the speech did no service to Britain. Of course we must right those things that are wrong. However, the most important part of the single market programme is moving ahead to dismantle barriers. There is no sense in imposing regulations on business that will deter the creation of employment and job opportunities. If we are to have a sensible social dimension in Europe, there must be wider access to training and retraining, better standards of training and retraining, implementation of the health and safety at work directive agreed last December, equal treatment in social security, and free movement of labour. Having rolled back the frontiers of Socialism in Britain, there is no way that we will see them re-established in Brussels.

**Mr. William Powell:** Can my right hon. Friend say how much fraud against the EEC has taken place within the frontiers of the United Kingdom, and how many prosecutions of United Kingdom nationals have occurred for fraud involving EEC budgets?

**Mrs. Chalker:** I cannot give my hon. Friend such details without notice. I shall write to him with the details that are known. Figures mentioned in the press have been highly speculative. We do not doubt that very large sums have been involved across the Community as a whole, and that fraud is a serious problem. The nature of the fraud means that it is impossible to give precise figures now, but action must be taken all the way to reduce such frauds to a minimum. Even if I cannot give my hon. Friend the details that he wishes, he should be in no doubt about our recognition of the need for action and our determination to take it.

## Afghanistan

16. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Afghanistan.

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** We welcome the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The unrepresentative regime installed and armed by the Russians remains in place. We believe that it should go now, so that bloodshed can end and a representative Government can take office.

**Mr. Cohen:** Why are the Government backing a rag-bag group of terrorists who, if they ever achieve power —God forbid—would be a deadly cocktail of the Ayatollah and Pol Pot? Now that the Russians have left, will the Government stop arming that group of fanatics and terrorists and instead get on friendlier terms with the authorities to try to deliver Afghanistan from war and feudalism rather than leaving it to endure incessant hostilities?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** The hon. Gentleman's perception of the matter is wholly at fault. The Government who are still clinging to power in Kabul and who were installed and armed by the Russians, against the wishes of the great majority of Afghans, represent virtually nobody but themselves and control virtually nothing outside Kabul. It is only when that Government step down and allow the Afghans to choose a Government representative of the Afghan people that the fighting will come to an end. That is what we all want to see.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Government of Mr. Najibullah have blood on their hands from the hundreds of thousands of people killed in Afghanistan or driven into refugee camps in Pakistan during the Soviet occupation? Will my right hon. and learned Friend work closely with the Government of Pakistan to try to restore order to that region?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The Najibullah Government have caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Afghans and have driven millions of them to refugee status. It is only when that Government step down and make way for a Government who represent the Afghan people as a whole that there will be a prospect for the peace that we all want in that tragic country.

## Iran (Diplomatic Relations)

3.30 pm

**Mr. Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the breaking off of diplomatic relations by Iran.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe):** The Iranian Government broke diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom on 7 March. I told the House on 21 February that in face of the incitement to murder proclaimed by the Ayatollah Khomeini, we were closing our embassy in Tehran and had asked the Iranian Government to withdraw their chargé d'affaires and the one other Iranian-based member of his staff from London. They left on 28 February.

We have made clear throughout that, as with any other country, normal relations between Britain and Iran must depend on Iran's fulfilment of her international obligations, in particular by renouncing the use or threat of violence against our citizens. Iran has not withdrawn those threats. We have therefore decided that on security grounds, a number of Iranians must be required to leave this country. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department will shortly be giving notice to that effect. We are keeping the activities of other Iranians under very close review and further action will be taken as necessary. The Iranian Government have until now maintained a consulate-general in Hong Kong. They have been told to close the consulate-general. Its staff have been given two weeks in which to leave.

**Mr. Kaufman:** I welcome the response by the Foreign Secretary and the action that he has announced. That has our full support and the Foreign Secretary also has our full support for refusing to make any kind of deal with Iran until that country's regime withdraws its monstrous death threat against Mr. Rushdie. Deplorably, that threat has now been reaffirmed by the President of Iran.

Does the Foreign Secretary share our satisfaction that, apart from Libya, no Government of a Moslem country has endorsed the death threat? Although we do not have to agree with everything that it says, the attitude of the Islamic world is much more accurately reflected in the calm and balanced tone of the statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Can the Foreign Secretary tell us what arrangements are being made to keep in touch with and protect the interests of Mr. Roger Cooper, whose family must, understandably, be extremely worried about his welfare and safety, especially in the light of the deplorable cancellation by the Iranian authorities of a Swedish consular visit to him that should have taken place yesterday?

Does the Foreign Secretary agree that, far from the United Kingdom caving in to any ultimatum from Iran, it is the Government of Iran who must prove themselves fit to resume diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** The right hon. Gentleman's last point is at the heart of this matter. That view is widely supported in the world. Not the least important feature is the extent to which it is supported by Governments of Moslem countries as well as by Governments in the rest of the world. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's support for that. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Mr. Cooper. We are greatly and continuously concerned about the prospects for his future, as well as about the prospects of freedom for the British hostages who are still detained. We deplore the refusal by the Iranian Government to allow the consular visit to Roger Cooper which was arranged only a short time ago. They have broken the undertaking to allow such a visit. We shall therefore continue to press for consular access through the Teheran embassy of Sweden, our protecting power, whose support in this matter, as in others, we greatly value.

**Mr. Peter Temple-Morris** (Leominster): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that he deserves universal support for the measures that he has had to take in in respect of this regrettable matter? Does he agree that the key, so far as elements within Iran are concerned, is international solidarity? Will he do his utmost to preserve the lead that the European Community has given? Does he accept that, in a very difficult situation, he deserves some congratulation for demonstrating understanding of the insult that this book represents to the Moslem world—going far beyond the Ayatollah Khomeini and what he stands for? Finally, does he accept that, much as we all like to make interventions in this House and elsewhere, a period of calm would perhaps be beneficial to all in efforts to solve this matter?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I accept all the points that have been made by my hon. Friend. The most important feature of the case, perhaps, is the strong, unified signal to the people and Government of Iran that came so promptly from the European Community—a signal that has been so widely supported elsewhere. That has been fortified by the generally calm approach by other Islamic countries and, equally, by the willingness of Islamic communities in Britain to recognise the importance of different communities in a country respecting each other's point of view. Only when general recognition, in a tolerant fashion, of the need for co-existence in a world of different religions is accepted by the Government of Iran will we be able to move towards a return to normal relations.

**Mr. David Steel** (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary accept from Members on these Benches support for the actions he has had to take? Will the Government continue to make it clear that, in upholding the absolute freedom to write and to publish, they are not signifying any approval of a book that many of us recognise is deeply offensive to Islam, not least to the Moslem population of this country? We accept that no Government can possibly tolerate a threat to the lives of its individual citizens and that the breach of diplomatic relations was therefore inevitable. However, we hope that normality may be resumed once passions have cooled.

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's support. The Government will continue to uphold the freedom of speech within the law, upon a rock-solid basis. That does not mean that either the Government or this House, or any hon. Member, is required to condone or defend any particular book. I fully understand the way in which the right hon. Gentleman has expressed himself on this matter.

**Sir Peter Blaker** (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be a particular

welcome from the Government side of the House for the support he has received from both right hon. Gentlemen opposite who have intervened? Their comments will help to make it clear to the rulers of Iran that there is agreement in the House and in this country that there can be no question of resuming normal relations with Iran while a British subject is under threat of assassination from that country's Government.

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** Once again, I express my gratitude to my right hon. Friend, as well as to the hon. and right hon. Gentleman whom he has identified. On this matter they all speak for the entire House, and it is important that there should be no room for doubt about that.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that this country has no quarrel at all with the people of Iran—only with its rulers, a regime which has shown total contempt for international law? Is it not the case that, within the last few months alone, thousands, literally thousands, of political prisoners in Iran have been executed, many of them—the large majority, I assume—devout followers of Islam? Would it not be wise for the rulers in Iran to bear in mind the number of dictators and tyrants in this century who have under-estimated the will and resilience of this country?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** Once again, I am glad to be able to agree with the hon. Gentleman. Quite aside from the respect that we have for the people of Iran, we join the hon. Member in leaving the Iranian authorities in no doubt whatsoever about our grave concern over the abuses of human rights that are taking place there. I refer in particular to the recent allegations of mass exterminations.

**Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** (Bexleyheath): While strongly supporting the attempts of my right hon. and learned Friend, not only in recent weeks but over the last year, to restore relations between our two countries, may I ask whether he does not agree that, in the long run, it is important to both that we have a civilised means of communicating with each other? Can we not take some comfort from the fact that Iran needs Britain far more than Britain needs Iran?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** It is clear that, in a civilised and well-ordered world, there should be relations between countries of the importance of Iran and the United Kingdom, not least taking account of the fact that the United Kingdom is one of the permanent members of the Security Council and, in that capacity, played a substantial part in helping to bring to an end the conflict in which the people of Iran were so tragically engaged. It is because we wish to keep open the possibility of restoring representation between our two countries that we refrained from breaking relations in the hope that wiser counsels might prevail. That has not happened. We shall have to wait for a change of heart, as my hon. Friend pointed out.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): In addition to the protection that has quite rightly been offered to Salman Rushdie, will the Foreign Secretary contact his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and ensure that similar protection is given to any Iranians living in this country who are likely to be the subject of attacks by agents acting on behalf of the Iranian Government? Is he aware that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) pointed out, over 3,000 people have been executed for political activities in Iran since the ceasefire took place, and many more are on death row at present?

It is essential that everyone stands up against the Iranian Government for what they are doing to the people of Iran and the people of the rest of the world. In that sense, it would be totally wrong for any trade with that country to take place, any credits to be given to it and, above all, any sales of any arms by any other country which could be used as part of the political repression that is the awful lot of so many people in Iran at present.

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I think that the whole world is as disturbed as the hon. Gentleman by the continuing record of abuse of human rights in that country and joins us in condemning it, as I have already done. Likewise, the whole House would agree with the hon. Gentleman that anyone living in this country, lawfully here and abiding by our laws and institutions, is entitled to the full protection of the law against threats or the actuality of violence.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is a tragedy that the rulers of the people of Iran should behave in such an intolerable way? Is not the solution for us to wait until they can elect some new leaders?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I hesitate to have as much confidence as my hon. Friend about the method by which a change of Government will take place there. The Iranian people are entitled to a Government of higher quality than the present deplorable regime.

**Mr. Stan Crowther** (Rotherham): In view of what he has said about the world being disturbed, does the Foreign Secretary agree that the time has come to break off all relations with Iran—not only diplomatic but commercial relations—as long as that appalling regime is in power? Would it not be helpful at least to give some expression of support to the National Council of Resistance, which is seeking to replace that oppressive regime with a democratic one?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** We stand ready to take whatever action may be necessary in the light of events.

**Sir Dennis Walters** (Westbury): My right hon. and learned Friend has rightly received the support of the whole House for his statement. Will he accept that the Rushdie book is now the focal point of a power struggle within Iran, the outcome of which will be relevant to the interests of the west as well as peace in the middle east? Therefore, will he assure us that he will continue to handle the situation with the utmost sensitivity?

**Sir Geoffrey Howe:** I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. It is clearly important to go on making our position clear on the various points raised in the House today, as I think that the whole House has done. We certainly would wish to see the restoration of normal relations with the people, and thus with the Government, of Iran, but we are not prepared to see that done at the price of surrendering our commitment to our own principles. We must hope that events take such a course in Iran that will make that possible.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I have to remind the House that this is an extension of Question Time. We have a busy day ahead of us.

## Points of Order

4.44 pm

**Mr. John Prescott** (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received a request from the Government or the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement, in view of today's announcement by British Rail on the Channel tunnel? It makes it clear that an extra £1 billion will be required to meet problems in Kent. That clearly transfers the matter from a private Bill procedure to a public investment, which means public accountability. It is quite deplorable that we have had no statement from the Government. This matter affects not only the people of Kent but everybody in all parts of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have had no such request today. I understand that the statement was only made at 3.30.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since you are the final arbiter on questions that are tabled in the Table Office, could you give me some assistance as to why part of a question that I tabled has been refused? I——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. May I stop the hon. Lady there? I have not had an opportunity of looking at this question and I am afraid that I know nothing about it. Will she please allow me to do so before she raises a point of order on the matter?

**Mrs. Mahon** *rose*——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. It cannot be raised now. Let me look into it, please.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any request from the Secretary of State for Health to introduce regulations into the House to ensure that those people who are seeking to make claims from his Department to enable them to travel to visit sick relatives can have their claims properly dealt with rather than held up in a queue of 10,000 in the offices in Newcastle?

**Mr. Speaker:** I have not had such a request.

### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Ordered,*

That the Value Added Tax (Education) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 267) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

# Homes for the Elderly

3.45 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Moss** (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to regulate quality of service and standard of care of homes for the elderly and for other purposes.

The elderly proportion of our population is increasing quite dramatically as people live longer through better diet, improved living standards and a higher quality of health care. In 1987 there were some 9·3 million people aged 60 and over, of which 3·4 million, or 36 per cent., were 75 or over. By the year 2027 there will be an increase of 33 per cent. in the over-60 group, to 12·4 million and an increase in the over-75 group of 44 per cent., to 4·9 million. This will mean greater pressure than ever before on care and nursing facilities for the elderly.

Parelleling this increase in the elderly population in the past decade has been the massive rise in the cost of caring for elderly people in residential care homes and nursing homes. Estimates for 1988-89 suggest that the cost will break through the £1 billion barrier for the year, representing a fortyfold increase in costs since 1980. In May 1988, the annual figure was £878 million, compared with just £18 million in 1980. The current bill is rising by a staggering £200 million a year. This is probably the fastest growing area of public expenditure within the Department of Social Security.

This upward trend raises the obvious question whether this represents the best value for money for the taxpayer, commensurate with the most appropriate type of care in all circumstances for the elderly. Paradoxically, finance through social security benefits is available for what appears to be the most expensive type of care.

Residential care takes its rightful place as part of the provision of care within the community, a subject which was highlighted in three major reports last year. In March 1988, we had the Griffiths report on community care, followed by Lady Wagner's independent review of residential care, and both these followed on a report by the Committee of Public Accounts, "Community Care Developments", published last April. Before that, we had the report of the social services inspectorate's inspection of the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984, entitled "Certain Standards". The subject is, therefore, in the forefront of much research and investigation, a lot of it Government-commissioned.

All these reports highlighted similar problems. There was an enormous variation in the quality of care and standards of service in residential and nursing homes between different local authorities and between local authority provision and that of the voluntary and private sectors in the same statutory area. There was no general agreement on whether these variations should be tolerated or even allowed in the first instance. The social services departments of local authorities, as the registering authorities, were in many cases ill-equipped to fulfil their functions of registration and inspection.

There was little co-operation between public and private sectors, few joint approaches and little co-ordinated planning. The main deficiency was the absence of rights and privileges for the elderly residents, the customers, who often seemed simply to feature as statistics and rarely as human beings with the right to a dignified retirement.

The Registered Homes Act 1984 was intended to ensure regulation of standards in private and voluntary residential care homes, while allowing for local development, flexibility and co-operation. The Act has brought some much needed discipline and structural form to the operation of residential care homes and nursing homes. However, it has failed to meet some of its objectives, especially in developing a relationship between the social services departments and the private sector. It has also failed to eliminate completely the scandals of disgracefully run homes, of which there are enough examples for us to demand changes to that Act to strengthen its regulatory powers.

The most recent statement on the issue was the report entitled "Residential Care for elderly people: a consumer viewpoint", recently published by the National Consumer Council and submitted to the Department of Health. Building on many of the recommendations of Griffiths and Wagner, it put the case for the consumer right at the heart of the issue. It is that emphasis on consumers' rights that is fundamental to the changes to the law proposed in the Bill.

The Bill proposes that the responsibility for registration is taken away from the social services departments of local authorities, principally because they have been placed in the invidious position of having to monitor registration requirements and standards, which in some cases their own homes fail to reach. Conflicts of interest inherent in service-providers monitoring their own standards is a general problem. Instead, the task of registration will be taken over by a new independent authority, to be called the residential homes inspectorate. That body will also be responsible for conducting regular inspections of all homes —not less than twice a year—in a systematic way, using procedures set by the Secretary of State.

For the first time all homes—the local authority homes included—will need to achieve the registration requirements and be subject to regular inspection. The Bill also widens the scope to embrace nursing homes and mental nursing homes, as well as residential care homes, as defined in the 1984 Act.

In the 1984 Act, homes with fewer than four residents were excluded from the legislation, and that has given rise to real fears and criticism. The Bill proposes to bring all homes into the registration process, including those with four residents or fewer, unless, at that smaller size, the home is not run for reward. That will still allow small units caring for relatives to exist outside the registration process.

It is estimated that in East Sussex alone there are 3,000 unregistered homes of that size. I believe that a time bomb is ticking away and a scandal is waiting to happen.

The Bill brings in a new clause to strengthen the regulatory powers of the Secretary of State, so that he shall make regulations to establish minimum and universally applicable standards of care and service. The Centre for Policy on Aging's code of practice, as set out in its 1984 publication, "Home Life", which has already been endorsed by the Secretary of State, shall provide the basis for detailed regulations and those shall apply equally to nursing as well as residential homes. Those nationally determined standards will form the basis for the residential homes inspectorate's registration and inspection responsibilities.

*[Mr. Malcolm Moss]*

Focusing yet further on the consumer dimension, the Bill's other proposals introduce the requirement for comprehensive information about homes—information concerning their style, the regimes of life and internal rules. That information would be made readily available to customers and potential customers.

That will be achieved, primarily, by the mandatory requirement to publish and distribute a brochure or handbook about the home. Requirements on content and presentation will be established by the Secretary of State and their implementation will be monitored by the inspectorate. Each home will be required to set up a well publicised charter of customer rights and a complaints procedure. The inspectorate will have powers to investigate complaints and adjudicate on them. It will be mandatory for each home to set up self-evaluation procedures with proper training of staff, together with a regular performance review.

The Bill will not answer the vexed question of who makes, and under what procedures or organisation, the decision that care for an elderly person is best delivered in a residential home, as opposed to them receiving community care in their own homes. The Griffiths report made recommendations concerning community care and the Minister's statement in February gave on grounds for optimism that that report will soon be brought before the House for full debate. Care for the elderly in homes is, however, a vital and rapidly increasing ingredient in the provision of community care, and improvements in overall quality of service and standards, universally and independently monitored, are long overdue.

The majority of homes achieve adequate standards, but that is not good enough. The best are excellent, and the best practice should be encouraged to become the norm.

As Sir Roy Griffiths said:

"Community care is a poor relation, everybody's distant relative and nobody's baby."

It is time that that baby was adopted.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Malcolm Moss, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Roger Knapman and Mr. John Hannam.

HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY

Mr. Malcolm Moss accordingly presented a Bill to regulate quality of service and standard of care of homes for the elderly and for other purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 17 March and to be printed. [Bill 93.]

# Orders of the Day

## Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions)

3.54 pm

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King):** I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987 (Continuance) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.

We are gathered here for the annual event of the renewal of the emergency powers and provisions in Northern Ireland. As the House knows, the rules have been changed under the 1987 Act so that that Act will lapse in 1992 and it will require totally fresh——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Secretary of State, but I should make it clear to the House that we are also debating the second motion:

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.

**Mr. King:** I think that that will be for the convenience of the House.

The 1987 Act will lapse in 1992 and it will then be necessary for totally fresh legislation to be brought before the House if the emergency provisions and emergency powers are to continue.

These provisions require an annual renewal of the legislation, which gives the House an opportunity to review it. The first question before the House today is whether the emergency provisions and emergency powers are necessary. If that question is answered in the affirmative, as it is by Lord Colville in his extremely valuable review, the second question is whether they are all necessary, given that they are necessary in general.

One of the advantages now enjoyed by our debate is that we are in possession of Lord Colville's report on the operation in 1988 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts. I am sure that I speak on behalf of the House when I express our appreciation for the thorough and constructive way in which Lord Colville has approached that task. His report has undoubtedly improved the quality of our debates. People do not necessarily agree with all the conclusions that Lord Colville may draw, but he has gone into these matters thoroughly and made clear in his report how many people he spoke to and the depth in which he has studied these matters. It is extremely helpful to have his independent assessment of the Acts.

Lord Colville concluded that the emergency powers are necessary; not least after yesterday's events, and after other recent outrages, I hardly think that anybody would seek to suggest that there was not every need to ensure that the security forces are properly equipped with the necessary powers and resources to give support to the community and to protect it from attacks, from whichever extreme they may come.

As the House is aware, the IRA is currently seeking to mount a particularly vicious campaign in Northern Ireland, aided and significantly resourced by weapons and explosives from Libya. That campaign poses a major threat at present to the security of the community and it endangers members of that community throughout the

Province no matter from which side they may come. We have had some particularly awful and nasty IRA attacks, as well as attacks from other extreme republican terrorist groups, and some particularly appalling loyalist extremist attacks. I know that the House will join me in uniformly condemning them, from whichever quarter they come.

Yesterday evening's atrocity, against the background of the recent instructions for no attacks on civilians which were, apparently, given by supporters of the IRA, strikes the depths of hypocrisy. We have seen a background of attacks on distinguished civil servants, judges, contractors, service families, on the Hanna family, Gillian Johnston, the grandfather and grand-daughter returning from bingo in Benburb and on the good neighbours in Londonderry going to see whether another neighbour was all right. We have seen the bomb attached under the car of somebody who had the misfortune of buying a house previously owned by an RUC member who had moved more than a year before, the attacks on the two civilians passing the Falls road swimming pool and the security guard at Donacloney, the atrocity last night at Coagh and the attack on the former policeman in Donegal. We have seen mistake after mistake, and nastiness after nastiness from both extremes.

Those outrages bring home to us all too clearly, as those who work or spend time in Northern Ireland know, the vital need to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the security forces and to ensure that whoever is responsible for outrages is brought to justice and that those who can give help or information to the RUC do so to break this appalling cycle of murder, viciousness and bestiality, whose only product is yet more murder, killing and bestiality.

In bringing these instruments before the House, I have even less need for embarrassment than before in standing for the need for the special powers and the paramount importance of ensuring that the police and security forces have the resources and powers available to them to deal with the nasty and evil people who exist in some of the darker and less attractive corners of the Province.

**Mr. David Alton** (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The whole House is with the right hon. Gentleman in what he has said. Can he tell us a little more about the incident to which he referred in which more Semtex was discovered yesterday in Scarborough and the possibility that more than one active cell of the IRA may be involved in trying to promote more violence in Great Britain?

**Mr. King:** I cannot comment further on that from the information that the police have made available. I referred earlier to a particularly vicious IRA campaign which is amply reinforced by weapons and explosives supplied by Libya. I know that no hon. Member is under any illusions that the campaign is confined to Northern Ireland or to Great Britain. One knows from events, whether in Gibraltar, Germany or Holland, that the IRA's intention is to kill, maim and murder wherever it finds easy targets and wherever it thinks that carnage can be created and attention drawn to its evil purposes.

I am afraid that we had confirmation yesterday of the IRA's determination to use its resources in whatever ways may cause the maximum stress and suffering. It also reminds us that no society can stand aside from such terrorism and that everyone in the mainland of Great Britain is as one with the people of Northern Ireland. We face a common threat, we must face it together with all the resources that our country can bring to bear, and we must face it with the Government of the Republic as well. Anyone who stops for more than a second to study the IRA—or the UVF and others in the short term—knows that, if they were to succeed in their awful campaign in Northern Ireland, it would be a serious threat to the future of democratic government throughout the island of Ireland.

**Mr. James Kilfedder** (North Down): In view of the catalogue of atrocities to which the right hon. Gentleman has rightly referred, was it not wrong for the Government to cut the amount of money available to the Royal Ulster Constabulary?

**Mr. King:** What is quite wrong is to try to score such political points, especially if they are totally incorrect. If the hon. Gentleman wants to say that he wishes that the increased funds to the RUC had been increased by even more than the amount by which we increased them this year, he has a valid point, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to mislead the House and I assume that his remark was an unfortunate slip of the tongue. Funds for the RUC have in no sense been cut. They have been increased and we shall seek to ensure, at all times, that the RUC has the necessary resources available.

Anyone who is familiar with, or knows something of, the work of the RUC cannot fail to be impressed by their courage, professionalism, training and equipment, all of which take resources, and do not give the impression, with great respect to the hon. Gentleman, that the RUC is starved of funds. It is a police force for which I am proud to have some responsibility. It works bravely in extremely difficult circumstances and is increasingly recognised as a force seeking honestly to deal impartially with both communities and to protect both from the extremes and nastiness that can exist in Northern Ireland. I am anxious to ensure that it has the necessary resources to achieve its objectives. I hope that that point is clear.

**Mr. Tony Favell** (Stockport): In view of the discovery of Semtex in Scarborough yesterday and yet another threat to assassinate our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, will my right hon. Friend say something about the freedom of movement of Irish citizens across the border from Southern Ireland into Ulster and by sea from the Republic to ports in this country? Is he satisfied that there is adequate surveillance? As my right hon. Friend is aware, there is at present a debate about border controls between, for example, France and the United Kingdom and Belgium and United Kingdom. Yet Irish citizens can move here freely without passports. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that there are proper controls over their movements?

**Mr. King:** My hon. Friend is right: there is easy and ready access, and the connections between the two countries are manifest and extensive. On the most recent figures, about 1 million first-generation Irish people are living and working in Great Britain. The contacts and involvements are substantial, and there are various anomalies. It is, for example, no secret that there are citizens of the Irish Republic serving in the British Army.

*[Mr. King]*

They are enlisting in British regiments and serving honourably and bravely in them. There are many connections.

The tragedy and awfulness of terrorism is that the genuine and admirable relationships which have existed for so long between our countries are put under strain by evil men and evil pressures. I can assure my hon. Friend that we are trying to ensure free movement backwards and forwards, whether for Irish race horses coming here or for Jack Charlton managing the Irish football team, and the relationships are myriad. We try to ensure that decent, honest people can maintain friendly relations, while also trying to ensure that proper scrutiny and the best intelligence are maintained on those whose intentions may be less satisfactory than we would wish.

We have a short debate, so I must proceed to say a word about the two Acts. That is necessary, because I doubt that I am the only Member of this House who has difficulty in finding his way through the maze of the two Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987 and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 and deciding which powers arise from which Act.

Although I have enormous sympathy with Lord Colville's suggestion about consolidating all the legislation, I cannot respond to that. However, it would be enormously to the benefit of any hon. Member trying to contribute to these debates, because the legislation has evolved in a complex way. Although I do not see any early prospect of such consolidation, I can well understand why Lord Colville made that suggestion.

I remind the House that we are proposing to continue the emergency provisions Act 1978, which has three key elements. It gives the security forces in Northern Ireland extra powers to deal with the special problems of terrorism in Northern Ireland, including the powers to stop and question, to arrest, to search and to seize. It also provides powers to proscribe organisations and creates offences relating to training people in the manufacture or use of firearms or explosives and to displays of support for proscribed organisations. That Act also provides the legal authority for the so-called Diplock courts.

The 1987 Act introduced a statutory right for persons arrested to have someone notified of their arrest and whereabouts and to have access to legal advice. It provides authority for me to impose statutory time limits on pretrial stages of proceedings and it introduced a statutory scheme for regulating the security guard industry in Northern Ireland. That was one of the first steps that we took to try to stop some of the rackets and the gangsterism that disfigures various activities in Northern Ireland. The provision of those two Acts are all temporary and, unless we renew them in this order, they will lapse on 21 March.

I turn now to the basis on which we are proposing that the two Acts be renewed. As I did last year, I express my appreciation to Lord Colville for his review, which was thorough and penetrating. I refer to his recommendations on certain provisions that could lapse, but as I said at the beginning of my speech, we have two questions to answer: should we renew these emergency provisions, and if we should, do we need to renew them all?

Lord Colville pointed to certain powers that can now be allowed to lapse. They all relate to the 1978 Act and comprise section 24, which gives the security forces the power to call upon assemblies of three or more people to disperse: paragraph 4 of schedule 3, which allows the RUC to impose directions on the conduct of funerals and paragraph 5 of schedule 3, under which I can, by order close licensed premises and clubs for public order purposes. Lord Colville stated that each of those three powers could now be allowed to lapse, apart from one part of paragraph 4 of schedule 3, under which the police can require people taking part in funerals to travel by car.

The Government welcome those recommendations, and the order and regulations that we are considering today will give effect to them. I hope that the House recognises that that confirms our readiness to consider the provisions, to review them where sensible and to reduce powers that are no longer necessary, but only—I stress the word "only"—when it is safe to do so.

In that context, I also welcome and accept Lord Colville's recommendation that when the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 becomes law, the RUC's power of arrest under section 13 of the 1978 Act can lapse. That is the police's sole remaining arrest power under the emergency provisions Acts—thereafter, the police will rely on the power in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 or the ordinary criminal law. That further reduction in the emergency law would be another welcome adjustment in the balance of the law.

**Mr. William Ross** (Londonderry, East): Given that we have seen extreme violence at funerals, what powers will the police have over the conduct of such funerals in the future?

**Mr. King:** There are powers in the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 in the prevention of terrorism Act and in the ordinary criminal law. Rather than try to give a precise answer to that question off the cuff, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman studies Lord Colville's report because the powers that Lord Colville suggests can lapse will not leave gaps that would leave the RUC without proper powers of control. As Lord Colville identified, there is undoubtedly some duplication. We should like to achieve the least possible difference. The security forces have powers that make the emergency provisions redundant. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will——

**Mr. William Ross** *rose*——

**Mr. King:** I shall give way again briefly to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Ross:** Can we take it as a general principle that all the provisions that are being allowed to fall are covered elsewhere?

**Mr. King:** If the hon. Gentleman reads Lord Colville's report, he will find that that is his view—and it is our view also. I am putting forward our proposals only after close consultation with the RUC and the Army.

I turn now to the main findings of Lord Colville's report. As I have already said, Lord Colville makes it clear that, in general, the powers continue to be needed, but it is important that the powers are seen to be used fairly and impartially. Lord Colville also raised a difficult issue that had been raised previously—that of an alternative charge of manslaughter for members of the security forces who may be charged with the use of undue force or even with

murder. In the present circumstances, they can be found only guilty or not guilty of that serious charge, and it has been suggested that there should be an alternative charge of manslaughter. At the moment, Lord Windlesham is chairing a committee on murder and manslaughter and their treatment under the law. As that issue is under consideration, I propose to await the outcome of that committee's findings before commenting further. However, I entirely understand why Lord Colville raised that issue.

Elsewhere in his report, Lord Colville returned to the question of "certifying in". That is the idea that, instead of defendants being tried before a Diplock court, unless the Attorney-General decides otherwise, the presumption should be that they will be sent for a jury trial unless the case is certified in to a Diplock court. Since Lord Colville's report last year, the balance seems to have shifted more in favour of the idea of certifying in. As that might be perceived as a further step towards normality, we are willing to consider it seriously, especially if we find that the proposal is generally welcomed. I hope that those comments will be helpful.

Likewise, we shall have another close look at Lord Colville's remarks about the video recording of terrorist interviews, although there are substantial arguments against such a course. Such arguments are partly rehearsed in Lord Colville's report, as is the question of the audio recording of terrorist interviews, but that also raises some difficult issues. However, as I have said, we shall reconsider that.

I have made it clear that the Government are pleased to accept most of Lord Colville's recommendations and that they are contained in the amending regulations. We shall reconsider his two points about certifying in and video recording and, as I have said, the issue of a manslaughter offence will be considered further in the light of the Windlesham findings.

The debate on these emergency provisions and the focusing on the powers that they contain can be misrepresented by others to suggest that the Government believe that, by these provisions alone, the serious situation and threat of terrorism can be effectively addressed. It is, of course, vital to ensure that in the exceptional difficulties and circumstances that the security forces face in protecting the community from attacks, from whichever quarter they may come, they have the necessary powers to enable them to discharge those responsibilities.

But as Lord Colville emphasised, it is absolutely vital that the powers about which I have talked—of arrest, of stop and search and of seizure—are used in a responsible and proper manner. I know that the Chief Constable and General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland attach the greatest importance to ensuring that all those concerned—be they constables or private soldiers, and whether they be in the RUC, the Regular Army or the UDR—at all times conduct themselves to the highest standards and in the best traditions of the regiments and organisations to which they belong.

Anybody who knows anything about Northern Ireland appreciates how easy it is for them to be, and how often they will be, subject to provocation—how people try to embarrass them and how young soldiers often find themselves in difficult circumstances, when a great deal is asked of them. We in this House must recognise, and pay tribute to, the way in which the overwhelming majority of those young people, on finding themselves in often dangerous and frightening circumstances, still comply with and honour the codes under which they have been trained and instructed. We owe a great debt to them.

It is absolutely vital that they act in that way. When those standards are not maintained and when, sometimes under stress or pressure of one sort or another, one constable, young soldier or whoever it may be, slips from those standards, the propaganda machine can easily wind into action, criticism can easily arise and damage can be done to the whole reputation of the security forces, to the cause for which they stand and to the interests of a free society. I appreciate, therefore, why Lord Colville addressed these matters as he did. I appreciate also the enormous importance that those in authority give to ensuring that the people under their command understand the importance of all of this.

Apart from the exercise of these provisions, it is important, if we are to meet the threat of terrorism and the evil attack on democratic society that it represents, that in every respect we can be seen to be conducting administration—be it the administration of justice or of government in Northern Ireland—thoroughly, fairly and properly.

I pay tribute to the courage, tremendous service and distinction of the judiciary, to all those involved in the courts service and particularly, in view of recent events, of all those involved in the legal profession, who seek to maintain the standards of justice in Northern Ireland.

We have had problems, for instance in the administration of justice. There have been problems over delays in cases coming forward, with considerable delays for people on remand. All of those have given rise to genuine feelings of grievance, with people believing that they have not been fairly treated. We owe it to the security forces and to those who stand in the front line to ensure that the other elements in our policy are fair and effective and do not give rise to grievance and disaffection in such a way that their task is made more difficult.

We must consider the situation in the courts, the proper administration of the courts, and have a fair and positive approach to prison policy. In economic policy, we must ensure that we create the opportunity for more employment, with fairness and equality of opportunity in the achievement of those jobs. We must provide a better environment and seek to ensure a better quality of housing; establish higher standards and better opportunities in education, with more opportunity for education together by way of integrated education, cross-community contacts and schemes between schools and in further education or in other voluntary activities. All those features can contribute to what must be an effective and comprehensive Government policy towards addressing some of the tragedies and challenges that are represented by attitudes and the situation in Northern Ireland today.

It is the aim of the terrorist to destroy and intimidate, and to kill the hopes of a better life and future for the people in Northern Ireland. It is our ambition—as it is of every Member in this democratic House of Commons—to see that the people of Northern Ireland have a chance of a better future, and better prospects and, through the defeat of the men of violence, to restore hope and opportunity to the Province.

We seek by many means to achieve that, but one necessary ingredient must be to ensure that the security forces, who stand in the front line against the most evil and

*[Mr. King]*

nasty elements that exist in the Province, have the powers and provisions to do their job. It is in that spirit that I commend the order to the House.

4.26 pm

**Mr. Kevin McNamara** (Kingston upon Hull, North): Regrettably, once again we are obliged to discuss Northern Ireland business in the shadow of the gunman. Yesterday's murders demonstrated yet again the depth to which the conflict in Northern Ireland can sink. On behalf of the Opposition, I extend my condolences to the families of the victims.

I assure the Government that we are committed to the defeat of the so-called freedom fighters, whose vision of freedom is limited to the freedom of the graveyard. Our difference with the Government is how that goal can best be achieved. Whether one rejects or supports the order, no one can be satisfied that we should be obliged to debate yet another renewal order for the emergency provisions Acts.

No hon. Member in any part of the House can take comfort from the fact that the Government feel it necessary to renew the Acts and thus admit that Northern Ireland continues to be a society in which armed soldiers are required to patrol the streets, in which police officers are obliged to carry arms and in which many of the human rights that we take for granted are suspended.

The Labour party realises that there is a serious problem which requires the use of the Army and which necessitates an armed police force. But we do not accept that human rights can be suspended indefinitely without defeating the purpose which the security forces are trying to achieve—the protection of those same rights against the would-be dictators of the paramilitary groups.

The strategy adopted by the Government places the security forces in an invidious position. My party cannot accept that the policy of containment alone, which appears to be adopted by the Government—despite what the Secretary of State said—is viable, and therefore we shall vote against the order.

It has long been accepted by the security forces that they are engaged in a holding operation the objective of which is to provide the space for political leaders to devise effective institutions for the Province. Without such political reforms, the role of the security forces becomes a demoralising exercise in futility.

The longer the politicians hide behind the security forces and rely on them to deal with the problems which emerge from the political morass in Northern Ireland, the more intractable the problems become, the more difficult is the position of the security forces and the more difficult becomes the possibility of a political settlement.

Ultimately, emergency legislation has a corrupting and counter-productive effect. I say corrupting in the sense that the persistence of the emergency leads Ministers and other political leaders to lose the sense of urgency that the occasion demands. It is counter-productive because the suspension of human rights eventually becomes the abolition of those rights, thus accentuating the political problems which gave rise to the emergency in the first place, and so the vicious spiral continues.

It is useless to deny that the security forces face a major problem in the Province, but it is equally foolish to deny that they are part of the problem. They are asked to operate on behalf of political institutions whose legitimacy is contested by part of the population. As a result, the security forces are not accepted in the same way as they would be in other democratic societies. Continuing to allow them the use of powers which they would not need in other democratic societies is an abdication of political responsibility by the leaders in the Province, for which the security forces pay the price. That again is why we shall vote against the order.

Having said that, I am pleased that the Secretary of State has decided to act upon some elements of Lord Colville's report on the operation of the legislation. It is a pity that the Government were not more forthcoming on his report on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. Although I do not agree with all the conclusions in the report, I believe that it contains a significant number of comments and recommendations which reflect the views of my party.

I want to single out two issues identified by Lord Colville as being of particular importance. In paragraph 1.5 he stated:

"The battle for hearts and minds should be the paramount preoccupation of those who exercise emergency powers."

Although the Labour party believes that the emergency powers themselves are a factor in sustaining grievances which encourage violence, their impact can be significantly attenuated or accentuated by the ways in which the powers are exercised in the homes, on the streets and in the courts.

Lord Colville gives a striking example. The end of the supergrass trials has removed a particularly damaging threat to public confidence in the Diplock courts. Those courts will still be unlikely to gain the compete legitimacy that the judicial institutions in Britain or even the ordinary criminal courts in Northern Ireland enjoy because of the way in which they were instituted, but at least it is possible now to avoid some of the practices which throw the administration of justice into complete public disrepute.

Another issue which Lord Colville raised correctly was the standard of behaviour of the security forces. Critics may object that hon. Members demand an excessively high standard of behaviour from the police and the Army, confronted as they are by paramilitaries whose contempt for human rights is only equalled by their hypocrisy on the subject. Faced with sectarian killers, bombers and vigilantes, there is a natural temptation to take off the kid gloves. That is precisely what must not be allowed to happen. I know that the Secretary of State agrees with me on that, as he said earlier.

We expect high standards from the security forces precisely because they are there to provide security, not insecurity. It is in the best interests of the security forces that they occupy the high moral ground. That increases the chance of defeating the paramilitaries, eventually allowing for the establishment for the first time of recognisably normal forms of policing in Northern Ireland, which is the aim of every party in the House.

I am, therefore, concerned that even after last year's debate the 1982 shootings in Armagh have not yet been laid to rest. On the one hand, the inquest proceedings have been hindered by the negative attitude of the Government in appealing from the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland to the House of Lords, and now, tragically, by the death of Patrick Finucane, the solicitor murdered after the ill-advised ? comments by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). One of Northern

Ireland's most experienced legal figures, Sir Oliver Napier, the current chairman of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, has pointed out:

"I would hope that Ministers of the Crown would learn that in Northern Ireland words can kill and that their words can be used to justify murder. If those two lessons are learned, Pat Finucane will not have died in vain."

Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State has realised the error of his ways and even wishes to forget the remarks that he made, regrettably, in the Standing Committee. That seems to be his attitude because in letters to people who complained about what he said, he now talks about "remarks attributed to me". I do not know what reflection that is upon the people who write for *Hansard*, or even on the members of the press who were there and heard what he said, or on members of the Committee. Now that he is referring to "remarks attributed to me", I wonder at what stage he will forget that he ever said them.

**Mr. Ian Gow** (Eastbourne): The hon. Gentleman has made a serious allegation against my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). He read out part of a letter which I think he said was written by my hon. Friend. Does the hon. Gentleman think that he would be fair if he read out to the House not only that short phrase but the longer passage or the whole paragraph from which he selected those words?

**Mr. McNamara:** It is a short letter to a person who wrote to him on a postcard about the murder of Patrick Finucane. The Under-Secretary of State wrote:

"This is a tragic and wicked killing. I very much hope that those responsible will be brought before the courts as soon as possible. As to the identity of those responsible or the circumstances in which the murder has taken place, that is a matter for the RUC.

I entirely agree with the views Tom King expressed on this matter on Monday 13 February and reject any connection between Mr. Finucane's murder and remarks attributed to me. To seek to make political points on the back of such a tragedy is unworthy and does nobody any credit".

It does no one any credit either to deny what he has said or to seek to give an impression by the use of the word "attributed" that that was not the point he made.

**Mr. Gow** *rose*——

**Mr. McNamara:** I am not giving way. The hon. Gentleman asked me to read out the passage, and I have done so.

In regard to confidence in police matters, the internal police proceedings should be speedily concluded in the Stalker affair. I hope that they will be completed before the new chief of the RUC takes over. Not only would that improve confidence in the administration of the RUC but it would be fair to the police officers who have been kept in a state of uncertainty for far too long. Public confidence in the RUC has been damaged by the failure to clear up the affair.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) has raised the case of the Armagh four. I have had an opportunity to read the documents which he sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). On the strength of those documents, there are grounds for concern about the case. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider carefully the points made by the hon. Gentleman.

I agree entirely with Lord Colville's second major point. In paragraph 3 of the report he stated:

"I have approached the review on a simple basis, that the emergency legislation should not remain in force unless the case for it is clearly established."

It is clear from the review that that approach extends to the parts as well as the whole. That is an important principle which should not be overlooked. We cannot allow emergency legislation or any emergency powers to remain on the statute book simply through the force of inertia. There is a duty to assess constantly the validity of responses to the paramilitary threat, both in terms of the action on the ground by the security forces, and the policies put into practice by the Secretary of State and by the legislative decisions of the House.

That cannot be confined to the annual reports by the reviewer appointed by the Secretary of State, estimable though the reviewer is and the reports may be. There is already in existence a statutory watchdog for that purpose —the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights established by Parliament under section 20 of the Northern Ireland Act 1974. I regret that the Secretary of State has not treated the commision with sufficient respect in the past year, as he has ignored its views and in some cases its right to be consulted over several issues. As the commission chairman pointed out in a statement on 19 January:

"I am fearful that everything the commission is doing to promote human rights in Northern Ireland will be cut from under us if the Government does not make greater use of the consultative process which in a democratic society is absolutely essential. The cumulative impact of what Government is doing is most worrying"

However, the Secretary of State has decided to accept the advice of Lord Colville concerning those parts of the Act which are no longer necessary. I welcome his decision to allow section 24 to lapse and to amend schedule 3. Those powers are unnecessary as they are now covered by other parts of the law. I hope that the Government will act in a similar way in regard to section 13, in the order which I presume will be laid before the House next year—unfortunately. I say unfortunately in the context that all such legislation is unfortunate. I welcome what the Secretary of State said about section 13.

The police power of arrest under section 13 is clearly superfluous, having been used only once, in the first six months of 1988. I suspect that it is something of an embarrassment to the police, and was used only by accident when police officers became confused by the plethora of powers at their disposal. I shall return to that point later and refer to the need for clarity in the law, on which I disagree with the Secretary of State's conclusions.

I am also pleased that Lord Colville recommended that the process of certifying out cases from the Diplock court should be replaced by a system of certifying in. Opposition Members have urged that course for a considerable time. Therefore, we very much welcome the Secretary of State's statement that he is considering that as a sensible option. I believe that that would be one stage closer to restoring the law to normality. If cases are certified in that would be an unusual procedure, and we would improve the position so that there would be more trials by jury.

Perhaps one of the most contentious aspects of the Acts are the powers of internment contained in section 12 and schedule 1 of the 1978 Act. I am pleased that the Secretary of State has had the good sense to continue to allow those powers to lapse, despite urgings from some parts of the House. No Government, since the end of internment in 1976, have considered internment to be a sensible or

*[Mr. McNamara]*

effective method of dealing with the paramilitaries. However, permitting the power of internment, even if it is dormant, to remain on the statute book presents certain problems. For many in the Province, the distinction is too subtle and demands an awareness of legislative procedure that I doubt exists, and in any case is sometimes misleading.

In Northern Ireland, it is correctly assumed that the Secretary of State can simply sign detention orders at any time he sees fit and fill the prison ships once again. Although an Order in Council would be necessary, the detainees could be in custody long before Parliament had the opportunity to consider the order. Because of that, the power of internment is not dormant in a political sense. It is a live issue which the paramilitaries are only too willing to exploit in the aftermath of their periodic spectacular atrocities, using the threat, and its emotive connotations, to divert attention from their own commitment to violate human rights.

A clear political sign that internment is not an option should be given by removing the power from the statute book. Its existence is a constant reminder to the people of Northern Ireland of the fragility and contested legitimacy of political institutions in the Province.

There are of course aspects of the report with which I disagree, such as the length of periods of remand. The Secretary of State spoke about his new powers in that sphere and we hope to see them in operation fairly soon. Nevertheless, remand periods continue to be excessive. Although efforts have been made to reduce periods spent on remand, the figures remain unacceptably high. According to the statistics published by the Northern Ireland Office, in the first six months of 1988 the average period between first remand and sentencing or discharge was 234 days. Such a state of affairs enables supporters of the paramilitaries to gain credence for claims that internment by remand exists in Northern Ireland. To eliminate that source of controversy, the Secretary of State should make use of his powers under section 3 of the 1987 Act.

Another issue connected with the emergency which has attracted increasing concern is the problem of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences. The review procedure for setting release dates is attracting increasing concern because of the apparent lack of precision and lack of understanding by the parties involved.

We hope that the Government will be able to establish clear and objective criteria for the setting of release dates to reduce the degree of uncertainty and insecurity which afflicts prisoners and their families. We recognise that there are difficulties, but they are not insuperable. We believe that it is in the best interests of good order in the prisons, of the families of the prisoners and of the community that there should be no unnecessary sources of grievances in the prison system.

The Labour party also believes that there is a need to reform the present Diplock court system. I accept that some progress has been made in increasing confidence in the courts, but as long as the sole judge and jury are one and the same, there will be a credibility gap. An effective alternative would be the establishment of three-judge courts. That has also been recommended by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

Another area of concern is the admissibility of evidence. Although section 5 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1987 rules out confessions obtained by torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or by violence or threat of violence, it does not require confessions to be voluntary. I do not share the conclusions of the review on that issue. The courts have interpreted that section in a way which has been regarded as strengthening the position of the prosecution. Once again, confidence in the judicial process has been somewhat reduced. The trend towards the acceptance of involuntary confessions is now to be reinforced powerfully by the possibility of drawing inferences from silence under interrogation permitted by the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. Furthermore, there have been some worrying signs from what goes on during interrogations, as was demonstrated in the Gillen and Forbes cases which are recent, not ancient, history that interrogation rules have been violated and excessive force has been used in some cases. For those reasons it is more urgent than ever that the taping of interviews in police stations should be introduced, as should videoing, as Lord Colville has recommended. Unfortunately, Lord Colville's recommendations did not make completely clear whether videoing meant a silent recording of what went on or whether such videos should include a soundtrack. We believe that the videos should include a soundtrack. The power of the police to deny legal advice to detainees should also be removed, rather than regulated as it is at present.

I was interested to read Lord Colville's comments on the codes of practice for the police and the Army. I hope that those codes will be finalised and published as soon as possible. I feel sure that the Secretary of State and the security forces will wish to avoid the nonsense surrounding the publication of the RUC document "Professional Policing Ethics" at 3.30 on a Friday afternoon. We believe that all codes of practice issued to the RUC and the Army should be published. Given that the whole point of the codes of practice is to convince the public that the security forces behave impartially, there is no reason to keep them under wraps. We are also in favour of giving statutory effect to the codes of practice to ensure that they are not simply instruments for the effective management of the security forces. It is equally important to ensure that members of the public can secure redress and that action is taken publicly to deal with violations of the code. As the aftermath of the Stalker affair revealed, disciplinary hearings in private cannot replace the court room as a forum for winning and maintaining public confidence in the police and the Army.

Finally, I return to the clarity of the criminal law, a matter to which the Secretary of State referred. Lord Colville has twice suggested that the emergency provisions Acts and certain sections of the Prevention of Terrorism Act should be consolidated into separate legislation. That is a welcome suggestion, but I believe that we need to go much further and examine the total picture and the inter-relationship of the various parts of the criminal law with the emergency law and the non-emergency law.

At the most basic level, there is an urgent need to clarify the law for the security forces as well as for the average citizen. Ministers themselves have been somewhat confused, as has been shown by the remarks on searches made by the Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, and the recent controversy which the Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office provoked by his views on the

powers of the security forces to demand dates of birth. Not only does it make Ministers a laughing stock, but, more importantly, it is detrimental to public confidence in the law. Furthermore, it also gives the impression of a piecemeal and haphazard security policy.

If we are to have an emergency law, it should be clear, coherent and concise. There should be no powers which are not needed and no duplication of powers with other emergency powers or with the ordinary criminal law. We should not fall into the trap of believing that the criminal law alone can solve the problems of Northern Ireland.

As the Government fail to address those challenges, I call upon the House to reject the order. Until the Government grasp the reality of Northern Ireland politics and make moves to establish fully legitimate political arrangements for the Province and make proper use of the potential contained in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and until they realise that there are no military solutions in Northern Ireland, the present depressing climate is likely to prevail. As the emergency provisions Act, far from being a determined response to the paramilitary threat, epitomises political lethargy, the Labour party is obliged to vote against the order.

4.50 pm

**Rev. William McCrea** (Mid-Ulster): I rise with a heavy heart having experienced yesterday evening a most despicable and diabolical sectarian attack in my constituency which left three decent civilians dead in the village of Coagh. It is significant that we are debating the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987 (Continuance) Order 1989 only a few hours after the slaughter of the innocents.

I want first to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the security forces for their faithful service to the Ulster community in very dangerous and trying circumstances. Words of appreciation are not sufficient to express our debt of gratitude to the thousands of young men and women who wear the uniform in defence of freedom, especially during the past years of continuing murderous attacks by the Provisional IRA.

The security situation, unfortunately, continues to deteriorate and a very dangerous situation is about to explode. After 20 years, why do we come to the House today to debate the continuance of emergency provisions? After 20 years, why have the terrorist attacks not ceased or the terrorists been defeated?

I must declare that, unfortunately and sadly, there has been success in the terrorist camp and there are many reasons for that success. One of the reasons why we have to debate these emergency provisions after 20 years is that there is popular support for terrorism within a portion of the republican and nationalist community in Northern Ireland. There is no doubt that the IRA and its political wing, Sinn Fein, can boast considerable popular support in the Roman Catholic community. However, it must also be said that many Roman Catholics find the actions of the murder gangs repugnant. Unfortunately, many find themselves in large republican enclaves in the Province and they are held under the heel of terror. The defeat of terrorism would not only release the majority community in Northern Ireland, the Unionist population, from the heel of the terrorists; it would also release many of the decent Roman Catholics as well.

Unfortunately, over many years there has been a breeding of anti-British hatred and that has been expressed through the use of the gun. I speak with the support of the vast majority of the people in the Province, and, although Ministers may deny this, the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was a signal to the terrorists as is shown in the infamous words of Danny Morrison following its signing, "We have now proved that more violence will gain more concessions." Unfortunately, the violence continues.

There has been a lack of resolute action against the terrorist gangs. I was interested in the remarks made by the Secretary of State in reaction to my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) about the availability of finances for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Around Castlederg terrorist attacks have been common and members of the security forces are continually under threat. Some 400 serving members and ex-members of the security forces must be protected by the soft target protection unit. Is it right for the Secretary of State to claim that all is well when there are only 11 members of the STPU to care for 400 people over miles of countryside? I have spoken to members and ex-members of the RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment and I know that in that border area they feel in grave danger. They believe that there is insufficient protection for them in their homes or when they try to defend the freedom in that area.

It cannot be right for the Secretary of State to claim that all is well. Reserve Constable Monteith was murdered recently in Castlederg at the town's check-point. As the town is so close to the border and because of the evident danger to members of the security forces manning that check-point, a promise was made that three people would man the check-point at all times. Only one person was available to man it on the day that reserve Constable Monteith was murdered. Reserve Constable Monteith was not working that day, but an hour after the check-point was to be opened, he received a telephone call telling him to report for duty because there was no second person to man it. No third person was available; the IRA saw the breach in security and reserve Constable Monteith was murdered and buried as a result.

I make my appeal with the full knowledge and support of the members of the security forces serving in that area.

**Mr. Martin Flannery** (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman in these debates for several years, but he never refers to killings carried out by the so-called loyalists. Does he, along with the rest of us, condemn killings no matter which side carries them out? Does he not think, therefore, that he should mention the loyalist killings, many of which have happened recently?

**Rev. William McCrea:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. However, it is sad to see that he has not examined the official record and has deliberately misrepresented——

**Ms. Marjorie Mowlam** (Redcar): Answer the question.

**Rev. William McCrea:** With the greatest respect, I will answer in my own time and if the hon. Lady wants to intervene, she should have the decency to ask.

I have made it absolutely clear that Ulster does not need any killings and I want to see the security forces carrying out an effective policy throughout the Province which will remove the men of terror right across the community. That is what I want for Northern Ireland. In the five or six years

*[Rev. William McCrea]*

that I have been a Member of this House I have still to hear the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) state genuinely that he has much pity for the loyalist community, which has suffered so much over the past 20 years from the murderous thugs of the IRA. As usual, the hon. Gentleman wants to draw us away from the attacks. All I am talking about is an innocent RUC man and I suppose that that is not enough for the hon. Member for Hillsborough.

I am concerned about members of the security forces who are in danger and I have been asked to make representations on their behalf by the people who elected me. It ill becomes any hon. Member to try to play down the serious threat faced by members of the security forces from callous, cowardly bunches of thugs and terrorists who do not care whether they murder Protestants or Roman Catholics.

Members of the security forces do not believe that there are sufficient personnel to protect Castlederg in my constituency. The other evening I spoke at a meeting there. A call was put out to me as a Member of Parliament that, since we were only half a mile from the border, there should be extra security personnel.

Castlederg police station is close to the border and the town is more vulnerable to and has faced more bomb attacks than any other. In its graveyard a dozen UDR men and reserve personnel are lying in their coffins, yet whenever a call is made for more personnel, the answer comes back "Sorry, we have only two people to cover the complete area and no one is available to go out in a car because the station will be left without personnel". I should be delighted for the Secretary of State to check that. Personnel from Strabane covered the meeting that evening.

Unfortunately, my constituency is in the border area and the community faces attacks from terrorists hiding in the safe haven of the Irish Republic.

In answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for North Down the Secretary of State painted a picture of sufficient manpower and security force members to do the job. I hope, perhaps in a written reply, I shall receive an answer about what happened in the specific cases I have mentioned. I owe it to the gallant members of the security forces to make my voice heard in their support in the House. If members come to me fearing that the lives of people along the border are at risk because there are not enough personnel, it is only right and proper that, as the representative of that area, I should do that.

I know that in the past certain hon. Members have befriended IRA personnel and brought them into the House. I know that the House does not want to hear this, but we are in an emergency. Unfortunately, 20 years on, it is still an emergency, and I shall explain why. Recent events in the Province show that the vicious nature of the campaign is gaining momentum and crudeness.

What I have to say may not bother some people but yesterday, in my constituency, a business man and his wife returned from shopping in Cookstown. The man entered his garage while his wife sat in the car waiting for their two children—a boy of 14 and a girl of 16—to return from school. For those who do not know cosy, quiet, Coagh village, the garage was run by 39-year-old stock car ace, Lesley Dallas. He was the European hot rod champion in 1986 and lived for his stock car racing and his little business, which he had built up with pride.

Quite rightly, he was the pride and joy of his wife and two children, who loved him dearly. How proud they were last Saturday when he went to the silver jubilee race at Ballymena hot rod meeting and came second. He felt that he had achieved honour for his family and district.

I grew up with Lesley Dallas—we played around the same houses and went to the same school. Lesley Dallas was one year younger than me. With Lesley lying in his coffin at home, am I supposed to come to the House and be Mr. Nice Guy for everyone to applaud, and to whom everyone can say how nice everything is? Tomorrow we shall bury Lesley Dallas and not one hon. Member—other than Unionist representatives—will go through the door of his house to say that they are sorry about what happened. They will never take the hand of Mrs. Dallas or her 14-year-old son or 16-year-old daughter, or of his widowed mother, sitting broken-hearted and riddled with arthritis in the corner.

I can assure the House that the hon. Member for Hillsborough—who was quick to get to his feet a few moments ago—will not pass through the Dallas door to speak to the sorrowing family. I would take more seriously comments from someone who knows what it is to walk into houses where there is death and who has experienced what it is to look into the face of bereaved loved ones. Such a person could not walk away with a pious attitude or a smile on his face after such an occasion. There is nothing glorious about that, or—as I will be doing tomorrow—about attending three funerals and going from one house to the next, to the next, for the burial of three constituents. I am sure that when I offer my sympathy and sorrow to the families I shall not be crowded out by a lot of hon. Members.

Lesley Dallas, whom I knew very well, stood with his hands in his pockets listening to a joke and was gunned down in cold blood as his wife was forced to crouch in the car seeking to avoid the bullets fired around her. Unfortunately, the race—remember he was a stock car driver—of life finished suddenly for Lesley Dallas yesterday as he leaned against his garage door laughing at a joke with his neighbours.

Austin Nelson, the father of four children—his daughter is a member of my congregation—appeared on television one night playing the fiddle. His only crime was that he was a fiddle player. He spoke on television about his retirement hobby of violin making and, at the end of the programme, he said that he hoped that he would be long spared, not only to make fiddles and violins for his children and grandchildren but to give people happiness by listening to the music he played. Last year, Austin went on a special course in Cambridge to further his hobby. His gracious nature won him the respect and affection of his neighbours. One evening, he entered a garage to enjoy what in Ulster is called a good bit of "crack" or humour.

Last night, less than 24 hours later, Austin reappeared on television, this time, not as a man playing a fiddle but as a body being carried off the street of Coagh. This time, the news was the announcement of his murder.

Ernie Rankin, who was 72, was a very popular Coagh character with a keen interest in football. He had no relatives and the people of the area adopted him as a son of the village. They fed him, looked after him and gathered him in on Sunday afternoons because he was a person who

liked simply country humour. Ernie enjoyed nothing better than a hearty chat and a laugh to dispel the loneliness of his life. He was nearly blind: if an IRA man had been standing in front of him, he could not have recognised him. He enjoyed company. He was called—we can see why from the photographs—the Coagh Jimmy Savile because of the way he kept his hair.

Lesley Dallas will not be driving this Saturday; Austin Nelson will not be entertaining with his fiddle on any more stages; and old Ernie Rankin, the simple, retired, loving pensioner, will not be walking Coagh street befriending everyone that passes by, irrespective of who they are.

How did these men die? At 10 past 4 in the afternoon Coagh main street turned into a scene from a John Wayne western. Outside Coagh the men were seen donning their masks. The hooded gunmen drove in and sprayed the garage corner with indiscriminate fire. Three men were murdered. Mrs. Gibson was in the car as the gunfire surrounded it. Mr. Gibson's brother was in the back of the garage as the gun fire spread through it—thank God they were saved.

No sooner had the gunmen done their deed than a bus stopped and a 14-year-old boy stepped off it, immediately opposite the place where his dad way lying in a pool of blood. A second bus pulled up behind the first and a 16-year-old girl stepped off it and walked over, not to meet her mother with joy to find out what she had bought in the shops, but to find her mother screeching and her father lying with his two friends with whom he had been sharing a joke, in a pool of blood.

After completing their task the gunmen drove down the Ballinderry road. Again, it was like a John Wayne film. As they drove away they continued firing indiscriminately into the air and then started cheering. It was another job well done. And some hon. Members, with their friendships, claim that these are the heroes and soldiers of Ireland. They are nothing better than cold-blooded murderers; let no one try to paint them in any other light.

Some weeks ago, the president of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams, and Martin McGuinness talked about refined violence and avoiding civilian casualties. The Unionist population knew that that was eyewash, and so it has proved. It was pathetic to hear the media trotting out IRA excuses for the Coagh carnage. First they said it was retaliation; then they changed their story, claiming that the garage was a UVF hideout. A 72-year-old pensioner, a 61-year-old retired man who took up the hobby of violin-making and a 39-year-old stock car racing driver who was looked upon as a champion in the community —these were the supposed conspirators. This was nothing more than a sectarian killing; none of the people was connected with any political party or paramilitary organisation, as the police have made clear.

The legislation has not dealt with the emergency. If it had, we would not be here talking about it 20 years on. This same village had a 1,000 lb bomb placed in it last September. The bomb was left at the police station. This was not an attack on the security forces—the IRA knew that only an unlicensed dog was guarding the police station. The IRA thought that the time was right to place a 1,000 lb bomb there, not to kill the dog but to murder people living in an adjacent estate, whose inhabitants were 100 per cent. Protestant. Through the mercy of God, they were not killed.

Listening to the Secretary of State discussing the changes that he accepts, one would think that affairs were improving and that we were leaving the crisis behind. The crisis is deepening, and the daily crimes are growing more violent. It grieves me and the people of Northern Ireland to see the media's lack of interest whenever Protestants and Unionist people are murdered. For months on end we heard stories every day about Gibraltar, but when three Protestants were murdered in Coagh last night, the media gave the event 30 seconds. The headlines in the daily papers do not mention the event—they gave the story five lines. The victims happen to be Unionists. I assure the House that if the attack had been carried out by anyone else, it would have made the headlines. If it had been carried out on anyone else the same would apply, but for Unionists there are no headlines.

This is the facing down of Unionists, for which a certain political party called when seeking the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The IRA has faced down three innocent men. Their families asked me to ask the House when this is going to end. I should be glad to receive a promise from the Minister of State about that. What can I promise my constituents who are walking broken-hearted behind coffin after coffin? They are not facing threats: this is the real thing. I can tell them that the Government say that they accept recommendations for improving the emergency powers legislation, because we are moving in the right direction. The Government can bring in whatever emergency legislation they want, but unless they are willing to take the initiative and face the terrorists, they will never defeat them.

I beg the Secretary of State—he has the power—and the Prime Minister—she has the authority, as she has proved so often—to take resolute action to end the nightmare and the carnage in the Province which I love best and which is a part of this great Kingdom. I am sure that the House understands how I feel. I trust that right hon. and hon. Members will also understand that I must return to my constituency, and to the families of those murdered there. I want to listen to the rest of the debate, but I must leave for the airport. I trust that the next speaker will understand that no disrespect is meant, but will bear in mind that I must return to those families who will be burying their loved ones tomorrow.

5.20 pm

**Mr. William Ross** (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who is my parliamentary neighbour, drew attention to media coverage of three recent deaths in Northern Ireland. He contrasted that coverage with that of other incidents. I was surprised that he did not draw attention to the endless stream of coverage of an author who has simply been threatened with death. That is another facet of the circumstances with which right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies must live. If a threat is made against an individual or groups of individuals in Britain, it is headline news. But whenever there is death in Ulster it will be lightly passed over as just another killing, unless it is a case of multiple death.

The victims of IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland are being killed because they want to be members and citizens of the nation. At the end of the day, those killings are not about sectarianism but are an attack on British citizenship and the British presence in the Province. I am part of that British presence. When the IRA talk of driving out the British, they are talking not about the fellow in a uniform

*[Mr. William Ross]*

who comes from Kent or Glasgow, but about me, those who vote for me, and those whom I represent. That fact is one that the House steadfastly ignores.

When a similar debate took place at about this time last year, the cry that went up was about the bombing at Enniskillen and about the tragedy and horror of the multiple death there. Had the debate occurred a week later, the cry would have gone up instead—as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster—about the deaths of three would-be murderers in Gibraltar. A fortnight or so later, that crazy madman Stone was seen running through a cemetery murdering people. If our debate had occurred three days after that incident, it could have concerned itself with the butchering of Corporal Wood and Corporal Howes by people who are worse than wild animals, as we saw on our television screens.

The same Ministers are in the House today as one year ago. Five or 10 years ago, their predecessors were wending the same weary path, for the same weary reasons—the lack of proper understanding and of proper measures being taken to resolve the conflict. The incidents of the past year have highlighted the need to control funerals, for example. I interrupted the Secretary of State to ask for an assurance that the power to control funerals is to remain. My belief is that funerals should be very strictly controlled, no matter which murderer is being buried.

Funerals give the IRA and others an opportunity to display their power to intimidate and to do their own thing in their own areas. Those displays are as much a challenge to the security forces and to the governance of Northern Ireland as any IRA attack, such as that which occurred yesterday. They serve as a proclamation that the area in which the display takes place is one in which the IRA can operate. I draw the attention of the House to the almost casual arrogance now being displayed in IRA killings. The soldier murdered in Londonderry city recently was killed not in the heart of a republican area but right in the heart of the loyalist stronghold there. Ten years ago, the IRA would not have dared to do that. It would not have dared when the present Administration came to office. The fact that it does now illustrates the IRA belief that it is making progress, which further illustrates the Government's failure to deal with the situation.

I think back to the funeral last year that led to the deaths of two young soldiers who simply took the wrong turning, and I wonder who told the security forces to stay away. I wonder what pressures and subtle nuances were brought to bear to keep the security forces away from that IRA funeral. I wonder who told the security forces not to interfere, even when those two young soldiers were being butchered. A "chopper" fitted with a television camera was hovering overhead, observing it all, yet apparently no effort was made to rescue the two individuals who were being killed. That still angers and niggles Ulster people, who have not yet been given the answers that they want.

At the beginning of the debate, reference was made to the winning of hearts and minds. In a way, I think that that is the wrong policy. It is said that the security forces representing the Government should try to win hearts and minds by staying away from funerals, for example, because their presence will be resented. The House, the Government, the nation and the security forces should instead set about convincing the IRA and Irish republicanism in general that they are not going to win. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to note that I am referring to violent IRA republicanism, because that is the well from which all other terrorist organisations ultimately draw their sustaining strength. The activities of the IRA are given as an excuse for Protestant paramilitary attacks and other endless acts of violence. If the IRA problem is solved, the Protestant paramilitary problem will deteriorate, decay and disappear along with it. The conquest and destruction of the IRA is the key to peace in Northern Ireland. Until that fact is faced, and until measures are taken to bring about that conquest, things will go on in the same old way.

For the IRA, winning is the achievement of a united Ireland. It is as simple and as straightforward as that. It does not matter to the average IRA man or republican whether it is an all-Ireland republic dominated by Charles Haughey or by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)——

**Mr. Seamus Mallon** (Newry and Armagh): I would not dominate anyone.

**Mr. Ross:** But the hon. Gentleman would no doubt be part of a nationalist party, and it would be a nationalist-dominated Ireland. It would be a nationalist Ireland with a nationalist ethos, which is something that I and the people whom I represent would reject.

The IRA does not really give two hoots, any more than its supporters, which is the dominant republican nationalist element, provided that there is an all-Ireland republic. They are not even very worried whether it is Labour, Left-wing, centre or Right-wing, provided that it is an all-Ireland republic. They would be happy with that, but I would not. The failure to comprehend the nature of the Northern Ireland situation is the root cause of the Government's failure to devise policies that would be totally effective in bringing peace and stability. I have left out the bit about reconciliation because reconciliation is the result of many years of peace and stability and of people living together. I do not think that we shall fall into each other's arms if the IRA stops murdering people tomorrow.

Since last year some incidents have broken through the normal crust which leads to people ignoring Northern Ireland. I shall mention a few of them. Last August an Army bus was bombed and a number of young men were butchered on their way back from leave. Then we had the Father Ryan affair, over which there was a great deal of hubbub, froth and hot air. Now there is a sort of embarrassed silence because he has vanished into thin air and the chances of getting him back to stand trial here are a very short way above nil, if they are above it at all.

Yesterday we had the incident in Coagh. There was also a bomb find, apparently where weaponry was being prepared to attack the Prime Minister when she visits Scarborough. Throughout the year there was continuing public and private evidence of a border that is practically afloat in Semtex and weapons. All the evidence available to anyone who takes an interest in Ulster or to those like me who live in it and represent people there shows that Government policy is not defeating the IRA.

Now and again the people who live on this side of the Irish sea see the tip of what I can only describe as the moral cowardice of the Government in dealing with this matter. Facing the terrorists is not a matter of physical courage

because many people are willing to do that. What we see is moral cowardice, an unwillingness to stand up to the propaganda, the lies and the nonsense with which we are taunted throughout the world by the supporters of the IRA murder gangs. That moral cowardice is illustrated by the story of a young paratrooper who was walking around on guard with an empty weapon. Perhaps that is an advance, because I think that at one stage they walked around with pickaxe shafts. That is not much good against a Colt 45.

When I was in the Ulster Special Constabulary, of which I was glad to be a member and proud to serve for 16 years, I never saw the sort of creatures who are often described by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh. We rarely went about with unloaded rifles. We had charged magazines in the rifles. Anyone who knows anything about shooting knows that that means that the bolt has only to be pulled backwards and forwards and the weapon can be fired. That is the way in which every soldier on guard outside any military establishment should be armed and ready.

We are sending these lads out to wander about with unloaded weapons. They are young men in crack regiments of what we are told is the best army in the world. I believe that. We are sending them out with unloaded weapons, as if their expensive training was so ineffective as to render them incapable of handling loaded weapons. That is nonsense and I hope that the people of Britain have seen the end of that nonsense in this incident. I hope that the next time a paratrooper or some other soldier or naval officer or member of the RAF Regiment walks round the corner of a building and sees a terrorist planting a 60 lb Semtex bomb, he will at least be able to fire at him.

Regardless of when the next shooting incident takes place I hope that we shall not hear in the House and everywhere else claims that "these people are out shooting to kill". Who the devil ever shot to miss? People are meant to shoot to kill, to stop, and if a modern weapon is fired at a body it will cause severe damage, and the person will be extremely lucky to survive. That is what the weapons and ammunition presently issued to the Army are for and they do their job very effectively. I regret that the job is not done often enough.

If I went to any pub in London tonight—leaving out those that are peopled by the Irish—or if I went anywhere else in Britain and asked the average Englishman, Scotsman or Welshman what he thinks should be done with the IRA or terrorists, he would give exactly the same answer as I give and would probably do it rather more crudely than I would like to do in your presence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Mallon:** That would be indelicate.

**Mr. Ross:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the first and possibly the last time.

**Mr. Ivor Stanbrook** (Orpington): Has the hon. Member considered what would have happened if the sentry on duty at Shrewsbury, having secured his ammunition, had been able to fire accurately at those who were running away? At that stage they had not blown up the barracks. If he had killed one of them, under our present state of law, he would surely have been charged with murder. Does that not show that our present criminal law simply does not apply to the reality of terrorism in Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Ross:** Of course, the hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct. He will remember the two corporals butchered in Belfast in March last year and that one of them leaned out of the car window with a pistol. If an Ulsterman had been leaning out of the window with that pistol, I wonder whether everyone facing him would have been alive 10 seconds later? That soldier was acting under the rules of engagement about which we heard from Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. Members of the security forces are out in places where they are likely to be killed and the law should reflect that reality. The Government should not behave as if they are dealing with a peaceful English village on a summer afternoon. Sometimes we read in the newspapers about little riots in such places, so perhaps they are not so peaceful.

An IRA man or any terrorist with a gun has one intention. It is to plant a bomb or to kill, and he is already psyched up to do it. He will kill as quickly as a snap of the fingers. A police officer friend of mine stopped a person one day in the street in Dungiven, my own village, to ask a question and it ended in him being buried.

The House and the country should recognise the reality of the situation in Ulster. This House does not think that we are at war, but the IRA figures that it is at war with us and its attitude is that anything goes. I do not want to enter that sewer where anything goes but the laws of the realm should reflect the reality of the task that we have asked our security forces to carry out. The laws that we are debating are not doing that. We should also understand that when incidents such as the one in Gibraltar happen there will be massive howls of indignation.

The Secretary of State spoke about the propaganda war. The Government lack the commitment to ensure a better and louder propaganda statement. That propaganda must be founded upon truth to rebut the misrepresentations put out by the terrorist organisations.

This debate must end at 7 o'clock. It is somewhat better attended than many on this issue—and I have been sitting through such debates for 15 years. However, it should not end with the discussion in this House; it should go on within the parties—and principally within the party of government—to ensure that the changes that are absolutely vital are made. This legislation should be part of the whole policy of convincing the IRA—those who, for many years, have been prepared to risk life, limb and liberty—that the game is not worth the candle. That is what it is all about—convincing them that they are going to lose.

But convincing them that they are going to lose is only partly a question of law; it is also very largely a question of the perception of Government intention as to where Ulster will be five, 10 or 20 years hence. Unless the Government's actions are sustained, it will not be possible to convince the supporters of the IRA that the IRA will fail, that the republicans will fail, that the nationalists will fail, that the SDLP will fail, in their objective of bringing about a united Ireland. So long as that policy continues, the war will continue at the steady drip, drip, drip of murder that we have seen for the last few years. In that respect things have not changed very much.

A new Chief Constable has just been appointed. The politicisation of the police in Northern Ireland under the Anglo-Irish Agreement is far greater and far more evident than that which was alleged under the Stormont regime. I wonder how much discussion there was, within the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, about the appointment of

*[Mr. Ross]*

the new Chief Constable. Indeed, the Government are duty bound to listen to what the Irish Government say. Should the British Government not introduce the matter into the discussions, the Irish Republic's Ministers certainly would, as they would be duty bound to do.

How much discussion took place as to who the new Chief Constable should be? How much discussion was there about what sort of man would be acceptable to the nationalist community? Of course, we shall not get an answer. That information will remain hidden perhaps for ever—or at least for 30 years. The Minister replying to this debate will deny that any such discussions took place, but in Northern Ireland his denials will have about as much effect as would throwing a bucket of water on a duck. People will not readily believe them.

Under article 7 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which is relevant to this debate, the conference considers security policy. This calls into question whether the Secretary of State and his Ministers could easily act in defiance of Dublin's wishes. Given that they are required to work towards agreement with the Government of the Irish Republic, how on earth could they ever arrive at a new effective policy in the short term? Only after the most protracted discussions in the conference could any new policy appear.

Appointments to the police authority also have to be discussed. To say that these matters do not strike at the very root of the problem in Northern Ireland is to ignore the factual evidence. I wonder whether the new Chief Constable has been given a timetable for the defeat of the IRA, and what policy restrictions are to be placed upon him and upon the other security forces. Given the circumstances under which the Chief Constable is appointed and the circumstances in which he operates, how could anyone say that he is independent? He has to sit with his political masters and with his opposite number from Dublin and his political masters—and the Republic has a very political police force. Bearing all these things in mind, one can only conclude that the political influence that was complained of in the past has not only returned but been reintroduced in a form a dozen times stronger.

Unless there is a deep and fundamental change in Government policy, we shall be talking in the same terms next year, and the year after that, and for many years to come. The perspective of the terrorist is what matters. The terrorist believes that he has made progress and is making progress. His whole attitude and all of his actions—no doubt some people in this place do not understand those actions because they do not live with them—indicate that what he perceives is Government retreat and republican advance.

We shall be back next year, and in five years' time, and in 10 years' time, unless there is a deep, fundamental change in Government policy, and unless the new policy is acted upon. Otherwise, the IRA will go on, quietly, steadily, mercilessly, and with ruthless efficiency, killing in dribs and drabs and sometimes in large numbers, to keep the temperature high and to undermine the will of the people to remain British. But we shall not allow our birthright, our nationhood and the things that we believe in to be taken from us by such people. I can assure this House that we shall be there for a long time—British, and being killed because we want to stay British.

5.47 pm

**Mr. Ivor Stanbrook** (Orpington): The agony of the bloody conflict in Northern Ireland has been going on for over 20 years, and in its wake the constitutional government of the Province has been set aside. Normal local government has been virtually abolished. Transitional constitutional experiments, designed to give the minority a share of power, even to the extent of allowing a foreign country the right of consultation, have been tried and have failed.

All those developments were designed to placate the minority in Northern Ireland, who would rather be governed by the Irish Republic than by the United Kingdom. British Governments of all persuasions have thought that, if those people could be placated, they would not support the terrorist campaign, which seeks to achieve republican aims by violence. But that is wrong, and it has always been wrong. The violence has not ceased; indeed, since the conclusion of the last desperate expedient—the Anglo-Irish Agreement—it has escalated.

I shall not repeat the arguments that I have used over the past 10 years against these foolish efforts to appease our enemies in Ulster. I pay tribute to the courage and integrity of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, but I have to say that all their efforts have failed and that the British Government are left with a situation which, in some ways, is worse than it has ever been. Far from being abated by the Government's efforts at conciliation, the hostility and resentment of a significant part of the Irish republican minority in Northern Ireland has been aggravated by a situation in which they see themselves as the political masters, whereas they once thought of themselves as the underdogs. The majority of the population—loyal, but often sullen and anxious, and fearful of being abandoned by a Conservative Government they can no longer look on as a trusted friend—have suspended their judgment, and most of their representatives now sit opposite the Government in the House of Commons.

The scope is small for further political initiatives to end the constitutional impasse and terrorism. The only outstanding initiative, which has not been taken up so far, lies in the Irish Prime Minister summoning Unionist leaders to Dublin as though to hear his terms for a settlement.

Devolution has failed, as it inevitably must when we try to isolate in one cockpit two warring, incompatible elements divided by race and Church. The continuing habit of British Ministers in such circumstances to repeat the cry of devolution as though it were some possible solution makes one wonder at their common sense. A further long period of stalemate and attrition faces us. The agony, torment and suffering of the good British people of Ulster seems destined to go on, reinforcing misery, deepening divisions, and providing new agents and new recruits of bitterness and hostility to carry on the conflict which many people now believe that neither side can win while Northern Ireland remains in its present form. The IRA has made it quite impossible—it is quite out of the question—for any loyal Ulsterman even to contemplate a united Ireland.

One honourable option is still open to us. I know that I am presently much in the minority of Unionists who advocate it. It is to provide for an exercise in self-determination in Northern Ireland by way of a

referendum designed to identify those who wish to remain in the United Kingdom and those who wish to live in the Irish Republic. Where, in border areas, a majority exists for the Irish Republic, let those areas secede from the United Kingdom. For the rest, let a similar logic apply —generous resettlement grants for those who find themselves on what they may consider to be the wrong side of the new border. That would be a drastic and costly remedy to the situation in Northern Ireland, but only a drastic step will detach the republican population from the IRA. That remedy would not be nearly as costly as the continuation of the present situation.

5.53 pm

**Mr. Seamus Mallon** (Newry and Armagh): One of the tragedies of this type of debate is that we never seem to deal with the subject that we are supposed to be discussing. In this instance, we are discussing the emergency provisions legislation as it applies in the North of Ireland and also references to it by Viscount Colville of Culross. During this debate, there has been remarkable insight into some attutudes not just to this subject but to the context in which that legislation is to operate. I can understand the anger and resentment that was expressed by hon. Members who represent the Unionist community in the North of Ireland, but we should never allow that anger, or the sentimentality that it produces, to cloud our judgment of the challenge that faces us.

The challenge is simple. It is how to get a solution to the awful problem that faces all of us, not just in Northern Ireland but in Britain and the Republic of Ireland. Whatever type of thinking we bring to it, the problem does not stop at the border or the coastline. It transcends them. It is a three-part problem that will require everybody's resources, commitment and resolve.

Throughout the debate, I have been reminded of the famous words of Wilfred Owen about war situations:

"The poetry is in the pity."

I like to think that we can get to a stage in Northern Ireland at which the politics are in the pity and that the pity that was clearly expressed today could translate itself into the type of political attitude in which, rather than getting bogged down in the type of emotional binge that we all indulge in so often, we try to think our way out of the problem. I hope that, somewhere along the line, anger, resentment and pity can be translated into the type of practical politics that alone will solve the problem.

This has been a political debate. The only time we get a chance to debate the political problem in Northern Ireland is during a debate on a piece of emergency legislation. Unfortunately, the political context is tied to an emotive matter. Since I have been elected to the House, there has not been a time when the purely political element of a debate could be discussed in a more rational manner. That is one of the tragedies.

I should like to dispel some of the problems enunciated by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). He talked about nationalists' wish to dominate people on the island of Ireland. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the nationalists whom my party represents firmly believe in nationalism and are absolutely opposed to the use of violence to obtain their political objectives. They do not wish to dominate anyone. They have no desire to indulge in domination, not only because of the human elements concerned but because, if history has taught us anything, it has clearly shown that domination will never solve any problem. I take this opportunity of informing the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues—I have said it before in such debates, and I shall say it again—that the problem will not be solved on the Floor of the House of Commons.

It has been interesting to note almost schizophrenia on the part of some hon. Members—their irrational fear of nationalism and disillusionment with membership of the House, while proclaiming their Britishness. Political Unionism is expressing its disillusionment with its British context, its British presence and membership of the House. That schizophrenia affects all people and not just unionism in the North of Ireland. We must patiently try to work it out. The immediate image that sprang to mind during the debate was of the magnificent play, written not so long ago, called "Observe the sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme". It was almost as if we could hear those footsteps again, blaming the British connection for their own failure to work out a means of living peacefully on a small piece of land called Ireland. That is the basis of the political approach that my party would offer those people who live with us.

I am not one who likes to get up here or anywhere else wearing my heart on my sleeve. I am a villager as well. I live in a small village. I lifted a policeman up one night, shot dead by people who call themselves Irish patriots. I lifted up my own election agent one night from his doorstep, riddled with bullets, dead. I do not want to go into that. It is not the way forward. All we are doing is clouding our own judgment. All we are doing is losing sight of the objective, which is to solve this problem.

But I understand the emotions that exist about Coagh. It is a small village. Everyone knows it. I could pick out three people in my own village who would be mirror images of those who were killed. We could do it for every village in the North of Ireland. So it is not just an isolated feeling of pity. One of the strengths of our situation is that the pity is there, the abhorrence of that terrible sectarian deed is there, throughout the North of Ireland. Rather than let it become an end in itself, I would ask that it become a springboard for consideration of our problems.

The problem is nothing new. Nationalism has been used in a very throwaway sense here this evening. People in the North of Ireland, however, were killing each other in the same way long before nationalism became a force. The famous massacre on the river Bann in Portadown took place in the 17th century, long before nationalism became the vogue, as it did as a result of the French revolution, and long before it became a potent force in Irish life before and after partition. We have on record sectarian assassination after sectarian assassination in the county that I live in, long before nationalism became either a political or a physical force. So the problem is more profound.

Yet it may be much simpler than we often make it. How do we, a small group of people living on a small island, decide together how we will live there for the benefit of everyone, how we will live in peace, with nobody winning, with no domination, with no surrender on anyone's part? I suggest that we start looking at that question. It struck me tonight, as it has often struck me, that if we spent more time in the House discussing how we might solve the problem, or even the same amount of time as we have spent on this piece of legislation and the prevention of terrorism legislation and the public order legislation, and on and on, perhaps somewhere we would get some light and some insight into the way that we must move.

*[Mr. Seamus Mallon]*

I want to reassure those who represent Unionists in the North of Ireland that domination has no part in our political philosophy. Victory has no part in our political philosophy. We believe that, it they look at this problem simply as an extension of the House, it will not be solved, because we are all optional extras in the Palace of Westminster. Nobody from the North of Ireland needs to be told that. One of the roots of Unionism's anger and frustration is that Unionists are only now realising what perhaps others of us have seen from the outside for so long. Nor will it be solved on the floor of Dail Eireann. I have been there and I realised that in many ways I was again an optional extra from a different place. But we will solve this problem, when we solve it, with the help of the House, the active help and involvement of the House and of Dail Eireann in getting to grips with it. Then we shall be in a position to begin to talk rationally about this and other pieces of legislation and see where they fit into the overall jigsaw.

I do not want to make light of the problem of not talking about the emergency provisions, because they are very serious indeed. There is the problem of policing. Viscount Colville has said that there is a problem, and we all know that there is a problem. If there is a problem, let us, for heaven's sake, face it. Let us start talking about it. I am frustrated when, time and time again, we get platitudes from Ministers. They stand up, pat us on the head and take almost a different position every month to see what the reaction may be.

We must face the reality that, in almost half the land mass of the North of Ireland, there is not a single policeman. That is a fundamental problem. So we must ask two questions: why is it that way, and how can we deal with it? It is correct to say that one of the reasons is that they would be killed, but the problem is much more fundamental than that as well. So do we ever get an opportunity from the Government to begin to discuss the problems, or do we spend the rest of our political lives feeding on the type of platitude that we often hear?

We must also look at the very factor that Lord Colville identifies—the relationship between the community, the police and the security forces. He identifies that as one of the problems, and it is a big one. How do we deal with that type of relationship? Bad policing is having a terrible and corrosive effect. It is counter-productive. Viscount Colville clearly identifies that, and I am glad that he does so. He puts it right at the forefront of his report, in the hope that something will be done about it.

I take this opportunity of asking the Secretary of State and the Minister of State what they will do to ensure that it is driven home to those charged with looking after law and order that policing must be done on a fair and equitable basis and within their own rules. They must tell me. And, no thanks, I want no more platitudes—I have had enough of them. I want to know what steps will be taken. I agree with Viscount Colville when he makes it clear that senior police officers realise that this is a very important issue which must be dealt with.

What will be done at the political level by the Government to ensure that that realisation filters down from the senior officers to the ranks? If the problem continues, it is due to one of two things: either the senior officers and the Ministers do not make their writ run, or the junior officers involved in these incidents are cocking a snook at those who are giving the orders. It is one or the other, and it is so serious that I ask again, as I have asked so often, what steps will be taken to deal with it.

Viscount Colville focuses on the problems of both the Police Complaints Commission and the complaints procedure for the Army. To date, the new Police Complaints Commission has been a fairly abysmal failure. It has a flaccid, passive approach to dealing with the legislation that it is given. While that legislation is inadequate in many ways, it is at least there to be used, but it has not been used by an inactive commission, with the result that the commission in its own way is counter-productive when it comes to the problems that will be faced by a new Chief Constable.

I welcome that appointment. I do not know the man from Adam. I do not know his religion. It makes no difference to me where he is from—Dublin or Belfast—or what his religion is. All I want to know is whether he is a good cop. Does he know what he is doing? Has he the strength to go in there and look at the problems and not pretend that they do not exist? Has he the strength to go through with his decisions and to ensure that those decisons will help to bring about a solution to a policing problem which has always been there? Has he the vision to look at policing structures and to see whether there is a way within those structures in which we can get to grips with the problem? We talk about policing as an amorphous thing. There are 48 police services in England and Wales and eight in Scotland. Northern Ireland has a structural problem. Perhaps at some time we will have the vision to consider how we can deal with that element of the problem.

Reluctantly, I turn to something which affected the debate earlier, which was the reference by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department to the position of solicitors in the North of Ireland. My views on that are on record, and I do not want to enter into that controversy again. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that, in a letter, the Under-Secretary talked about "remarks attributed to me". He repeated that allegation 11 times. I am wondering whether he is saying that that was attributed to him 11 times.

Much more importantly, the Under-Secretary began by saying, "I have been advised". Who advised the Under-Secretary to put those remarks on record? He must have been advised, because he displayed an absymal ignorance about everything else about the North of Ireland. Who told him that that was the position? Only three agencies could have told him—first, his Government colleagues; secondly, the police and Army authorities in the North of Ireland; thirdly, lay people. The Under-Secretary owes it to the House and to the people in the North of Ireland to tell us who advised him to put his foot in it to the extent to which he did.

I believe that we must draw together all these pieces of legislation. Their re-enactment will again come before the House in 1992. We have the prevention of terrorism Act, the emergency provisions Acts, the public order legislation and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act as it applies to the North of Ireland. When one starts to deal with those, especially in Committee, it is a nightmare, because one is jumping from one piece of legislation to another. It is almost impossible to follow the strands, because there are contradictions, elements which overlap and elements

which simply do not make any sense. There is an opportunity to discard some of the elements that Lord Colville and others have recommended we should discard.

I have argued the case for normality so often that I shall not detain the House with it again. If the emergency legislation must be repeated, at least let it be repeated in a way which makes logistical sense, because as it stands there is provision for some elements of the emergency provisions Acts in the public order legislation that is applied under the prevention of terrorism Act. It is a nightmare not just for people in the House who must deal with it, but for police officers, solicitors and, above all, for the person who is arrested under that legislation.

I have seen at first hand the financial sacrifices, inconvenience and hardship caused to people who come to this country to visit their relatives in prison. It does not make any humanitarian sense to stick strictly by the letter of the law and to say that people from Ireland—especially Northern Ireland—must serve out their sentences here if they were committed here. The hardship caused to relatives is a hidden factor, something that we are ignoring. I ask that the process of transferring prisoners from gaols in Britain to serve out their sentence in Northern Ireland be speeded up. We can then bring a little humanitarianism, consideration and pity into an otherwise harsh landscape of emergency legislation.

6.15 pm

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson** (Newbury): I hope to mention at least one of the points made by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Recently I saw a poster issued, I believe, by one of the Northern Irish political parties in which superimposed on the word "Terrorism" was the slogan:

"Defeat it, don't debate it."

After 20 years of violence and yet one more debate, one might feel that the poster's author had a point. However, with all their imperfections and inadequacies, debates on the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts enable us both to debate and to maintain the legal structure within which our security forces must operate at all times.

On this occasion, there is another dimension to the debate. It is taking place while the review period for the Anglo-Irish Agreement is proceeding. Three years ago when the agreement was announced to the House, we were told that its objectives were to secure peace, stability and reconciliation: that by the agreement security on both sides of the border would be improved with much greater co-operation between the Garda and the RUC and, therefore, peace might become a reality in the Province. We were told that, through the ministerial meetings that were enshrined in the agreement, matters of mutual interest would be discussed and that the concerns of the minority community in the North would have a powerful new advocate in the shape of the Dublin Government. Sadly, what the agreement lacked—and one of the reasons why I voted against it—was any place in its machinery for the voice to be heard of the majority community in the Province. For that reason it was, and remains, seriously flawed. I hope that during the review process that flaw will be put right. Although I may be told that the Unionists will not accept the agreement anyway, nevertheless, if that agreement is ever to obtain acceptability among the majority in the Province, it can do so only if they have a voice in its counsels. To this day it has amazed me that we felt that we could sign such a treaty without incorporating that obvious need.

Of course, in some quarters there is the hope that the continuing hostility to the agreement from the Unionist parties and the events in the South over extradition will, in fact, result in the agreement being shelved altogether—somehow or other it will wither on the branch and will die a natural death. I wonder if that is a realistic scenario. Apart from the fact that, as far as I know, no British Government has ever unilaterally broken a treaty, what would be the effect on Irish politics and international opinion if under pressure from one part of the community the Government gave up the agreement? I believe that it would be catastrophic. Those who want to believe that the Catholic minority is always under threat from the Protestant majority would have their worst fears confirmed.

Irish America would be incensed and would no doubt multiply many times over its contributions to Noraid. The IRA would have a field day. It would have scored such a major propaganda victory as to give it new hope and zest to continue its fearful and bloody campaign of violence, another terrible example of which were the killings in county Tyrone yesterday.

Would the Province suddenly become more peaceful? Would the minority community be more willing to co-operate with the Government? Would the security forces or the RUC get co-operation from the minority community if the agreement was torn up? Would we be any nearer to seeing the Acts that we are debating tonight lapse if that happened? I believe that the only answer to all those questions is a resounding no.

For all practical purposes I consider that the agreement must stand and that the Unionist parties must modify their refusal to co-operate with the Secretary of State and his Ministers as they seek a way in which to implement the words in the Queen's Speech about allowing local politicians greater involvement in the affairs of the Province.

**Mr. Peter Robinson** (Belfast, East): Would the hon. Gentleman change his view were it possible to negotiate a better agreement which would command wider support than the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Why would the hon. Gentleman want to hold on to an agreement that has so lamentably failed and that does not have the consent of the community if it were possible to get an agreement which the Unionist leaders would consider as an alternative to and replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement or the Social Democratic and Labour party leader would consider as transcending in importance that agreement?

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman as I was just about to say exactly what he said. If the agreement has failed to deliver peace, stability and reconciliation, what useful purpose does it serve? Standing on its own and after three years perhaps not much, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman would agree that cross-border co-operation has greatly improved, even if we cite as evidence only the huge arms finds north and south of the border. Those finds have done much to negative the threat posed by the shipment of explosives and weapons from Libya to the IRA. We all recognise that those arms finds are extremely important to the lives of a great many people, particularly in the North.

*[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]*

The acceptance in writing of the status of the Province set out in the treaty could be, if we chose it to be, the beginning of a new stability for Northern Ireland. It could be seen as a way to achieving peace and reconciliation. As so many speakers have already said we all know that terrorism thrives on—indeed, seeks to create—instability, the feeling that nothing is permanent and that everything is up for grabs. That is why each failed political initiative in Northern Ireland has ultimately played into the hands of the IRA and those who believe that the instability of the Province serves their political ends.

While Ulster is without an assembly or a regional administration and the political parties that represent the majority of her people boycott the Secretary of State and his efforts to create a local forum—while there is a political vacuum in the Province—those politicians are working against their own best interests. I also question whether they are completely in step with certain bodies of opinion in the Province if the recent poll in *Sunday Life*—a local Sunday newspaper in Northern Ireland—of 26 February is anything to go by. That survey showed that of those polled, 78 per cent. of Protestants and 57 per cent. of Catholics preferred power sharing to other options such as integration or a federal Ireland. In fact, more Catholics even preferred that option to a united Ireland. No one suggests that one poll is conclusive evidence, but it is a rough guide to local feeling—nobody can gainsay that.

If, as the poll suggested, it is also true that a majority of Ulster Unionists, SDLP and Alliance members and a sizeable proportion of the Democratic Unionist party were in favour of the Duisburg inter-party talks, is it not possible that the desire for a new political structure in the Province—one which would give Ulstermen a proper share in the administration of the six counties, their counties—could, if taken up seriously, lead to a political institution from which the entire community could benefit and reconciliation become a reality?

According to the agreement, the involvement of the southern Government in the affairs of the Province are or would be limited by the extent of the responsibilities given to a devolved administration. Surely that is a prize to make the most anti-agreement politican ask whether non-co-operation with the Northern Ireland Office is now not self-defeating.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): A democracy of devolved institutions is more than just majority rule—majority rule has caused some of the problems in Northern Ireland. Even if the political parties share a desire to come together, how the politics work out might mean that majority rule leads to a situation in which the minority feel oppressed. In those circumstances, would it not be a good idea for a bill of rights to accompany any move towards devolved government? In that way the minority, as well as the majority, would feel that their civil liberties were protected. In that way the conditions in which democracy could work would be improved as democracy is not just about votes, but about the spirit in which it operates.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** I do not dissent from that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman heard me refer to power-sharing as the favoured option of the majority in both the Catholic and Protestant communities. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that the Duisburg talks involved the SDLP, the Unionists and the DUP. I am not suggesting, nor would anyone else suggest, that we should go back to old style majority rule. I am talking about a local administration and I would like the Government to spell out the framework in which such an administration could be created.

**Mr. John D. Taylor** (Strangford): On the suggestion of a devolved assembly in Northern Ireland with power sharing between those who want a united Ireland and those who are British—in other words, the nationalists and the Unionists—does the hon. Gentleman extend the sample principle to Scotland? Is he in favour of power sharing between the Scottish Nationalists and the Scottish Conservatives in Edinburgh?

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not pursue that particular argument. I believe that he was a member of a Government in Northern Ireland who were certainly prepared to offer some of the chairmanship of their committees to the other political parties that were not in the majority in the old Stormont. I may be wrong, but I believe that that was the case. I do not believe that my suggestions would differ widely from that because the right hon. Gentleman will note that I have stressed the word administration. I believe that there would be committees covering various aspects of that administration and I understand that there is wide agreement that the chairmanship of those committees could be spread among the parties.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** I agree with the sharing of chairmanships among the parties, but with regard to the former Stormont Parliament I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the nationalist Member for Mourne was the Chairman of Ways and Means of the House of Commons.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that information and I hope that I have been able to clarify the point he made.

In a sense my peroration is rather ruined; perhaps that is no bad thing. I believe secure borders and a stable local administration to be the most effective answers to the terrorist who seeks to manipulate the region's politics out of the barrel of his gun. Are they not the way to stability and peace for the future?

6.28 pm

**Mr. Martin Flannery** (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) mentioned a point about which I have felt deeply for rather more years than he has—that we never discuss the politics of Northern Ireland or Ireland without there being some kind of emergency or emergency legislation. In Committee, we have discussed emergency provisions to the point of exhaustion, but one point that has stood out in today's debate has been the avoidance, by almost all hon. Members, of discussing what we came here to discuss—the renewal of the Acts. There is a good political reason for that and it is linked precisely with the fact that politics breaks through, whether we like it or not. All hon. Members have discussed the politics of Northern Ireland today and have only occasionally mentioned the emergency provisions legislation.

To make matters worse this time, we have just heard of the dreadful and melancholy killings, although all our debates on Northern Ireland are melancholy. It is a sad business, but a harsh reality, that people who have such a sense of humour should never use it in debate. The emergency provisions legislation has hardly been mentioned because it is almost irrelevant to the problems. That is one reason, among others, why I shall be voting against the renewal of the provisions for the umpteenth time tonight.

The overwhelming majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland—the extremely overwhelming majority, if one can say that—on both sides of the sectarian divide are honest and law-abiding people who want to live in peace and democracy. For as long as I can remember, they have not been given the chance to do that. The problem burst through, for the umpteenth time, about 20 years ago. When I became a Member of Parliament—15 years ago this week—I never dreamed that we would go on discussing the problem, as it had been raised in 1973 and the civil rights march had taken place in 1969. We must, therefore, while struggling against the paramilitaries of both sides, protect all innocent people from arbitrary arrest and harassment. The harassment is often not directly physical, but springs from the terrible situation in Northern Ireland which makes all the population of Northern Ireland—innocent and law-abiding as they are—feel that they are part of the struggle across the sectarian divide and causes them to see no hope of getting anywhere. If we do not realise that when we are discussing the emergency provisions and if we do not realise that people who have never harmed anyone feel that everything is hopeless and that they are getting nowhere, we are not seeing the situation properly. It is wrong that we do not discuss the politics of Northern Ireland in straightforward debate without it always being tied to emergency legislation.

This morning, the publicity Member of Parliament for the Official Unionist party—the hon Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—was on the radio and, once again, he called for internment. It is extremely sad that, after all we have learned, he should be calling, once again, for internment. I believe that, in fact, internment can still be used, although it is not being used at present. To call for internment once again is to pour petrol on the terrible fire that is once again raging in Northern Ireland. I cannot understand why anybody who has been immersed in the struggle for so many years would call for that, although my heart goes out to the people who live there and I say that in every debate. I do not live there and when I listen to the people, from both sides, who do, I am staggered at their courage.

For such a person to call for one of the causes of the deepening struggle in Northern Ireland was shocking. The gaoling of people whom we do not know to be guilty is a real crime. It immediately intensifies the problem. It brings the detainees' families into the struggle when the detainees have never even been tried. It is shocking to have an important Member of Parliament calling for internment when he knows that in flinging what he called the godfathers into gaol without trial we would bring a whole new section of people in Northern Ireland into physical action and strengthen the hand of the paramilitaries on both sides. It would strengthen the IRA when, on present showing, it can go on indefinitely killing and maiming and surely we want that to stop, not to intensify. There are no signs of the paramilitaries being defeated either by the security forces or by each other.

We shall go on discussing the problem long after I am gone if something political is not done. To raise the politics of Northern Ireland in the House is to be condemned straight away. Yet we would then be discussing the reality of what is happening and not the superficialities of the terrible deaths, killings and slaughter which continue all the time. We could go on discussing that as the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) did. I know that it was hard for him because people had just been killed in his constituency, but we must discuss the causes and not just the symptoms of these terrible problems. There are no signs of either side being defeated. Both have considerable support in their communities and stores of armaments from various sources. They can carry on as they are, almost indefinitely, unless politics intervenes or supervenes.

The deadly enemy of terrorism is democracy, not defeating the other side or armaments. It is precisely because there was no real democracy in Northern Ireland that we are in this mess today. I must say to all Unionists that they still have the old Stormont mentality. All they want is to go back to the old Stormont, but that is impossible. However, as long as that mentality pervades their ranks, the slaughter will go on. That is the harsh reality which we never discuss here because we never discuss the politics of the situation.

**Mr. Mallon:** I do not think that that is the reality. Many Unionists now do not think in those terms and are desperately seeking, as we are, to see how we can get not just an arrangement, but a solution to the problem. If they are not prepared to put that on record, I may be forgiven for helping them out by doing so.

**Mr. Flannery:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for correcting me if I was wrong. I do not see the situation with the same clarity, but I do not see it with the optimism that he conveyed in his remarks either. I am surprised that he feels such optimism. I cannot sense it, but I hope that I am wrong and that he is right.

The House condemns terrorism by both sides. It is time that the Unionists did what I asked of one of them earlier today. They should condemn murders when committed by paramilitary loyalist groups and condemn the IRA when it carries out murders. They should condemn both, but they should not intensify the struggle by condemning only one side. We must condemn terrorism from both sides.

The present legislation has not done anything to stop the killings. The killings have intensified and there is considerable evidence that the Acts have exacerbated the problem and have not achieved anything held out by Lord Colville, or by Sir George Baker before him. I have attended almost every Northern Ireland debate and Question Time in the past 15 years and, once again, matters are becoming worse. There is no victory on the agenda in Northern Ireland for anyone. There is a problem to be faced, but no victory. The people who believe that they can be victorious are living in a dream world. They might want to smash the enemy and put him down, but if they did, he would rise again, whichever side he was on. Peace will come only when proof is given that equality and democracy will be given to both communities and that

*[Mr. Flannery]*

there will be no return to the flagrant lack of democracy of the old Stormont, which brought about the civil rights march and the attack on it 20 years ago.

**Mr. William Ross** *rose*——

**Mr. Flannery:** No, I shall not give way because it is time for me to conclude my speech.

The only hope for peace is to ensure that the majority community never again enjoys a virtual autocracy over the minority community and that there is a coming together of the communities. There is no future in slaughtering each other. The only hope is for a change of mind on the part of the Unionists and for them to offer the hand of democracy to the minority community. I am sure that if that hand were reached out, the other side would heartily grip it and there would be peace, but that is the only hope that I can see.

6.39 pm

**Mr. Jim Marshall** (Leicester, South): We have had an interesting debate which has been highly charged in part. It is well that we remind ourselves of the people about whom we have been talking and of the reason the security forces claim to need the emergency powers. We are talking about the thousands, if not millions, of ordinary people who live in the Province who wish simply to go about their daily business unhindered and without the threat of violence. They wish to pursue what we consider to be ordinary objectives such as a job, a decent house, a decent school and all the other things that make up normal social and economic life for the rest of the United Kingdom.

We must always remember that that is the backcloth to our debates. Like the rest of the citizens of the United Kingdom, the people of Northern Ireland wish to live in peace and in a democratic society. That is why the Army went into the Province some years ago and that is why the emergency provisions legislation was introduced. It is as well to remind ourselves also that the Army entered the Province to uphold democratic values and to support, not supplant, the civilian authorities in upholding the rule of law. If that is the backcloth and those are the reasons, despite the cries for greater activity from some hon. Members, it inevitably means the minimum use of force and, where possible, the application of the general criminal law, and every derogation from those values must be justified. Our claim is that there has been a distinct failure to do that, especially in the Secretary of State's speech, and that is one reason why we shall vote against the order.

I should like to make it clear that that does not mean any softening towards terrorism or acts or terrorism. Terrorism is inimical to the basic democratic instincts that the vast majority of Members of Parliament in the House share. I regret and reject the charge made by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) that there is a lack of resolve against terrorism. He charged the Government with a lack of resolve and, by implication, his charge was general against all parties in the House. I totally reject that charge if it was levelled at the Labour party. I am sure that when the Minister replies he will reject the charge equally vehemently on behalf of the Government.

We are not soft on terrorism. Terrorism must be defeated, but it must be defeated in a way that does justice to the democratic values of our society and that does not use techniques or methods that would be more appropriate in a more authoritarian if not dictatorial society.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East also gave the impression that the attitude of the IRA and its apparent freedom of movement suggest that the IRA thinks that it has won the battle. That is turning truth on its head. The frustration of the IRA and its inability to make real political progress, either north or south of the border, is shown by its increased use of violence in its attacks in the North of Ireland and in the attacks that it has sought to carry out in Great Britain. There is no way, politically, in which the IRA can win the hearts and minds of the majority of the minority community in the North of Ireland and there is no way in which the IRA can militarily defeat the security forces in the North of Ireland.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** As election results have consistently shown that 30 per cent. of the Roman Catholic community votes for the terrorist party Sinn Fein, why does the hon. Gentleman think it impossible for Sinn Fein to advance from 30 per cent. to 50 per cent?

**Mr. Marshall:** If the hon. Gentleman reads my remarks in *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that I said that Sinn Fein has failed to win the majority of the minority community in the North of Ireland. That is the position now. My best guess is that it would find it virtually impossible to secure the majority vote of the minority community in the North of Ireland——

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** Why?

**Mr. Marshall:** Because the majority of people in the minority community—as in the majority community—do not like being pushed around by bully boys. They want to lead normal lives and to live in peace with people across the community. It is for that reason that they share the same aspirations, desires and aims as all other ordinary people in the North of Ireland and why they do not share the aims and objectives of the gunmen and the terrorists.

As I have only four minutes left, I shall try to make further progress rapidly. I refer now to the speech made by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). In his absence I shall say only that I wish that the hon. Gentleman would show as much emotion and feeling when seeking to attain a political solution in Northern Ireland as he shows when bringing to the House one catalogue of death after another. The hon. Gentleman shows a high degree of emotion and feels highly emotional about the position. However, if he could divert his energy and emotion into positive avenues of seeking a political solution in Northern Ireland if only for a few seconds, Northern Ireland would be a far better place.

I turn finally to the comments of the Secretary of State. He singularly failed to give any justification of the measures that he is bringing forward for renewal today. He made two general assertions with which no one would disagree. I remind the Secretary of State of those two assertions. The first was that, in view of yesterday's and other recent events, the security forces require every assistance and support. I agree with that—everyone would agree with it. The second general assertion was that the perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. Again, we all agree with that general assertion. However, the Secretary of State then sought to imply that, having

made those two general assertions, there was no need to seek to justify the measures in detail. That was a failure on the part of the Secretary of State this afternoon.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) made clear, when we are seeking to justify changes from the normal criminal law and derogations from normal standards, it is vital that justifications are given and that they are convincing. The Secretary of State tried to hide his lack of any real argument in favour of the measure by drawing attention to progress made by the Government in other spheres, and he referred to jobs, equality of opportunity and housing. While the Government have made admirable progress in those areas, the right hon. Gentleman must appreciate that unless there is political progress, with a determination on his part and that of the constitutional parties to get together and form a new political consensus in the North, all that admirable economic and social progress will count for naught.

I urge the Secretary of State, as I have in previous debates, to continue to seek talks with the constitutional parties, and I appreciate that that is his intention. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) pointed out, there is great need for politicians in the North to talk in terms of making political progress and not concentrate always on the evil aspects of the Province.

We need a body of criminal law in Northern Ireland which is clear, coherent and concise. We should dispense with all powers that are not really needed. There should be no duplication of powers and we should not fall into the trap of believing that the criminal law alone can solve the problems of Northern Ireland.

Because it fails to answer those challenges, we shall, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, oppose the order tonight.

6.53 pm

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart)** This debate is taking place in the shadow of last night's atrocity in Coagh, and hon. Members present this evening appreciate the emotion of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who spoke about those whom he knew personally. But despite that emotion, we must take decisions using judgment, according to our best advice and experience of the facts.

I heard with sadness from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that the Opposition would vote against the order tonight, because there is no subject about which one could say more strongly that the Government wished that they had no grounds to criticise the Opposition. If ever there was a subject on which a unity of purpose and approach was desirable in this House, it is this issue of the troubles and terrorism in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, we do not have that tonight. To use an Irish writer's phrase, the Labour party's attitude to terrorism is in a state of "chassis."

I recall that, when we debated what was then the Prevention of Terrorism Bill on Second Reading, some Opposition Members abstained, some voted for a reasoned amendment and some voted against. Tonight they have decided to vote against. I hope that some of them may be honourable enough to abstain, or even to vote in the Lobby with the Government.

I draw a contrast between what was said in this debate by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and his noble Friend Lord Mason who, when he had the responsibility for dealing with these problems, introduced and supported measures such as we are discussing tonight and ensured that the security forces had the powers they needed. Speaking in the other place recently in the context of prevention of terrorism legislation, Lord Mason said: "we stood together"—

referring to the 1970s—

"with the major political parties behind us."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 February 1989; Vol. 504, c. 34.]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** Order. If the Minister is quoting from a speech made by a Member of the other place who is not a Minister, will he please paraphrase?

**Mr. Stewart:** Thank you for that guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Lord Mason said in another place that at that time basic freedoms were under serious threat and that bipartisan support was necessary. I regret that we have not had that in this debate.

When Labour Members were in office in the 1970s they were responsible for these issues and were determined to deal with the problem. I was sorry to hear the remarks of the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), because he seemed to be apologising for the position that his Front Bench was advocating. Opposition Members seem to have lost their grip on reality. They say that they are committed to the fight against terrorism, but they will not support any longer the measures that are necessary to conduct that fight. To will the end but not the means is a position of irresponsibility.

The Government have their responsibilities in this matter. We regret, just as Lord Colville regretted, that he had to conclude that there was reluctant acceptance of the need for emergency provisions of this kind. The powers which we seek to renew are a regrettable necessity. We do not view security policy in isolation. We do not want to leave a vacuum on the political front. We believe that progress towards political development and dialogue would help, but they would not achieve a solution on their own. Without the necessary powers, our security forces cannot pursue the campaign against terrorism which, alas, is essential in Northern Ireland today.

The Government will continue to deal robustly with terrorism within the law. With emergency legislation, it is always a question of balance and fine judgment. Measures must be powerful enough to be effective, but we must never lose that essential ingredient of fairness and general consideration towards the public, a point to which several hon. Members have referred.

Lord Colville emphasised, above all in what he said, that the comments made to him were not so much about the powers as about the way in which they were exercised. I wish to endorse again on behalf of the Government our commitment that all these powers should be implemented in a fair and impartial way, with courtesy and consideration, and that lapses—which occasionally, I am afraid, are bound to happen and are deeply to be regretted—must be as few as possible. We appreciate that they have an effect on public confidence and that the support of the community is a vital contributory factor in countering terrorism.

*[Mr. Stewart]*

I hope that the independent commission for police complaints, which was not enthusiastically received by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), will prove to be an important instrument for dealing with complaints. We must bear in mind that the commission has not yet produced a report on its first 10 months of activity. I am sure that its establishment is an important innovation.

The fact that the Army has taken new measures to speed up the machinery for dealing with complaints demonstrates our belief that this is an important matter, and we support what Lord Colville said about the impact that it can make in the general campaign against terrorism.

To get the matter into perspective, with 10,000 regular troops and 6,000 members of the UDR in Northern Ireland, in the eight months to the end of January that represented nearly 4 million troop days of activity, and that has resulted in fewer than 200 complaints coming to Army headquarters, Northern Ireland. I wish that the number was smaller, but one must keep the situation in perspective.

I pay tribute to the members of the RUC, the Regulars and the Reserves, the UDR and the Regular soldiers for the way in which they, on behalf of the whole community —of the Government, the people of Great Britain and the people of Northern Ireland—at great risk to themselves —day after day, month after month and alas year after year—enable the people of Northern Ireland to live as normal a life as possible in difficult circumstances.

We are anxious to see an improvement in the security situation, and I am not without hope on that front. Significant finds of weaponry have been made in recent months in the North of Ireland, and also by the Gardai in the Republic. I am encouraged by the growing feeling of resentment in Northern Ireland about the futility of terrorism as a means of achieving any of the ends that the terrorists say they espouse.

There are better prospects now in Northern Ireland; they could be even better if terrorism could be seen to fail. Terrorism itself will never achieve anything but grief and waste. We need to ensure, under those circumstances, that the brave members of the security forces who carry such responsibilities on behalf of us all have the means to counter terrorism. They need the sort of powers that were introduced in the emergency provisions legislation of the 1970s and 1980s. They need the provisions in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill which is going through Parliament——

*It being Seven o'clock,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question on the motion, pursuant to Order [3 March].*

*The House divided:* Ayes 239, Noes 118.

**Division No. 119]** **[7 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy

Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

**NOES**

Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987 (Continuance) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.

*It being after Seven o'clock* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [3 March], put the Question forthwith,*

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.

*Question agreed to.*

# Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

7.14 pm

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart):** I beg to move

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 28th February, be approved.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** It might be helpful if I make it clear that debate on the order may cover all matters for which Northern Ireland departments, as distinct from the Northern Ireland Office, are responsible. Police and security are the principal excluded subjects.

**Mr. Stewart:** The order is made under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

The draft order has two purposes. The first is to authorise the expenditure of some £473 million included in the 1988-89 spring supplementary estimates. That amount, when added to the £3,618 million previously approved by the House, brings the total estimates provision for Northern Ireland departmental services to some £4,091 million for this financial year. The second purpose of the draft order is to authorise the vote on account of some £1,669 million for 1989-90. That amount is necessary to enable services to continue until the 1989-90 main estimates are approved later this year. Full details of all the provisions sought in the draft order can be found in the spring supplementary estimates volume and the "Statement of Sums Required on Account" leaflet, copies of which have been placed in the Vote Office.

As the draft order covers the entire range of services provided by Northern Ireland departments, I shall say a few words about certain key features of the Northern Ireland economy which inevitably influence the pattern of public expenditure provision. I am glad to say that the Province's economy continues to show clear signs of improvement and revival accompanied by a welcome reduction in numbers out of work. By January of this year, total unemployment on a seasonally adjusted basis had fallen by nearly 16,000 since the peak in October 1986, and by nearly 7,000 on the numbers a year ago. Our public expenditure plans for the coming year, with extra resources for training and investment, should contribute to a continuation of that trend.

Meanwhile, the numbers in employment are increasing. The number of employees in the manufacturing sector has risen by 2,000 in the year to last September. In the same period, the number of jobs in the service sector has increased by 3,000. Recent successes by the Industrial Development Board, which is due to receive additional funding in 1989-90, show that Northern Ireland is a highly attractive location for new investment. In the service sector, the commercial revival of Belfast and other centres continues.

As the estimates show, the Government will continue to pursue economic and public expenditure policies in Northern Ireland to strengthen the Province's economy. I want to ensure that the economic recovery is as broadly based as possible for the benefit of all areas and sections of the community.

I now turn to the specific estimates before the House. The Department of Agriculture's vote 1 provides for the Northern Ireland expenditure on United Kingdomwide support schemes. Provision of £600,000 is sought to meet the costs in Northern Ireland of the measures introduced to assist the egg industry, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the House on 19 December. These short-term measures were introduced to restore stability to the industry following the sharp fall in demand for eggs as a result of the problems in Great Britain associated with salmonella enteritidis in eggs and egg products. Although no such infection was detected in any eggs produced in Northern Ireland, the industry is co-operating with the Department of Agriculture on further measures and final decisions in relation to Northern Ireland will be taken in the light of developments in Great Britain.

Following the reopening in Northern Ireland of the national element of the agriculture improvement scheme, the order provides for additional expenditure of £4 million, mainly on grants for effluent storage and disposal facilities. An extra £1·3 million is also provided this year for payments of compensatory allowances to farmers in less favoured areas.

The Department of Agriculture's vote 2 requires £0·5 million extra in the drainage programme to meet additional expenditure on the restoration of flood defences at Strabane following the severe flooding in October 1987.

The Department of Economic Development has supplementary estimates for all of its five votes. The most significant item in vote 1 is an extra £15·8 million to meet the current level of expenditure on industrial development grants and loans under selective financial assistance agreements. This reflects the continuing success of the Industrial Development Board in promoting employment in manufacturing industry and tradeable services. The major investments by Daewoo and Montupet will in themselves provide 1,600 new jobs. I should add that this increased expenditure is largely financed by an extra £14·6 million of receipts mainly from the sale of factories and land in line with the IDB's policy of privatisation.

The increases sought on the DED's votes 4 and 5 are all less than £3 million, but vote 2 contains by far and away the biggest single increase in these supplementary estimates. This is the provision of £390 million for the recapitalisation of Short Brothers plc, which the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), announced on 27 February.

The House will recall my hon. Friend's previous statement on 21 July 1988, that the Government were ready to consider suitable proposals that might lead to the acquisition of Short Brothers by private sector interests. Subsequently, Kleinwort Benson were appointed as merchant banking advisers, and we have been moving towards our objective of privatisation.

The interest shown in Shorts by potential purchasers confirms our view that Shorts is a company with many fine products and is held in high regard by other companies in the aerospace industry. We remain convinced that Shorts' best interests will be served by an early return to the private sector with the disciplines and opportunities which are available there.

The House will be aware that an information memorandum was issued to companies interested in acquiring Shorts. Detailed discussions are taking place with prospective buyers. The House would not expect me to speculate on a date for disposal, but our intention is to achieve sale as early as possible.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson** (Newbury): Has the European Commission approved the loan?

**Mr. Stewart:** I will have a word to say about that in a moment.

Since the early 1980s, Shorts has been funded largely by commercial borrowings, and, because of the high development costs related to new products together with trading losses, a high level of borrowings has been built up. This in turn has placed a considerable interest burden on the company. The Government have always recognised the need to restructure Shorts' balance sheet before the company can be returned to the private sector and has been considering how and when this should best be done. We have reached the view that there would be merit in taking steps now to enable the company to extinguish the bulk of its loan indebtedness to commercial banks.

Clearly, the simplest way of achieving this would be to inject grant into the company now to enable it to repay its bank borrowings, but we have decided not to follow this course. The European Commission would not wish to sanction a definitive capital reconstruction until final details of the disposal are known. We therefore propose to replace the company's commercial debt by a convertible loan from the Government. This would be at national loans fund rates, and our intention is that it would replace all the company's commercial debt save for loans from the European investment bank which carry an interest rate well below that charged by the NLF. Our loan would be convertible, and our expectation is that it would not in fact be repaid, but be converted, either in whole or for the most part, into equity at the point of disposal of the company. This proposal would of course be subject to the agreement of the European Commission, and formal notification of our plan has already been made to it. We are hopeful that it can reach a positive decision before the end of the financial year.

The aim of replacing commercial debt with Government debt is, first, to reassure the market about our intentions on capital reconstruction; secondly, to simplify the company's portfolio of borrowings so that final recapitalisation can be effected at the appropriate point with minimum delay; and, thirdly, to secure a reduction in the interest burden currently borne by the company and consequently a corresponding reduction in the Government's liabilities. There may of course be other payments to conclude the sale, but such matters will arise from detailed discussion with prospective buyers.

I therefore seek the approval of the House at this stage to a payment of up to £390 million. The public expenditure consequences of this payment cannot be accommodated within the existing Northern Ireland public expenditure block and the necessary resources will be available from the reserve.

I am sure that the House will support the substantial provision proposed to replace existing commercial borrowing by Shorts. It is a positive indication of the Government's determination to give the company the best prospects for an early and successful return to the private sector.

In the Department of Economic Development's vote 3, when balancing items are taken into account, the net additional provision sought is £2·9 million. Within the overall amount, £4·1 million is provided for the expansion of the action for community employment programme, giving an average of 8,800 jobs for the long-term unemployed during 1988-89. This figure includes the 500 additional jobs announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as part of the making Belfast work initiative.

The Department of the Environment's vote 1 covers roads, transport and ports, where a net additional provision of £10·9 million is being sought. This includes £5·9 million towards an extended programme of structural maintenance works on carriageways and footways, plus £3·1 million for new construction and improvement schemes.

In a recent statement, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport informed the House that the Government had made a contribution of £250,000 to the East Midlands air crash disaster fund and that £100,000 of this donation would be met from the Northern Ireland block. Appropriate provision has therefore been made in this vote. I hope that hon. Members will welcome this contribution to relieving the suffering caused by this tragic accident.

I now turn to the Department of Education, where net provision of £9.3 million is sought in vote 1. The main increase in this vote is an extra £5·2 million grant to education and library boards, of which £3·4 million is for recurrent expenditure on mandatory student awards, schools for mentally handicapped children and library book stocks. The boards will also receive a further £1·8 million for maintenance of school buildings. An extra £5 million will be provided for capital expenditure. Hon. Members will note that provision is made within this vote for curriculum working groups being established under the Government's education reform proposals.

An additional £4·3 million is sought for the Department of Education's vote 2. The increases are mainly for capital expenditure and will provide, for example, furniture and equipment for Magee campus in Londonderry, as the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), announced yesterday, and additional resources for physics at Queen's university. Belfast's grand opera house and the Downpatrick arts centre will also benefit. Earlier today, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State also announced that there will be increased finances for the arts, museums and sport in the coming year.

For health and personal social services, a net additional provision of £46 million is being sought in vote 1. Of this total, some £29·5 million will be allocated to health and social services boards, mainly to meet the cost of the nurses' regrading and pay settlement and other review body pay settlements. The extra cash will help to maintain the high standard of health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. It will also enable further progress to be made in the transition from institutional to community care for those in long-stay accommodation.

The increase of over £10 million in the capital programme will ensure that building projects are carried forward as planned, that essential medical equipment is replaced, and that some of the most pressing maintenance jobs can be tackled. A further £10·7 million is also required for family practitioner services to meet higher estimates of demand and increased costs, particularly in pharmaceutical services.

In the social security programme, a total additional provision of £7·6 million is sought and £0·6 million of this is required in vote 3 in connection with the social security reforms. An additional £7 million is required in vote 4 to

*[Mr. Stewart]*

meet increased demand on the social security budget for income support, supplementary benefits, attendance allowance and transitional payments.

In my opening remarks I have sought to draw the attention of the House to the main provisions of the order. The Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), hopes to reply to the debate and we will be most interested to hear the contributions from right hon. and hon. Members.

7.29 pm

**Mr. Jim Marshall** (Leicester, South): I thank the Minister for taking us so carefully and definitely through the order and I am sure that most of us are now far wiser about its detail and consequences. I certainly found his explanation enlightening. It makes a pleasant change to be able to start these proceedings with agreement.

On a more personal level, it is good to see the Minister restored to full health and I hope that, within the next few weeks or months, he will be able to run around Westminster as he used to.

This evening we have the opportunity for a general debate on the social and economic state of the Province, and I suspect that this debate will be less emotionally charged than the previous one. I shall repeat the point that I made when winding up the previous debate—the economic and social aspects of life in the North of Ireland are of great importance to ordinary people. To the many people who do come into contact with violence, they are of paramount importance. Matters such as whether one has a job, or a reasonable prospect of getting one, whether one has a house and whether it is in decent repair, mean a great deal to ordinary people. We must bear in mind that we are talking about policy issues that have an impact on the vast majority of decent men, women and children in the north of Ireland.

I think that there is complete agreement in the House that Northern Ireland is perhaps the most deprived region in the United Kingdom. It is also one of the most deprived countries in the European Economic Community—as shown by its objective one regional status under EC regulations. I think that there will be further agreement that the security problem diverts resources away from social and economic development, and handicaps the generation of new internal and external investment.

However, within these parameters and constraints, the Government have enjoyed some success in attracting inward investment. The Minister mentioned Montupet, which is to be welcomed and on which I have already congratulated him. The Government have also been successful in encouraging economic activity through local enterprise initiatives, which are also to be welcomed.

Having given credit where credit is due, it remains the Opposition's view, and one that I have previously expressed, that the Thatcherite approach to the economic and social life of this kingdom is totally inappropriate in Northern Ireland. It is based on the concept that the size of the public sector in Northern Ireland creates a dependency culture and stifles enterprise, initiative and risk-taking. The Government believe that the Province must adjust and that the public sector should take a lower percentage of Northern Ireland's GDP. That policy is shortsighted and offers limited scope for the successful development of the Province's economy.

The narrow emphasis on law and order—important though that is—must be broadened and the Government must recognise that, when dealing with community conflict, they should also tackle other issues to promote a fair and equitable society for all citizens. The ban on public cash for Conway mill in the Lower Falls area of Belfast is to continue, despite the pressure—including that from local clergy and other community leaders—which has been applied. I have visited the mill and am aware of the sort of danger to which the Secretary of State alluded when he said that public funding would not be given to the mill, either directly through the Vote or through international funding. However, a great deal of useful work takes place at that mill and many local people gain experience and useful information. It is a crying shame that it is continually denied public funding of any kind.

This example highlights the problem that the Government face with their blanket refusal to give their reasons for denying funds to specific organisations. The project is a place to which people can go to receive education, training and experience. When the Government continually fail to provide funding for such projects, that reflects badly on them and creates the impression that they do not care for the section of the community which use such places. Will the Government look again at that institution?

I have an 18-inch pile of press releases from the Northern Ireland Office in which Ministers gleefully announce that they have received additional resources for their Departments from the Treasury. However, both the Ministers and the press releases fail to point out that those resources—although I agree that they are additional—are totally inadequate to redress the increased poverty in the North of Ireland.

During the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 debate last year, the Opposition argued that the Government's social security changes constituted a cruel, cost-cutting exercise which failed to recognise the enormous problems of poverty and deprivation in Northern Ireland. We received some vague assurances and heard some glib political comments during that debate, but, unfortunately, our fears have proved to be well founded. The Government will know that the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux in Northern Ireland recently carried out a survey among 30,000 of its clients. It found that eight out of 10 people on income support will be worse off when additional liabilities, such as the payment of rates, are taken into account.

More than half the families on family credit are now worse off, if changes in housing benefit and the loss of free school meals are taken into account. That is an illustration of a case in which the Government claim they have provided additional funds, but instead of the lot of people living in poverty being alleviated, large numbers of people have been left in worse poverty than before. It ill behoves the Government to claim that they are doing a great deal to remove poverty in the North of Ireland.

I should be grateful if the Minister would answer the following questions about the social fund. A few months ago my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) asked the Government some questions about the amount of underspend from the fund and the number of applications to it which have been refused. After six

months, only 12 per cent. of the grants budget had been spent and only 33·5 per cent. of the loans budget had been spent. What are the recent percentages of expenditure from the grants and loans budgets? If we can be given those figures, and if, as we suspect, they still show a large degree of underspend, may we be told why?

Why are so many people who seek assistance refused it? Thirty-four per cent. of applicants for grants are refused, and 37 per cent. of applicants for loans are refused. One in three applicants for grants and loans are refused. How do those rates of refusal compare with rates in the rest of the United Kingdom? If, as we suspect, they are higher in the Province, why is that so? We fear that if people are refused grants or loans they will inevitably be thrown into the eager arms of the loan sharks and money lenders. As the Minister knows, per capita debt in Northern Ireland is already frighteningly high, and we should hate to feel that these measures made it worse. There is already a debt time bomb ticking away in Northern Ireland, and Government measures should not make the problem worse.

Ministers continually claim that Northern Ireland receives a higher allocation per head for health than equivalent regions in the United Kingdom, and I do not doubt their claim. But they fail to take into account the health of the citizens of Northern Ireland. The Eastern health board recently published a report on Belfast showing that the general standard of health there is worse than in any other part of the United Kingdom, and among the worst in western Europe. The profiles on immunisation targets, congenital handicaps, coronary heart disease and chronic arthr[illegible] are the worst in the United Kingdom. So it is not enough to claim that the allocation per head is higher in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the country, true though that may be. Far higher levels of expenditure are required to deal with the problems there.

One of the results of this comparative underfunding has been deteriorating services and growing waiting lists for in and out-patient care, particularly in the acute sector. The Minister knows that waiting lists for community care are growing, and that people receiving it have had their provision cut back throughout the Province, not just in any particular health board area. That augurs ill for the future, especially in the light of the Government's determination to press ahead willy-nilly with increased emphasis on community care.

The Government must treat the problem of health seriously and go back to the Treasury before Tuesday of next week to try to obtain even greater sums from the billions of pounds floating around there to deal with the problems as they exist, not as Ministers would like to think they exist.

We welcome the Government's encouragement of integrated education and applaud the decision recently announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), to give £3·3 million to Lagan college. However, Ministers will know that that decision has not been unanimously applauded in Northern Ireland. Every press comment that I have read so far has more than paid lip service to the principle of integrated education, but has then gone on to say that capital expenditure spent on it should not be made at the expense of capital expenditure programmes for other schools. The Government must take heed of that problem and convince people that the £3·3 million is additional expenditure, not made at the expense of capital expenditure on other sectors of secondary education.

The Government must also accept that there is a backlog of capital expenditure requirements in Northern Ireland. I urge the Minister to go to the Secretary of State in the first instance, and then to the Chancellor before Tuesday, to seek additional funds with which to make a more determined effort to remove the outstanding capital expenditure needs of other schools in the North of Ireland. In general, Government plans for integrated education have our full support.

The Government must be a little concerned about the low morale that is apparent, especially among secondary school teachers. It is clearly related to inadequate funding, particularly of the new GCSE exam. Recently, the Irish National Teachers Organisation revealed that funding for the GCSE was clearly inadequate and sporadic, leading to problems with course planning and shortages of textbooks and equipment, all of which has put excessive pressure on teachers.

This pressure has contributed to the accelerated retirement rate due to ill health during the past year. I understand that it accelerated by 42 per cent. in the Province last year. In the light of that increase, will the Minister confirm the latest pupil-teacher ratio in the Province? He will recall that when a question on that subject was put to him last year, the figure was given at 18·5:1 compared with the United Kingdom figure of 17·4:1. It is common ground between us that any substantial increase above 18·5:1 would have adverse consequences for the Province's education system. My own view—which I hope is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar—is that in view of the Province's particular requirement for imparting expertise, so that people may obtain jobs created from the investment that the Government seek to attract in Northern Ireland, a teacher-pupil ratio not equal to but better than that of the United Kingdom should be achieved.

On housing, the Government are proud of their success, and rightly so. I have previously paid tribute to the Government on that aspect. Nevertheless, they should not allow their success to breed complacency. Much remains to be done, and that will require additional resources. A recent report from Shelter Northern Ireland indicates the extent of the housing problem there. Forty-two thousand homes are unfit for occupation, 115,000 homes are in need of major repairs, and 28,000 homes lack at least one basic amenity. The report also indicates that more than 22,000 applicants are on housing waiting lists, of whom more than 13,000 urgently need accommodation. Those problems will not be overcome unless expenditure is increased. There is currently doubt as to whether the Housing Executive's budget will increase or decrease in real terms. I hope that it will not decrease, given that 42,000 homes are unfit for habitation, 115,000 need major repairs, and 28,000 lack basic amenities. This is not the time to cut the housing budget but to increase it. Will the Minister confirm or deny that next year's Housing Executive allocations will be less in real terms than this year? If they are to be greater, will he give that figure instead?

Also of great concern, not only to people living in Belfast but throughout Northern Ireland, are the two companies currently facing the threat or prospect—whichever verb one likes to use—of privatisation.

*[Mr. Jim Marshall]*

Decisions that the Government will take in the next few days, weeks or months will impinge directly on the lives of 10,000 people and their families living in Belfast, and indirectly on the lives of thousands of others.

The two companies concerned are familiar names in this House. They are Harland and Wolff and Shorts. There is no need for me to rehearse the arguments about the importance of those two companies to the economies of Belfast and Northern Ireland. The decisions that are to be made about those companies—especially about Harland and Wolff—must be made quickly. In my more cynical moments—fortunately, cynicism is not one of my natural bents—I begin to believe that the Government want to see the closure of Harland and Wolff, which, over the past few years, seems to have suffered death by a thousand cuts. That shipyard, led by John Parker, with the support of the trade unions and work force, has made valiant efforts to compete internationally. I pay personal tribute to John Parker who, in the few months that I have known him, has striven with every ounce and fibre of his body to protect the shipyard and ensure its survival. I am convinced that he has full support for all his efforts.

It would be a tragedy—not just a personal tragedy for John Parker—if the time and effort of all those people who have striven so hard over the past few years to make the company more internationally competitive came to naught. The Government can help by making a quick decision. They have only two bids to choose between. One is the management-employee buy-out, and the other is Bulk Transport. The Government should quickly decide which is to be the successful new owner of Harland and Wolff. My view is that the Government should prefer the management-employee buy-out, but whichever decision they make, it should be made quickly. The Government must also give sufficient capital guarantees and restore the possibility of intervention funding without further delays.

Turning to Shorts, in a previous debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) made it clear that we wish to see the company sold as a whole. He also suggested in a private notice question last week that that could best be achieved by the Government retaining a golden share in the newly privatised company. I again urge that course of action upon the Government.

The two bids for Shorts that are before the Government, from GEC-Fokker and from Bombardier, both present problems, particularly in respect of the JFX project. Before the Government choose between GEC-Fokker and Bombardier, they must seek cast-iron assurances about the future of the JFX project. My own view is that if the GEC-Fokker bid succeeds, the likelihood of the JFX project getting any further will be slim. I would be happier if the Bombardier bid succeeded, because even if the decision was made not to develop further JFX, Bombardier's own keen involvement in the development of new regional jets, and the success that the company has had with Canadair, should ensure that such aircraft will continue to be built in Belfast.

Shorts is a centre of technical and engineering excellence that must continue, particularly if Northern Ireland is to retain a place in the aerospace industry. The Government must ensure the provision of capital restructuring and other assistance to give Shorts a fair chance of succeeding in the private sector. If the Government do anything less than that, they will betray not only the workers at Shorts but all the people of Northern Ireland.

7.59 pm

**Mr. A. Cecil Walker** (Belfast, North): I join the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) in congratulating the Minister on the presentation of the appropriation order. I sympathise with the Minister on his physical problems. I am glad to see him back in the House.

As usual, I object to the way in which these iniquitous draft orders are imposed upon the Province. Many people say that the method is corrupt. Many hon. Members have exposed this unacceptable system of undemocratic government, and to govern in this way at this time is completely wrong. Northern Ireland Members want to be treated in the same way as other hon. Members.

There is a sincerely held belief in Northern Ireland that our Ministers can exercise supreme powers without being answerable to us in any way. People believe that we have no means of redress or of pointing Ministers in the right direction. That may be so, but as responsible elected representatives who have to answer to our constituents, we must at all times endeavour to represent them to the best of our ability. Where necessary we must be ready to take issue with the Government on matters that concern our people. The order gives us some opportunity to do that. We know that we cannot change it, but at least we can put to Government our suggestions for improvements that would be to the benefit of the Province and its citizens. With that in mind, I should like to draw attention to vote 3 on page 4 for expenditure on housing services by the Department of the Environment. I am dissatisfied at the reduction in funding to the Housing Executive and the way in which the funds are distributed to the various sectors under the Housing Executive umbrella.

I am worried about the reduction in grant provision for repairs and renovations. The Minister must know that the poor condition of housing stock which is more than 25 years old has reached disastrous proportions. Consequently, grant applications are at an exceptionally high level. It is unacceptable for the Housing Executive to announce a £6·5 million cut in this year's budget and that repair grants are now considered cut in this year's budget and that repair grants are now considered only for declared housing action areas, for houses affected by statutory notices, or for applicants who are suffering financial hardship.

It is worrying that renovation grants are available only for housing action areas or for those who are disabled or suffering from financial hardship. The Minister knows that I have often spoken in the House about the criteria for grant aid. I am most concerned about people who purchased their houses in the 1950s when demand was high and standards were lamentably low. It is unfair that the owners of those houses are now denied the means to repair and renovate them. There are some Orlit type houses in private ownership and they did not qualify under the housing defects orders. The Minister should take a special interest in the grant side of the Housing Executive budget with a view to more realistic funding and to obtain better value for money. That is important when it is

remembered that in 1986 the allocation was £56·8 million. This year that has fallen to £30 million which is less than half the 1986 amount when one allows for inflation.

I draw the Minister's attention to correspondence that I have had with his office about the concept of defensible space and its importance to many tenants living in houses built by the Housing Executive in areas where crime and vandalism are rampant. The people in such houses, many of whom are elderly, are tortured by hooligans. Those elderly people require the privacy that is given by walls and fences.

In my constituency the Housing Executive has recognised that need and has provided small walls with railings and gates in such areas as New Lodge and Ardoyne. It has done that with great success, but there are areas in Shankill, Crumlin and Oldpark that have suffered as much from criminal vandalism and have not yet been provided with this necessary buffer zone in spite of promises made to me by the Housing Executive as far back as 1984. The executive said that the work would be undertaken as a matter of urgency. If the Housing Executive will not fund that work perhaps Belfast action teams could do it, possibly by way of community action. I hope that the Government will facilitate such an initiative because it would restore confidence to the people in these vulnerable areas.

I should like to deal with the new tenants agreement that has been proposed by the Housing Executive. My party is worried about some of its proposals because it feels that they are dictatorial and repressive. In part II, paragraph 1, the Housing Executive promises:

"To keep in repair the structure and exterior of the building."

In practice that is far from the case. Promises are one thing but practical application is another. The delays in carrying out repairs and the quality of such repairs are often pathetic. The fact that the inspection rate is so low in relation to the number of repairs must be a factor in the encouragement of shoddy and dishonest practices. Part II, paragraph 2(c), says:

"The Executive is not under any duty to rebuild or reinstate the dwelling in the case of destruction or damage".

There is a certain amount of ambiguity there and it deserves an explanation. Does the tenant have to live in a tent or in a damaged house until the Housing Executive decides what it will do? Is there an obligation to rehouse or is compensation available to tenants who find themselves in such circumstances? Tenants deserve to know. Paragraph 2 goes on:

"

(c) The Executive is not under any duty to rebuild or reinstate the dwelling in the case of destruction or damage by fire tempest flood or other inevitable damage.

(d) In determining the standard of repair or maintenance necessary for compliance with the Executive's obligations in that connection, regard is to be had to the age, character and prospective life of the dwelling at the time of the need for the relevant repair or maintenance.

(e) The Executive is not under any duty to carry out any work by virtue of its obligations to repair or maintain until a reasonable period has elapsed after the District Manager has been given written and specific notice (by or on behalf of the Tenant) of the need for such work.

(f) The Executive's duties to repair, maintain and decorate are subject to any additional limitations provided for in Schedule 4."

What happens in an emergency, or does the Housing Executive not allow for such things? What about electrical breakdowns or water problems that are not caused by any action by the tenant? The agreement needs to be more specific and the meaning should be clear so that people can understand the paragraphs.

The other part of the document that is causing great concern is part III, under the heading of "Improvements". It says:

"4. The Executive has the right to carry out any works in or in respect of or in connection with the dwelling (whether works of repair alteration improvement internal or external decoration, or otherwise) and the Executive shall not be responsible for the cost of any redecoration work necessitated by such works of repair, alteration, improvement or otherwise and further shall not be responsible for any claim by the Tenant for any inconvenience or disruption or for any physical damage to the dwelling or items therein arising from or consequential upon the carrying out of such works other than any such claim arising out of the negligence of the Executive or its employees."

That scandalous abrogation of responsibility must rate as the most diabolical and repressive example of dictatorship ever to be penned by the minions in the Housing Executive, obscured by this autocratic, secretive, monolithic structure. Such a statement must infringe civil and human rights, and, so far as responsibility is concerned, a body that could expect to impose such conditions would have no compunction about denying any claim arising out of its negligence or that of its employees. I shall not say any more about this subject, except that, no doubt, the Minister will wish to look very carefully at such repressive and, in my opinion, unlawful conditions.

Turning now to the Department of Health and Social Services—vote 1—I strongly oppose any proposal to diminish the night casualty facilities at the Mater hospital. The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance has presented to the Government an excellent case setting out in detail why this great hospital, which, since its inception, has endeared itself to the whole community of north Belfast, should not be interfered with at this time. The Minister will appreciate that the hospital is in a very deprived area. The Government have recognised that the special circumstances in such areas justify allowing for local conditions: I cite, as examples, Notting Hill, Bristol and Liverpool 8.

The Mater hospital has a catchment area encompassing the whole of north Belfast and parts of Newtownabbey. The rate of work done and the number of patients seen, in relation to the number of staff employed, must be among the highest in the United Kingdom. In times of emergency —and in north Belfast those are frequent—it is totally impractical to send seriously injured people to the City hospital or the Royal Victoria hospital. If there were delays arising from disruption, such people could die in transit. Furthermore, the night casualty departments in the City and Royal hospitals, particularly at weekends, are often fully occupied, necessitating unacceptable delays in treatment.

I ask the Minister to consider very carefully any proposal by the Eastern health and social services board to interfere with the exceptionally well run casualty department at the Mater. In future there will be discussions as to how the various hospitals should operate within the proposed new structure. That will be time enough to have an in-depth look at how the Mater hospital should be affected by these proposals.

*[Mr. A. Cecil Walker]*

Finally, I want to refer to the Department of the Environment—vote 4. As environment spokesman for the Ulster Unionist party, I want to draw the Minister's attention to the seemingly insurmountable problem of the litter that is being dumped all over the Province. I am sure that Ministers, as they go about their business, are as concerned as anyone else about the unsightly and unhealthy deposits alongside the roads. Irresponsible litter louts tip rubbish on almost every plot of vacant ground in the city. The existing legislation does not appear to be sufficient to deal with the problem, and local government byelaws are obviously ineffective. I should like to see the Minister using whatever authority is required to give councils the power to take the necessary action to stop these irresponsible practices, which are destroying our environment and contributing so much to deterioration and deprivation in the whole community.

8.14 pm

**Mr. James Kilfedder** (North Down): This debate cannot do justice to the myriad problems that affect the Province of Northern Ireland, nor can it do justice to the large amount of money that this appropriation represents. The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) has given some of the reasons for the people of Northern Ireland feeling that they are discriminated against in the manner of the presentation of this appropriation order. The time allowed for debate is limited, and it would be impossible to cover all the subjects if all Members wishing to take part were to speak. I intend, therefore, to be brief.

I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) in his thoughtful speech, particularly about the Belfast shipyard, which is so important to our economy. I join the hon. Member in urging the Government to come to a quick decision. I, too, believe that if the shipyard is to be privatised, the best course would be to sell it to the management and the employees. That would be the best way forward for Harland and Wolff.

As the hon. Member for Leicester, South said, this debate is taking place only a few days before the Chancellor unveils his Budget. I hope that some of the money provided will be made available to meet the problems that we in Northern Ireland have to face. The hon. Member pointed out that we have many problems. Indeed, Northern Ireland is rightly described as a deprived area.

In opening the debate, the Minister mentioned the fact that more money has been made available for the arts, museums and sport. This I welcome. Despite the campaign of terrorism, which has lasted for 20 years, despite the dark and difficult days that campaign has brought for the people of Northern Ireland, there is a need to foster the arts. Of course, that is additional to the need for jobs, adequate housing, modern hospitals and good schools.

As time is limited, I propose to deal with just four points, the first of which concerns schools. There is a desperate need in my constituency—in Bangor—for more schools, particularly for girls, who, at present, are discriminated against. I urge the Department of Education to ensure that a decision is made, without further delay, on the provision of a new school on the site of the former Forsythe nursery. That site would be ideal for the provision of larger premises for Glenlola collegiate school and Bangor girls' high school. Those schools could then expand, incorporating the existing Glenlola buildings, which are right beside those of Bangor girls' high. It is intolerable that pupils in Bangor have to receive their education in temporary classrooms. I understand that those two schools have about 50 temporary classrooms. That is acceptable only on a short-term basis, and it is high time that prefabs throughout Bangor were replaced.

I am all for integrated education. Over the years I have fought for it, and I am glad that the Minister who is now responsible for education is pushing it ahead. Again I join the hon. Member for Leicester, South in urging the Government to make sure that the amount of money made available to Lagan college is additional to the amount provided for the Department of Education. We must have good schools. The children of Northern Ireland deserve the best possible education because they are the wealth of the Province.

Much attention has recently been given to the environment by the British media and the Government. That attention has been concentrated on beaches along the coastline of Great Britain. Many people in Northern Ireland have been protesting about pollution in Belfast lough. That pollution defiles the beaches of my constituency of North Down and makes some of them a health hazard to bathers and other users of the beach, particularly young children.

Millions of tonnes of untreated sewage go into the Irish sea every year, and that is quite apart from industrial waste and the plutonium that is discharged from Sellafield. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) joins me in protesting about emissions from Sellafield. As the Conservative party has now become the green party—if we are to believe it—the people of Northern Ireland have a right to expect an end to the dumping of sewage and industrial waste into the Irish sea.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that, in the EEC survey of beaches in Northern Ireland, Belfast lough came out all right? A beach in Newcastle and one in North Antrim had problems.

**Mr. Kilfedder:** That may be all right for the people of Belfast and Belfast lough, but I am talking about what happens when sewage sludge is dumped in Belfast lough. It creeps around, and waves bring it back on to beaches at Orlock and Ballyholme. All sorts of things are thrown up on beaches. I have seen the results. It may be all right for the hon. Member for Belfast, South, but if he made use of beaches in North Down he certainly would not wish Belfast sludge to be dumped on them.

Each year, approximately 326,000 tonnes of sewage sludge is dumped in Belfast lough. That is no small quantity. It is not like somebody removing it from his backyard. It is nearly twice the amount that is dumped in Dublin bay. Many of my colleagues have criticised Dublin. Even though Dubliners may protest about sewage being dumped in their backyard, twice as much is dumped in Belfast lough. Together with the 1,700,000 tonnes of sewage sludge that is dumped in Liverpool bay and Bristol channel, the Irish sea has been polluted to an unacceptable degree. The Irish sea is virtually an inland sea as, I am told, there are insufficiently strong tidal currents rapidly to dilute and disperse sludge.

I commend members of the Orlock residents' association for their vigorous lobbying over the past few years in their campaign to clean up beaches in their area. They wish to see a sewage treatment plant installed for the district, instead of an extension to the sewage outfall at Briggs Rock. They fear that, as before, sewage will be swept back on to the beaches.

I commend also an organisation called Help The Aged. It has as its organiser a Mr. Will Glendenning, formerly a conscientious Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Perhaps he may not have been favoured by some of my colleagues, but he was a hard-working Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Help The Aged has collated statistics which prove that pensioners in Northern Ireland have suffered severely as a result of the Government's public expenditure cuts. The old-age pension should be substantially increased to meet the needs of the elderly and to keep pensions in line with inflation. Because of the shortage of time, I will not refer to the statistics in detail, but I ask the Minister to look at them. I believe that that organisation has submitted them to the Department. Perhaps the Minister will think with compassion about the elderly in our midst.

I single out one item affecting the elderly. One way in which Ulster pensioners could be helped is to provide them with free public transport. Is it not obnoxious that pensioners who have given so much to the community should have to plead for a little comfort and dignity in the fullness of their years? My maiden speech in the House, which was in October 1964, was on behalf of pensioners. More should be done for pensioners. I hope that the last speech that I make in this House will be on that subject, whenever that occasion may occur. *[Interruption.]* I do not like hon. Members welcoming that day.

The need for more jobs is paramount in Northern Ireland. A job provides not only money but dignity for the wage earner and his family. There can be nothing more soul-destroying than being in a dole queue month after month, year after year. I feel for all people who are unemployed.

I repeat the suggestion which I made in this Chamber on two occasions in the past two years. With representatives of the SDLP and any other constitutional party, I am prepared to go to the United States or anywhere else if the Government would organise such a delegation to get jobs for employment black spots in Northern Ireland. I have mentioned Strabane. I should like more jobs in my own constituency. I am prepared to work with my colleagues, regardless of their political party, to make sure that the people in Northern Ireland who want work get it.

8.26 pm

**Mr. Eddie McGrady** (South Down): As I listened to the presentation of the estimates, one matter that struck me was the depletion in real terms of the Housing Executive budget. The Housing Executive is one of the success stories in Northern Ireland in its design and redevelopment of housing and the clearance of slums. It is a pity that the Government have not continued to update and promote housing in Northern Ireland to the extent that they did in the past. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's present budget is not even capable of meeting the rather mean target that it was forced to set for itself in previous budget allocations. That is notwithstanding the fact that compulsory rent increases of 10·25 per cent. have been imposed on the public housing population who are suffering from the multiple deprivation articulated by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) regarding social security and the lack of take-up. I always assumed that rent increases would go hand in hand with, and not be greater than, inflation. Are we to understand that the Government's target for inflation next year is 10·25 per cent.? That is the rate of imposition in the public sector, and, as announced yesterday, it is 10·5 per cent. in the private sector.

The fact that the Housing Executive has not received an adequate budget gives rise to a considerable clawback of its proposed, and already reduced, building programme. The Housing Executive will receive £40·2 million less in 1989-90, compared with 1988-89. In real terms, over the three-year strategy period, the Government's net contribution to the executive is £110 million less than the modest strategy period bid.

What does this mean in terms of bricks and mortar? It means that only 1,400 houses can be expected over the next three years; that is the equivalent of saying that 780 dwellings which might have been improved under the previous standard of financing cannot now be improved and that 2,250 improvement grants, or 7,750 repair grants, cannot now be given. That is for a housing stock acknowledged to be among the poorest in western Europe and certainly in the United Kingdom. It comes on top of the fact that two new pieces of legislation have imposed severe additional burdens on the Housing Executive. One is the welcome legislation on homelessness and the other is the order on multiple occupancy which, it is expected, will affect between 2,500 and 3,000 dwellings in Northern Ireland.

When we hear the horror statistics of those multiple occupancies we realise just how bad the problem is: 40 per cent. of them are below the minimum required standard; 55 per cent. are in the category of inadequate; 80 per cent. have no alternative escape routes. That is another massive problem that the Housing Executive must face on a reduced budget.

Some time ago I urged the responsible Minister—who is not on the Front Bench at the moment—to stabilise and assist the Housing Executive in a planned and progressive way to achieve reasonable targets and to give it a five-year programme, not the stop-start, start-stop programme that we have had in the past two years but a confirmed five-year programme which would enable it to put contracts out in a proper way and establish a reasonable housebuilding programme.

My constituency of South Down is primarily an agricultural one. It is for the most part a less advantaged area in almost its entirety. We hear much talk about the need for farm diversification but the purse does not appear to be following the words and there is little that I can see by way of a comprehensive and adequate programme for farm diversification, something that is badly needed in view of the restricted income of the Northern Ireland farmer in general and the South Down farmer in particular, faced as he is with the withdrawal of the beef subsidy, the poor pig market and the problem of the milk levies.

It is a great pity that farm diversification schemes were not properly taken into account when the farm conservation grant scheme was introduced, particularly

*[Mr. Eddie McGrady]*

with regard to mushrooms which have provided a useful, and could provide a much more useful, diversified source of income for the small hill farmer in South Down.

A problem which is becoming rather alarming but is at this stage still in its infancy is the increased incidence of bovine tuberculosis. When the Minister is distributing his wealth, will he consider providing 100 per cent. compensation for cattle found to be so infected? It would encourage an immediate eradication of the beast or beasts in question; and perhaps the farm conservation grant scheme could be extended to buildings, crushes, pens, and so on, thus providing for proper isolation and treatment.

I am also concerned at the possible closure of the veterinary college in Glasgow, which has always served Northern Ireland. Our veterinary students nearly all go to Glasgow and it would be a tragedy if those interested in following such a career were prevented from doing so at that particular institution.

Another agricultural matter which is often not mentioned is the increasing amount of their reduced income which farmers, particularly in the south of South Down, for some historical reason, have to spend on keeping up farm roads which should have been taken into the public domain many years ago. I ask the Minister responsible to take account of the fact that so many roads which lead to farms and to clusters of farms and which would appear to be public roads are, in fact, private roads. Keeping them up to standard drains much needed resources from the small farmer.

On health matters, has the Minister noticed the increased incidence of Crohn's disease, particularly in a village near my own town, Drumaness, where there have been 12 cases in the recent past? This intestinal disease is very often related to water supply. Will the Minister take a serious look at this in the immediate future?

Perhaps the Minister has read the *Belfast Telegraph* of yesterday evening and found that Ulster has its own ozone hole and that the incidence of skin cancers, according to Professor Lowry, who was the Minister's own appointee into a previous cancer-related investigation, is 10 times higher than the United Kingdom average? Would he do some further research into that particular project? I do not know whether we have our own special ozone hole or not, but, if there is one and this is the result of it, let us do something about it.

On the general question of hospitals and hospital provision, two factors have worked together to provide a situation which will reduce the quality of the services to which patients are entitled. One is the ongoing struggle of nurses to receive a proper award under the new scheme. Whatever has happened in the past is water under the bridge, but there is great dissatisfaction among the nursing fraternity as to the way the awards have been allocated. If that requires additional money for the health and welfare of the service which also means the health and welfare of the patient, it must be attended to in such a way that there is job satisfaction and tranquility within the wards so as to produce a high standard of service.

Perhaps I may make a parochial plea for the hospital at Downpatrick, which has awaited the outcome of a promise made by a certain Mr. Morgan, the then Minister of Health in the old Stormont regime, over a quarter of a century ago. Will the Minister consider that as a new venture?

The environment causes problems that affect us all, and I have often spoken about pollution, as did my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) earlier. Tonight I want to comment on the absence of an adequate environmental infrastructure in South Down. We have always been outside the new pale that has been created around Belfast lough and in that sense we are still a deprived area. We had the Matthew report in the early 1960s with its key town concept. Downpatrick was one of the key towns, and it is the only key town centre which has never been developed. All the rest were substantially developed by way of infrastructure, for example, good roads and other environmental provision, which in turn enabled and encouraged industrial development to take place.

This is significant when one considers the new harbour, which is capable of much greater use, at Warrenpoint. The reason why it is insufficiently used is the totally inadequate road network which prevents it being readily accessible to its hinterland for export purposes.

Reference to that lack of infrastructure leads me on to say that two things which concern most people are a good house and the prospect of a job. It is that inadequate infrastructure which has been the greatest drawback to industrial development in South Down. It is a situation which can be remedied only by the immediate application of some of our present-day resources, such as were not applied in times of plenty, to that particular area. I cannot accept the argument that only a limited amount of money is available and so other areas must have priority. In the times of plenty the other areas received priority, but we did not. I ask for that situation to be reconsidered.

Please assist in bringing jobs to the people and not people to the jobs. Bringing people to the jobs is the most unsociable activity in which a Government can be engaged. It leads to massive urban conurbations with social, environmental parking, and transport problems. Why not bring jobs to the people and let people stay in the environments to which they are accustomed and in which they are happy?

I hope that the Minister is conscious of the plea I am making to him about the Star Plan development. The new fibre-optic miracle will bring us into the 20th century. Unless Northern Ireland has an adequate fibre-optic link to Europe, the entire north—not just my part of it—will be completely marginalised. Talking in the context of countries, industry will be drawn to the core. We shall be completely marginalised in the north Atlantic unless we have the infrastructure and, especially, the fibre-optic linkage communications. Without that we will be left behind when it comes to the new technology. Even today, industry can be transported on block from as far away as north America into little villages if they have the fibre-optic link. A prime example is the New York Life Assurance company which has transmitted its entire operation to the little village of Castle Island in county Kerry. It was able to create employment in an area which had nothing before, because of the fibre-optic link. I make that plea for my constituency and the whole of Northern Ireland in this respect.

Tourism is the other great job creator in Northern Ireland and of which my constituency should be a prime example. As the Minister will probably agree, Newcastle

has proven statistically to be the biggest tourist centre in Northern Ireland, yet it is only by local effort that that has happened. Where are the packages prepared for marketing by central Government? I envy the packages of Fermanagh and North Antrim. Can we not, for instance, have a package that would sell tourism in South Down, both in Europe and North America? After all, we are St. Patrick's country. His whole heritage is there in brick and mortar and that can be packaged, as well as our natural resources.

**Mr. Seamus Mallon** (Newry and Armagh): St. Patrick died in Downpatrick. He lived and worked in Armagh.

**Mr. McGrady:** I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman is trying to claim some credit for St. Patrick. Those were pseudo St. Patricks. The only genuine one was the one who lived in the Hill of Down, the Dun Phadriig—that is the Gaelic for Downpatrick.

As the hon. Member for North Down said, it is startling that Newcastle—the biggest tourist attraction in the north—is one area criticised in the EEC report for not having adequate sewerage. Could that scheme be speeded up as much as possible?

Education is an area that will be one of the most difficult to deal with financially in the coming year. I shall say one thing to the Minister to hand on to his right hon. Friend responsible for that Department. There is great unease about the inequality of the distribution of finances between the voluntary and the state sectors. There is, too, some unease about the inequality, or the prioritisation, of funds towards integrated schools, while established schools have been waiting many years for capital funds to erect new buildings. The Minister mentioned the art centre in Downpatrick for which I thank him.

Museums and arts are receiving £1·5 million but, if I remember rightly, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland still has no museums policy. It has a policy only for national museums. I ask the Minister to open the purse strings a wee bit wider and to give some—if only token—assistance and encouragement to the many local museums that are doing such a great job.

The primary thrust of my argument is to ask the Minister responsible to ensure an allocation of resources that will increase the environmental infrastructure of those deprived areas, of which South Down is one, and positively to encourage new industries to settle. The Minister boasted of the new inward investment into Northern Ireland. I was glad to hear of that, but that does not make any difference to my constituents, because they have not seen it. It appears that an area which has had high unemployment for decades is left with that high unemployment, whereas other areas which have had virtually full employment, but where there are now fewer jobs, receive special treatment. Why is a package not available for South Down as it is for Carrickfergus and Derry? I ask the Minister to consider the fair distribution of effort and resources in Northern Ireland.

8.45 pm

**Mr. Peter Robinson** (Belfast, East): Because of the great importance of the security situation in Northern Ireland and because of the vital nature of our constitutional position, occasions when we can deal with the bread and butter issues are all too few in the parliamentary process. However, I share the misgivings of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) about the manner in which the proceedings go forward. I would have had a great preference for having these matters dealt with in Northern Ireland in a local assembly, where local people could be taking local decisions, where they could use their own ingenuity and decide their own priorities for expenditure. Nonetheless, at least we have the opportunity to speak. It is the last trust reposed in us and, although we cannot affect the ultimate decision, at least we can give our minds to the Government so that they can, if they should grace us with the privilege, take on board what we have to say.

I shall deal with the funds in the Irish fashion, by starting at the back and moving towards the front. First, I shall deal in a more Irish fashion with a matter under the education budget but deal with it in respect of the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. I am referring to the Lagan college, which has been mentioned by several hon. Gentlemen. I believe that the Government should encourage integrated education. They should not be doing it by the back door, as is the present Government policy. I do not believe that they should be doing it at the expense of other schools. Therefore, I refrain from making too much comment about the £3·3 million being offered to Lagan college. I raise the issue of Lagan college not in relation to the Government's expenditure, but in relation to the behaviour of Lagan college's board of governors towards planning matters.

Lagan college is in the borough of Castlereagh. It is currently situated on two sites—one on Church road and the other at Lisnabreeny. Lagan college has had a deplorable record for erecting buildings without planning permission and without even applying for building control approval. One should have thought that people who have responsibility for young children, that an organisation that is headed by a resident magistrate and a body that should, above all, be showing responsibility would have behaved in a proper manner in relation to planning law.

Even when the problem has been drawn to the college's attention by the planning authorities and by the local council, it has refused to bring its buildings into line, to make the necessary applications for planning and to obey the planning departments directives in that respect. The college should not behave in such a way and I had hoped that the Department of the Environment would have exerted itself more to ensure proper enforcement action was taken so that Lagan college toed the line. I had hoped that the governors who, in another capacity, would be quick to draw to the attention of others their responsibilities in the community would have shown the same responsibility themselves rather than flout the law and trample it underfoot.

It is important to consider the general question of ex-post facto planning applications. In Northern Ireland it seems to be prevalent for the planning authority to be pushed to give permission for dwellings or other structures if the person has successfully had them built before the planning department finds out. It is felt that possession is nine tenths of the law and that, if a person can get his building up, permission will follow.

During the lifetime of the Northern Ireland Assembly—the 1982 to 1986 variety—the environment committee, of which I was chairman, put three planning proposals to the Department of the Environment. It happily accepted

*[Mr. Peter Robinson]*

two, regarding neighbour notification and objector appeals, on a test basis. During the past few weeks, I was glad to note that those proposals have been renewed.

The committee also put forward a proposal about ex-post facto applications. If the DOE is made aware of buildings that have been erected before an application has been submitted, it is essential that there should be a significant cost for subsequently submitting an application for such buildings. At the time of the Assembly, we suggested that the application should be ten times the normal application fee, which would discourage those who embarked upon such building.

Such proposals should not, however, remove from the DOE the responsibility to treat any application as if the building was not there in the first place and to adjudge the application in that light. I believe, however, that the Department gets bullied into giving permission for buildings that it would not otherwise give permission for simply because someone has had the audacity and the cheek to proceed with the building before submitting an application.

It is also important to consider the long-awaited Belfast urban area plan. I fear that serious problems will arise regarding building in the city of Belfast because the planning department has been forced to kick for touch because many of the major developments in and around the city are waiting for the report from the planning commissioners as a result of the hearings that they held about that plan. The delay is not the responsibility nor the fault of the commissioners. Most of us who have some involvement with planning matters in Belfast know that, in some instances, those self-same commissioners have been unable to hand over their other duties to other commissioners, because, I suspect, of the failure to appoint sufficient commissioners to assist with the volume of work.

We recognise that the commissioners have a heavy schedule, but I had thought that they would be willing to provide the Department with the various categories covered by the Belfast urban area plan. For instance, they could have informed the Department at different times about commercial use, recreational and housing use and transportation plans. Such information could have been passed to the Department piecemeal but that would not have required the Department to make its overall statement on a piecemeal basis.

If such information had been available to the Department, it would have been possible for it to digest the various aspects of the Belfast urban area plan report as presented by the commissioners. The Department would therefore need to take much less time when considering its final statement on the report. As it is, a two-month delay is contemplated before the Department can prepare its statement.

I am concerned about the Belfast urban area plan for several reasons. First, I must confess my vested interest as a Castlereagh councillor. We have plans for major recreational provision, but they require comment in the Belfast urban area plan report before we can successfully proceed. Some of my constituents are eager to establish whether certain road proposals, which will bring blight upon certain parts of my constituency, have been turned down by the planning commissioners—even now I hope that that is the case.

My constituents are concerned at the flyover at the Castlereagh roundabout and about much of the road widening scheme on the Albertbridge road and the further provisions in the Sydenham area. Decisions on those proposals are eagerly awaited as they are affecting house prices in the Belfast area. People are unable to get the proper price for their houses because of the blight that is hanging over them.

On top of that, many of my constituents are concerned about various housing proposals, and they want to know how the Department will finally decide on them. Other constituents are eager for such proposals to proceed, so that the houses they need can be built to allow them to live in the Belfast urban area rather than having to move outside that area.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give some idea of the present timetable and when we can expect the Department's decision. Is there any possibility of an internal arrangement between the Department and the commissioners that could speed up the process?

It is perhaps unexpected for a Member representing a Belfast constituency to consider agricultural matters, but if those Members representing rural constituencies will forgive me, I am more concerned about the consumers of agricultural produce. I am anxious about the effects of the salmonella egg scare. I welcome what the Minister said about the Northern Ireland egg being given a clean bill of health. That is not exactly news to many of us, as we were aware of its healthy condition.

Unfortunately, the poultry sellers in my constituency and people whose shops rely entirely on the sale of chickens, eggs and poultry products have found that at least 70 per cent. of their business has gone as a result of the egg scare, in spite of the fact that it does not affect eggs in Northern Ireland. Will the Minister please encourage his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to spend some considerable time, effort and, if necessary, finance on advertising to the Northern Ireland consumer the fact that there is not the danger that there is on this side of the water in purchasing poultry products in Northern Ireland? That would come as a considerable relief to my constituents who rely for their employment on the poultry industry. No doubt it would do no small good to those involved in agriculture as well.

As expected, I now come to the issue of the Department of Economic Development, and I could not have avoided it. As the Minister gallops around my constituency putting "for sale" signs on the main employers, he will recognise that I and my constituents are, to put it colloquially, on tenterhooks about what will happen over the next few weeks. The outcome of the present negotiations with the bidders for Harland and Wolff and Shorts is of no small moment to the people of east Belfast and the city in general. Like the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), I shall not rehearse the importance of those two industries to the Northern Ireland economy. That has been done by all the political parties in Northern Ireland, with perhaps one exception. It has been done by Church groups in Northern Ireland, by many of the community organisations in the Province and by hon. Members of all parties in the House. The Select Committee on Trade and Industry produced a report that stressed the importance of those industries to the Province.

I know that the Minister will be aware of the significance of those two firms to Northern Ireland as a

whole. There are features in common between Harland and Wolff and Shorts, but there are many differences between the two privatisation issues. I do not intend to argue the ideological issues. Unfortunately, it is not a question of privatisation or public ownership. The question that the Government have placed before us is of privatisation or closure—or at least bringing in people to sell off many of the assets. Such a choice would convert one fairly quickly to the cause of privatisation, even if one was not an ardent fan beforehand. Although I am not convinced that privatisation is in the best interests of either of those companies, and certainly not in the best interests of both at this time, we must do our best, even with the doubts we may have, to ensure that the Government's plans succeed.

There are two bidders for Harland and Wolff and I have come to the same conclusion as the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) and the hon. Member for Leicester, South. I have studied the two propositions, as far as they are known publicly, and as far as I can understand them, having spoken to the participants in both. Although the Government will undoubtedly be careful about the financial package that they finally agree, that is not my prime concern. Just as it was for the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, my prime concern is to ensure that the priority is towards achieving a viable and lasting solution to the sale of those industries, rather than achieving the best financial deal. If that meant an extra couple of million pounds or even an extra £10 million or £20 million, it would be money well spent.

I have learnt recently from the Northern Ireland Office that it is nearing the final stages of the negotiations on Harland and Wolff. I was somewhat perplexed to learn that there is some haggling over finance, which is not helpful to the smooth and orderly handover of the company to private ownership. If the Minister goes for the lowest cost, he could put the new owners in a position where they will not have sufficient strength and capital reserves to allow customer confidence and companies from whom they purchase will be dilatory in giving the credit that is needed during the first few years.

It is important that the yard is transferred on a firm and viable financial basis. I urge the Minister to consider as a priority the Secretary of State's terminology to the Select Committee when he said that he was looking for a safe and secure future for Harland and Wolff. Although I recognise that it would be irresponsible of him not to consider such matters, finance should not be his overriding consideration.

I concur with the comments that have been made about the management at Harland and Wolff, and especially about John Parker. In view of the interest that has been expressed by Fred Olsen and his group, one could ask why they were not prepared to go directly to the Government to express an interest in purchasing the company. Anybody who knows the nuances of the situation would know that the Olsen group is putting in significantly more capital than it is getting in shares. Therefore, it could have come to terms with the Government easily if it had gone to them directly. The answer to that question shows neither respect nor distrust of the Government; it is rather a sign of confidence in the chairman, the management and the men of Harland and Wolff.

When Fred Olsen learned that the management and men had sufficient confidence in the future of Harland and Wolff that they were prepared to put their own money into the company, that gave him the enthusiasm to back those people in that task. The confidence that has been expressed by someone of the standing of Fred Olsen in the shipbuilding and ship-owning world shows the high level of expertise at Harland and Wolff at present. That is just one of the reasons why I favour the management-employee buy-out.

Although this is not often mentioned—perhaps it should be mentioned much more frequently in Government circles and even by the Minister himself—Harland and Wolff has a responsible trade union group, which has acted with the utmost responsibility throughout the discussions on privatisation. It would have been easy for those who have great ideological problems with the issue of privatisation to be unco-operative throughout that period. However, as pragmatic trade unionists, those people have recognised the essentials for a viable future for shipbuilding in Belfast and have made them their priorities as they sought that future.

At the recent meeting between the Northern Ireland party leaders and the Prime Minister, those present were encouraged by the Prime Minister's grasp of the position at Harland and Wolff, by her enthusiasm for transferring Harland and Wolff to the private sector and by her belief that it would work in the private sector. The Prime Minister suggested that an essential ingredient would be a good working relationship between men and management and between men, management and the new owner, whoever that may be.

In the last few days, I have been encouraged to receive a copy of a communication from the Harland and Wolff trade unions to the Prime Minister, stating not only that they had reached agreements in the past with the management that were far in advance of anything agreed in the United Kingdom on flexibility or working practices, but that they were still flexible and co-operative in that respect and that they would be willing and delighted to work in co-operation with any new owner.

The trade unions should be encouraged—rather than, as is often the case with Tory Ministers, discouraged—because they have acted in a responsible way over the privatisation issue at Harland and Wolff.

The unions at Shorts have been much criticised publicly in recent days because of their concern over a pay issue and because they have said publicly that there could be industrial action over it. Industrial relations is not a matter simply of unions having disagreements; they have disagreements with managements. Just as the problem affects unions and managements, its resolution is a matter for both. A responsible attitude on the part of both at Shorts can and must avert industrial action at this time. Such action would be an act of folly. Unions and management must reach agreement in the coming few weeks, when the industry will be the showcase to those with an interest in purchasing.

In this case we have bids from Bombardier and from GEC-Fokker. Like the hon. Member for Leicester, South, I fear that the JFX project may become the victim of the privatisation issue. Not only does Bombardier have a rival project, but I understand that Fokker also has a similar development in progress. I was encouraged when speaking recently to an industrial editor from Amsterdam to learn that the local talk in his country is that, if Fokker is successful, it will not continue with the JFX project, but will bring its alternative project to Belfast and pursue it there.

*[Mr. Peter Robinson]*

Will the Minister say whether the JFX project will be killed off by privatisation? If so, does he expect that an alternative project will be available for the aircraft building side of Shorts? Is he aware that it is essential that all three divisions of Shorts should remain intact in Belfast?

**Mr. McNamara:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we want more than the building of the aircraft to take place? The question of design is vital to this issue. Unless we have a secure design base, the future will look grim.

**Mr. Robinson:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. If the design capability was lost—if it was supplied from elsewhere in Europe—the research and development side would be in jeopardy and ultimately the manufacture and production side would be in danger.

In the documentation on Shorts provided by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, the Minister responded to a number of questions put by the trade unions and said that 27 firms had expressed an interest in Shorts. It has been announced that two firms have been asked to submit a final bid. How were the numbers whittled down? Is there any prospect of other firms expressing an interest and, if they do, is there still sufficient time for them to act in the matter?

The Minister will appreciate that my constituents are greatly concerned about the two industries of which I have spoken, remembering that about 10,000 people in east Belfast and the surrounding areas are affected. While I recognise that the sensitive nature of the negotiations limits the amount of information that the Minister can give, it would be helpful to my constituents if he would say what progress has been made.

9.14 pm

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): I support the plea of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) about Harland and Wolff and Shorts. The Minister referred to the buoyancy of the economy. If those firms went down, not only people in Belfast and throughout Northern Ireland, but people in many areas in Scotland, England and Wales would suffer because of the knock-on effect. Both firms play an important part in the economy of Great Britian as well as of Northern Ireland. When the Minister referred to the buoyancy of the economy, was he contradicting the views of PA Management Consultants which has pointed out that, while there has been an improvement, the prospect of loss of jobs in manufacturing and even service industries is a threat to the future?

Under vote 2 for the Department of Education I welcome the expenditure on arts and museums but I regret that there is no mention of anything for the Ulster orchestra; is that to come out of the funds for the arts? We recognise the important part which the orchestra has played in Northern Ireland affairs over the years, but now it is in financial difficulties.

I question the provision for pensions under vote 3 of the Department of Education. No doubt the point affects not just Northern Ireland, but I raise it because women teachers in Northern Ireland have been in touch with me. Apparently widowers' pensions have been introduced with effect from 6 April 1988. Married women will have the opportunity of purchasing service prior to April 1988. I understand from the information I have that the Government insist that women buy back the years in question—1972 to 1988—if they are to be counted towards widowers' pensions. Male teachers can already count those years for widows' pensions. I am told that since 1972 women have paid the same contribution as men. Why, therefore, should those years not be credited to women, free of further charge?

On health, matters affecting Belfast also affect the Province as a whole because the services are regional. I regret that under vote 1 of the Department of Health and Social Services there is nothing for the capital development required at the Royal Belfast hospital for sick children. The Minister responsible will know that I have been pressing the Department on the matter. Discussion has been going on since 1964—for 25 years. In 1983 the then Minister announced a capital project of £4·4 million, about half of which has been spent. I understand from my contacts with the Department and with the Eastern health and social services board that discussions are still going on about what might be done, yet the announcement in 1983 involved an immediate injection of capital to deal with pressing requirements, pending the development of a new hospital. When will the current discussions end and the capital injection be made? In addition to the fears of the past, there are now fears for the future with the possibility that the Royal Victoria hospital, perhaps in conjunction with the City hospital, may become a hospital voluntary trust and may have difficulty in acquiring the capital required for work in the children's sector which supplies regional cardiac and paediatric services for Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said that far more money per capita is spent on health provision in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. That is because the population is smaller and scattered over the Province and that automatically adds to capital cost. I suggest that the injection of capital from public sources to different parts of the country does not go to deprived areas, but far more is being spent per capita in the south-east. We would love that capital injection for job promotion, research and defence contracts. It would be a tremendous help in lifting the Province out of poverty.

The Royal Victoria hospital has been trying to develop capital for its ophthalmic services, which are a basic regional speciality. Those who work in the ophthalmic unit at the Royal Victoria hospital have saved large sums of money over the years and have provided an excellent service to the region. But that service is now being impeded and the damage to the standard of training in that specialty may be irreparable if the hospital does not have the theatre service and other provisions it requires. I understand that although there has been a clear indictment of the cardiac surgery provisions, which is also a regional specialty, the hospital is hoping for some provision in August this year. Will the Minister give us an assurance or guarantee that that will happen?

I appreciate that we are dealing with the departmental budget and not the Northern Ireland Office budget which covers security, but I must raise the problem of security at the Royal Victoria hospital. The Minister may say that there is no security problem at the hospital and that that is ill-founded rumour. I understand that more than a year ago equipment was provided to assist in the security at the hospital, but there has been some dispute with the unions about the deployment of manpower and the equipment is

not in use. Since it is not a normal security problem that affects any large institution in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom, should it be funded from the hospital budget—the DHSS vote 1—or should specific security problems at the Royal Victoria hospital be dealt with by the security budget? The board considers that it would be far too much for the hospital to provide, given the finance required to care for patients.

Only a week ago a person visiting the hospital discovered that his car was missing from the car park. Eventually, he received a telephone call to an ex-directory number from someone claiming to represent an insurance company, saying that the car was in Andersontown. The police do not know who telephoned. They do not know anything about it, but that is where the car was found. However, there are supposed to be security officials there and it is important that we examine whether they have the authority to stop and search vehicles entering and leaving the hospital.

My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) dealt with the problems for hospitals and the matter of accident and emergency provision which will affect the whole city. Is it not the case that there is no emergency disaster plan in the Northern board area? Is the board relying ultimately on the Eastern board to provide that plan?

The Western board deals with the provision of mental health services in County Fermanagh. There must be provision for patients in the community before they are decanted from the hospitals. The present procedure for obtaining approval and funding for housing association schemes is extremely time consuming and that makes it difficult to plan the services in a concerted way. Would it be possible for the entire mechanism for approval of proposals to be speeded up?

I understand that the problem with regard to the provision of bridging funds in Fermanagh relates to the very low level of existing provision in terms of mental health services. The county is virtually destitute in terms of that provision and that is the result of the previous board's low-funded base line. Those of us who understood what was happening under the resource allocation working party will recall that the Western board carried through a strict budgetary requirement and every year it lost more money from the budget. As a result, the board is in difficulties. I plead that the board should receive an adequate share of the bridging funds being made available by the Department of Health and Social Services to enable it to provide the appropriate infrastructure in the community before transferring people from the hospitals.

People leaving hospital also face financial problems. It would appear that the main problem is that, because the majority of ex-patients are receiving invalidity benefit of a certain level, they are not eligible for income support and are not therefore eligible for a community care grant. In those circumstances, the board has to consider providing the funds for the initial essential furnishing and bedding requirements of those clients.

It is understood that there may be a resettlement allowance which will be payable weekly to long-term patients returning to the community. The object of that, however, may be to help patients pay off loans for furnishing. It is the considered opinion of the professional social workers dealing with those clients that that is wrong. They are totally opposed to the idea of their clients being put out of mental hospitals into the community and starting their lives in debt. They do not believe that that is the answer to the problem of funding their clients' initial requirements. It might be better if the resettlement allowances could be paid as a lump sum to the clients. Another alternative might be for the resettlement allowance to be paid to the board on behalf of the client to offset payments which the board has to make for furnishing.

Is the Minister aware of the pressures now developing with the Government's move to the provision of private nursing and residential accommodation? The costs are rising, ceilings are being set and as a result residents in those homes are being pressed to obtain extra provision. They depend on charities to provide extra funding. Is the Minister also aware that, much more deplorably, patients' private pocket money, the £8 allowance which they should use for their own purposes, is being taken by the owners of those nursing homes to top up the residential costs? It is deplorable that the Government should have a policy of putting people into private and residential homes and then cut the money to support them.

9.29 pm

**Mr. Michael Colvin** (Romsey and Waterside): I hope that I shall be forgiven for intruding in a debate that seems to be exclusively for hon. Members from Northern Ireland, but that is an important part of the United Kingdom. I represent an English constituency and, as chairman of the Conservative parliamentary aviation committee, having recently visited Short Brothers plc, I feel that I can make some contribution to this important debate.

I was most interested to hear what was said by a number of hon. Members today about the future of this very important company, Short Brothers plc, which is the largest manufacturing employer in Northern Ireland and one of the most important aerospace companies in the world. I was pleased that hon. Members gave credit to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and to the report that it produced following the Government's statement that the company was to be privatised.

The report highlighted the problem of the company's size. Following the mergers, aerospace companies today are of an enormous size and capability. Two examples in Europe are Aerospatiale and British Aerospace, both of which have turnovers in excess of £3,000 million per annum. Short Brothers plc is at the bottom of the European league table with Casa of Spain, both having turnovers which hardly reach £200 million a year.

That is not to say that, within its three divisions, Short Brothers does not produce work of extremely high quality. In fact, the essence of Short Brothers is the quality of its products. In particular, the SD3 series is a winning one with types flown all over the world. Short Brothers also hope to launch the FJX, which is another aircraft of great potential. It faces competition but British Airways is already committed to buying 20, which is a good sign and gives the aircraft the stamp of approval which it needs. Hon. Members raised the matter of launch aid for the FJX project. Although the project will cost £500 million, Short Brothers' share of that is only £120 million. Therefore, since launch aid amounts to only 50 per cent. of that figure, only £50 million to £60 million of taxpayers' money will be used. That puts the amount into perspective.

*[Mr. Michael Colvin]*

Shorts Brothers plc faces not only a debt problem but a productivity problem. When the Select Committee visited Queens Island, Short Brothers' management went out of its way to stress the importance of additional capital investment and quoted as examples figures of companies such as Northrop, which has a fixed asset to employee ratio of almost £19,000, and of Boeing, which has a ratio of fixed assets to employees of £11,000. Short Brothers comes at the bottom of the scale, with a fixed asset to employee ratio of £3,300. That could be for one of two reasons—either because the company has not put the money which it has received from the Government into capital investment but has been using it to pay off its revenue debts or because the company's productivity is not high due to overmanning and restrictive practices within the work force.

It is significant that, although the company's turnover has not increased much over the years, during the past 14 years, the work force has risen from 5,800 to 7,600. Other aerospace companies have reduced the size of their work force as their productivity has risen with the introduction of much more modern methods of production. When we toured the plant we were struck by the fact that some of the machine tools and equipment being used by highly skilled engineering employees should have been in a museum.

The company must tackle productivity. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave evidence to the Select Committee he stressed that he was going to seek three assurances from companies that might bid to take over Shorts. One was that the company's manufacturing base should stay in Northern Ireland; another was that the company's headquarters and research and development facilities, which must be retained, ought to stay in Northern Ireland. The third was that there should be some assurances about the level of future employment— there is the rub. No Government can guarantee to go on employing people in the quantities that Shorts does. I hope that its order book will expand; it stands at £1,000 million now, which is good, and I should like it to be bigger.

If the order book expands, the labour force may be able to stay the same size. However, if the company is to have the capital injection that it needs to improve productivity, there must be some rationalisation of the work force, which must be told honestly that that will happen.

Rationalisation has already occurred in other acts of privatisation, of which British Airways was a good example. The Government restructured the balance sheet and the work force eventually shrank by a third. The company was then successfully privatised, and Shorts must learn that lesson. The company has already proved that it can do this, because the Shorlac company, which is building the highly successful Tucano, has already increased productivity by working a cell system, cutting out demarcation and reducing sectarianism in the work force. In Shorlac, not only is the work force much younger —about 30 on average—but there is a higher percentage of Roman Catholics in that part of the work force than in any other.

This is my message to the company management and workers. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about manning levels and capital investment in Short Brothers.

I now want to mention a wholly different industry—the licensed trade—for which I know the Minister is responsible, and about which I have an interest to declare. The pubs of Northern Ireland are a great asset to good community relations. They are non-sectarian. Hon. Members have already referred to the importance of tourism. Grants from my hon. Friend's Department are available to build hotel rooms there, but not to enable publicans to add rooms to their pubs, which are far nicer places to stay in. I know that my hon. Friend is reviewing that problem as part of his general review of tourism. Has he come to a decision on giving such grant aid to assist public houses to provide accommodation?

9.38 pm

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): I often seem to be called near the end in Northern Ireland debates. I once had to make a three-minute speech on the subject, and this time will be much the same.

I want to mention one specific point and then provide a trailer of what I might be able to discuss some other time. The Minister mentioned expenditure on flood damage in Strabane. On 5 November 1987 I raised on the Adjournment the subject of an underground fire in my constituency. The Bellwin scheme came into that. Money had been spent on gale damage in the south of England, so I mentioned the flood damage in Strabane and asked whether the Bellwin scheme would apply, which allows, after a penny rate has been spent in the counties, or a 0·15p rate spent in the districts, 75 per cent. grant aid for the rest of the expenditure involved.

Has such an arrangement been allowed for the flood damage in Strabane, or has some other provision been made? That affects not only my constituents but the parts of Scotland in which there has been gale damage and which have not yet received the provision that the south of England did.

I turn to the trailer for my remarks on a future occasion. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) commented that there are few opportunities to discuss the politics of Northern Ireland—the kind of matters that are covered by the appropriation, concerning the conditions of ordinary working-class people. This debate has allowed the House to do so, and that is why I have been pleased to participate in it. Had I the time available, I would have developed some of the themes that have been introduced. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who often comments on matters relating to police involvement, might instead be able to provide some democratic answers to the problems of Northern Ireland.

I would have addressed myself also to some of the democratic and social aspects. I would have spoken of democracy in the sense of making a claim for devolved Government, but having a bill of rights, and of Socialism in terms of collectivist expenditure, public investment and public ownership as a means of meeting the problems of the Province. Where the greatest areas of deprivation and the greatest problems are to be found, Socialist solutions begin to be appropriate.

It would be useful if the Government began experimenting in Northern Ireland, applying not the policies used for the rest of the United Kingdom but others. Startling solutions might come from that. Northern Ireland could take the lead, because it has a

Protestant and Catholic working class that suffers from high levels of unemployment, low pay, National Health Service problems, housing problems, and other exacerbated difficulties of the kind found in the rest of the United Kingdom—and to which Socialist answers of the kind I wanted to talk about might be entirely appropriate.

As one enters the Chamber, one sees the statues of two Prime Ministers—Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. They were the leaders of what A.J.P. Taylor described as war Socialism. During the war, Socialism was used to build military defence, to handle social problems, and to unite the nation. When a statue of the present Prime Minister is erected, it will be interesting if she adopted a new policy for Northern Ireland. She may then be remembered for her Socialist achievements in Northern Ireland while helping to destroy the rest of the United Kingdom.

9.42 pm

**Mr. Seamus Mallon** (Newry and Armagh): It will be difficult to say in four minutes all that I intended to say. It is difficult for an hon. Member such as myself from the North of Ireland, who has been in the Chamber since 3 o'clock, to make the points that he wants to make. Like the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), I shall simply put down a marker and a trailer.

One thought that struck me forcibly during the debate was that, rightly, considerable time has been spent on the problems of Shorts. However, approximately five times the number of people employed by that company are employed in the agriculture industry in the North of Ireland. Since entering the House, I have never had an opportunity of addressing the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food across the Floor of the House. I address my first request to the Prime Minister and to the Whips Office—that our biggest single industry be recognised by the appointment of a Minister to deal with the North of Ireland's agriculture as the important industry that it is. To me, there seems to be a cheapening and devaluing of our most important single industry. The North of Ireland has two natural resources. One is grass and the other is people, yet agriculture seems to be excluded from the body politic and from the thoughts of the House.

My second request is for a look at the development of bovine tuberculosis in the North of Ireland, especially in the border regions. I make no political point whatever about this because the matter is purely agricultural. The problem is developing because, in border areas, there are many movements of security personnel, fences are cut and, for various obvious safety reasons, gates are not used. I should like to make three suggestions and I must do it in shorthand. I suggest the setting up in the border regions of a full-time veterinary centre that will be able to act immediately. When there are fatalities, damage to stock as a result of low-flying helicopters or abortions in cattle or sheep, inspections can be carried out immediately so that claims can be processed.

Two months ago I had an interesting meeting to which the Secretary of State for Defence saw fit to send representatives to discuss these problems. Believe it or not, the Department of Agriculture in the North of Ireland did not see fit to send a representative to see me and the farmers and to hear about the problems.

In addition to the veterinary inspection centre, I should like to see set up a veterinary inspection team which would be available to make an assessment immediately and not 24 hours or a week after something happens. That would enable a report to be made and people would not be at a financial loss.

In relation to bovine TB, I should like to see the setting up of a Government agriculture insurance scheme that will give 100 per cent. compensation for TB reactors. At present, if a farmer declares a reactor, he is offered 75 per cent. compensation. That is very damaging to the industry and will cause long-term damage. If farmers were offered 100 per cent. compensation, it might enable us to get rid of the disease as well as the beast that is infected. At present it is being recycled.

The whole herd of 43 cattle belonging to one of my constituents was shut down because of bovine tuberculosis. He gets 75 per cent. of the market price of the cattle and that invariably involves a loss because his profit would have come long after the period when he held the cattle. He also loses the headage payments. He potentially loses his milk quota and must then rebuild his herd on 75 per cent. compensation. He cannot get income support and inevitably he will go out of business. That problem is occurring time and again throughout the North of Ireland. Agriculture is our main industry and employs four to five times as many people as the other industries that we have rightly been debating. The problems of agriculture are going by the board.

The Minister who is responsible for the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland might well take the view that I sit up at night thinking up unique and quaint circumstances and instances for him to deal with. However, there is one problem that can be dealt with only at ministerial level. In the area of South Armagh surrounded by the Camlough mountains all primary legislation about drainage was handed over to the mill owners in the village of Bessbrook. Departments were absolved from any responsibility. Those mill owners have gone out of business, and the anomaly as we approach 1992 is that no Government Department is responsible for arterial drainage in that area. The result is that the Department of the Environment is spending about £12,000 per year on remedial road works deriving from the fact that the Department of Agriculture is not responsible for drainage in that area. It is unique; it is quaint; it could happen only to the present Minister—and he will appreciate the import of that remark, as I have referred certain other types of problems to him. To his credit, he has dealt with them, but this is one that must be grappled with quickly.

I am very concerned about my final point, although I do not have time to expand on my concern. I am delighted that I was present for the presentation of the ten-minute Bill dealing with problems in relation to residential and nursing homes. There is increasing reason for concern about the way in which the entrepreneurial bent is being used in the care of old people in residential homes. I do not have time to take the matter any further, but it is one of immediate concern to all of us. The people that we must treasure most are those who cannot help themselves. We owe it to those who, like all of us, are getting older to make sure that any homes that are set up are run in such a way as to ensure the maximum protection for their residents.

9.51 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers):** I have sat through many debates without getting an opportunity to speak, so I am sure we all feel a great sense of satisfaction that everyone who sat through this one had that opportunity —albeit, at the end, briefly. My only regret—and it is a very serious and sincere one—is that I will not be able to reply to all the points that were made, some of them very serious and very important. I counted more than 30 points that require some response from the Dispatch Box, but I simply will not be able to reply to all of them, and for that I apologise to the House.

In 1988-89 the public expenditure total for Northern Ireland is £5·2 billion, excluding the special addition of £390 million for Shorts. This very substantial allocation enables us to mount spending programmes which reflect Northern Ireland's higher needs, in terms of unemployment, health, housing and other issues. In response to those needs, spending per capita in Northern Ireland is substantially higher—about 40 per cent.—than the United Kingdom average. This is, of course, the considered result of Government policy, which, rightly, provides more resources to Northern Ireland and to other relatively disadvantaged areas than to the more prosperous regions of the United Kingdom. This clearly gives the lie to those in Northern Ireland who misguidedly talk about economic withdrawal. The facts speak for themselves: the opposite is the case, and the Government are providing, and will continue to provide, the resources necessary to assist the Province to strengthen its economy through self-sustaining growth.

The House will forgive me if I pick up one point of substance for which I have special responsibility—the job-promotion duties of the Industrial Development Board. In 1987-88 the IDB achieved its highest-ever level of promotions, with 5,300 new jobs. The board set itself an even more challenging target of 5,500 job promotions for 1988-89, and I am hopeful, indeed confident, that this target will be achieved, or even exceeded. The IDB has had a high level of success recently, particularly in winning prestigious international projects—Daewoo from South Korea, Montupet from France, Science Typographers from the United States, and Huco from Germany. These successes underline the IDB's ability and determination to pursue and win major new investment.

I should add that the IDB is tasked to promote industrial development throughout Northern Ireland, and I can assure the House that the board goes to great lengths to ensure that prospective investors are made aware of what all parts of the Province have to offer. The IDB is currently assisting companies across the whole of Northern Ireland. These include: in Magherafelt, County Londonderry, Peter England—100 jobs; in Dungannon, County Tyrone, Powerscreen Manufacturing—45 jobs; in Craigavon, County Armagh, Interfacing Flow Systems —87 jobs; in Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh, Adria—142 jobs; and in County Down, at Killyleagh, Atlantic Tanners Ltd.—121 new jobs.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) is prominent in putting forward the case that the Industrial Development Board is not fair in promoting jobs throughout Northern Ireland. In all sincerity, I say to him that, to my certain knowledge, he is wrong. I have written to the hon. Gentleman on this matter.

**Mr. McGrady** *rose*——

**Mr. Viggers:** If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not give way. I have a total of nine minutes to deal with 30 points.

Montupet—the French company—gave most careful thought to the possibility of establishing its tool room in Downpatrick. I have discussed that issue with the chairman of the company. The IDB has been successful in winning jobs for the whole of Northern Ireland.

I give one figure, which has not been published recently. In 1987-88 the Industrial Development Board was successful in winning about 5 per cent. of all jobs won into the United Kingdom by way of inward investment, bearing in mind that the population of Northern Ireland represents about 2·5 per cent. of that of the United Kingdom. In the current year, we have achieved a remarkable 11·6 per cent. of inward investment jobs into the United Kingdom. That is a proud record.

I will seek to deal with some of the large number of points that have been raised. The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) raised several important points concerning social security benefits. Last year's reforms were aimed at better targeting expenditure towards areas of greatest need, and benefit levels are on a parity basis with the rest of the United Kingdom. On family credit, the hon. Gentleman should know that the rates of benefit are more generous than under previous arrangements, but the Department of Health and Social Services is concerned about the level of take-up and is taking steps to improve it.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that expenditure on community care was being cut across the Province. There has certainly been an attempt to target expenditure where it is most needed so that people can remain in the community, preferably in their own homes, with the necessary support, rather than prematurely going into long-stay accommodation or blocking beds in acute hospitals. The policy of improving throughput in acute hospitals is intended also to release resources which can be redeployed to community services. I am sure that hon. Members would support such efforts.

The hon. Gentleman specifically asked about the latest pupil-teacher ratio. The most up-to-date overall pupil-teacher ratio for Northern Ireland is 18 : 3·1, which is marginally below the figure that was quoted by the hon. Gentleman, although very near to it.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) asked about the evening closure of the Mater hospital accident and emergency department. A recent complementary study of the Royal group of hospitals, the Belfast City hospital and the Mater hospital resulted in several recommendations, one of which was that the Mater accident and emergency department should close in the evenings, the time of closure to be decided locally.

So many hon. Members raised questions concerning Shorts and Harland and Wolff that it would be appropriate for me to devote the 180 remaining seconds of my speech to that subject.

**Mr. Mallon:** Why is the Minister making no reference to the largest industry in Northern Ireland—agriculture?

**Mr. Viggers:** As the hon. Gentleman took nine minutes to speak, having undertaken to take five, I might have had

more time to reply to his questions. *[Interruption.]* I would not have raised that ungracious point with the hon. Gentleman if he had not chosen to criticise me.

In the case of Harland and Wolff, the House will be aware that the Government are anxious to achieve an early and successful privatisation of the company. That approach has been endorsed by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. We have been working to find a privatisation structure which is right for the company and which will obtain the approval of the European Commission. We continue to study in detail the proposals put to us. Although there is no certain outcome to the discussions, there are encouraging signs of positive progress. The attitude of the management and the work force will be critical in that process. I welcome the approach and the comments of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) in this matter. He quoted the words and the attitude of the Prime Minister when she made that point. It is in everyone's interest that the company attains the higher levels of performance required in today's extremely competitive shipbuilding market. This is vital if we are to achieve a successful privatisation and a more secure future for the company in the longer term.

Turning to Shorts, as has already been indicated, our intention is to restructure Shorts' balance sheet. I announced 10 days ago the initial restructuring, involving £390 million of convertible stock. I can tell the hon. Member for Belfast, East that the list of approximately 30 companies which had expressed an interest in Shorts was reduced to a dozen to whom we sent the information memorandum and, based on the responses to the memorandum, we have now, with the advice of Kleinwort Benson, our professional advisers, identified two company interests, which may be joined by a third, with whom we are holding detailed discussions.

We believe that to be the best basis and way ahead for the company, and we are moving anxiously to seek privatisation on that basis.

*It being Ten o'clock,* MR. SPEAKER *put the Question on the motion, pursuant to Order [3 March].*

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 28th February, be approved.

## Commercial Vehicles

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I point out to the House that in respect of this document, 4311/89, on the derogation of weights of heavy commercial vehicles, the Select Committee on European Legislation received from the Minister a memorandum. Having considered it at a meeting some weeks ago, the Committee requested further information from the Minister which he sent to us in a memorandum dated 6 March. This the Committee received today at its meeting and it made a further report to the House, dated today, our 14th report, which is now available in the Vote Office.

I regret, Mr. Speaker, that no earlier notice was given of this, but because of the timescale, it was not possible to do so. Hon. Members, therefore, who took their papers from the Vote Office prior to 6 pm today may not have the full set of documents.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of saying this to the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** The whole House is obliged to the hon. Member for what he has said.

10.2 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon):** I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4311/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 6th March 1989 on the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles; notes the development of the circumstances which justified the derogations accorded to the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland from certain provisions of Directive 85/3; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that a premature end date to the derogations is not imposed on the United Kingdom.

I turn at once to what the hon. Member has just said in his point of order in which he rightly drew the attention of the House to the report of his Committee, which I have had an opportunity to read and which the whole House should read. I hope that it will become clear in the course of my remarks that all the points that he makes and all these matters the House will, I am sure, wish to reconsider on a future occasion as the situation unfolds.

Perhaps I ought to apologise to the House for the fact that this debate has been arranged at short notice, but I think that most of the House, including hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, will wish to have had this debate before the Transport Council meets next week. I wish to be in the position when I go to it of being able to give the views of the House of Commons.

**Mr. John Prescott** (Kingston upon Hull, East): We are right behind the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Channon:** That rather worries me. I only hope that there is not a knife in the hon. Gentleman's hand if he is standing right behind me. But that is a most unworthy suspicion.

The point that I want to make seriously to the House is that this matter is urgent at the moment and will continue to be an important subject to which the House will want to turn its attention. Tonight we shall examine the proposals in document No. 4311 before they are discussed in Brussels. The document is a report on the suitability of the bridge infrastructure in the United Kingdom for use by

*[Mr. Channon]*

five and six-axled lorries weighing 40 tonnes with a drive axle loading of 11·5 tonnes, as is general throughout the European Community except in Ireland.

The House will be aware that in 1984 we obtained derogations from those limits for five and six-axled vehicles because certain parts of the road network in both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland were not strong enough, and it was recognised in a Council directive that the requirement for substantial improvements of the relevant portions of our road network, especially bridges, would take some time to complete.

The next meeting of the Transport Council in Brussels takes place on Budget day—Champion Hurdle day, perhaps I should call it—and the draft directive which accompanies the report in document No. 4311/89 is not formally on the agenda of that meeting. But it is relevant for there is a proposal on that agenda which concerns two, three and four-axled vehicles. That proposal was the subject of debate in the House on 16 June 1988, when the Government sought the House's endorsement for the objective of keeping to current axle spacings and limiting the axle weight to 10·5 tonnes to safeguard our bridges. Retaining the limit on axle loading, as distinct from the proposed small increases in gross vehicle weight below the 40 tonne level—which is also part of the proposal—has remained the Government's main objective in what have been difficult and lengthly negotiations. I must warn the House that that directive is subject to majority voting since the Single European Act has come into effect.

I shall argue strongly in Brussels that the derogation on axle loading throughout the range of two, three and four-axled vehicles should be the same derogation as that of five and six-axled vehicles. It may be that other member states, which already have the heavier weights, will argue that any new derogation should be time limited—perhaps at 1996 as, indeed, the Commission's report suggests for the five and six-axled vehicles. However, it would be wrong for the new derogation on the smaller vehicles to be prematurely time-limited.

On our existing derogation that applies to five and six-axled vehicles, the directive in 1985 provided that it would be the subject of a Commission report on Britain's infrastructure, which is what is relevant tonight.

The Commission's report and the accompanying draft directive say that our derogation should end at the end of 1996. At one stage it had the ridiculous idea of ending our derogation in 1992. Therefore, even 1996 is an improvement. I do not agree, however, that that is good enough. For the sake of completeness, I should make clear that the draft directive with the report would also allow in one special circumstance for vehicles carrying the 40 ft., International Standardisation Organisation containers to be loaded at 44 tonnes, where that is part of a combined transport operation involving rail carriage and only end distribution by road. That is an exception and one that is not an issue in the normal limit of 40 tonnes and our derogations to 38 tonnes.

In February 1987, the Commission drew three conclusions. First, it said that design standards for bridges in the United Kingdom were similar to those in other member states; secondly, that older United Kingdom bridges were equivalent to bridges in other EC member states which did carry 40-tonne vehicles; and, thirdly, as only a small proportion of older United Kingdom bridges had been assessed, a strategic plan of assessment and possible strengthening should be drawn up to enable the Commission to make a proposal.

In November of that year my Department published the bridge census and sample survey report that looked at bridges on local roads. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic announced on 24 November 1987 a 15-year programme for the rehabilitation of bridges on trunk roads. That programme includes general bridge maintenance as well as strengthening for the requirements of modern heavy lorries. The first 10 years or so of that programme will include the assessment and strengthening of the older bridges—notably the pre-1922 bridges—to make them capable of carrying up to 38 tonnes gross laden weight, and, incidentally, 40 tonnes should that prove necessary.

The important point that the House and the Commission should understand—because I do not believe the latter does—is that 15 per cent. of bridges in the United Kingdom are pre-1922, compared with, perhaps, only some 3 per cent. in Germany.

**Mr. Prescott:** Why is that?

**Mr. Channon:** Because the bridges are older, it means that they need more work done on them. They were not built to the standards that we require today.

**Mr. Prescott:** It was really the RAF.

**Mr. Channon:** I thought that the hon. Gentleman might say that. I nearly said it myself, but I shall need the support of the German delegation next week. I hope, therefore, that *Hansard* will attribute the remark to the hon. Gentleman rather than to me.

**Mr. Peter Snape** (West Bromwich, East): It will be reported as an interruption.

**Mr. Channon:** Yes, an interruption.

The latter part of our bridge programme will concentrate on the more modern bridges, which are already designed to carry the heavier weights, but which will still need major capital maintenance. Later this month I am expecting a further report from bridge consultants on the state of the concrete bridges in the country. I have no reason to assume that that report will be optimistic.

What the various sample surveys show is that, in Great Britain, there are some 11,400 bridges on trunk roads and of those 2,600 need detailed technical assessment to see whether they can cope with heavier vehicle weights. On a sampling technique we estimate that about 1,200 will need to be strengthened. The Commission says that 230 will need strengthening, so there is a considerable difference of opinion. On the basis of the figures—they are only estimates—our trunk road bridge strengthening programme is planned for completion by 1998.

The sample survey of local bridges, including those owned by statutory undertakers and other bodies, produced the estimate that of some 50,000 local bridges, about 11,250 are expected to be below standard. Local authorities have been making their own plans for tackling those, and a few may have already embarked on work programmes. But it is not likely that the necessary strengthening work will be more than partially completed by the end of 1996.

The costs are considerable. For trunk roads they will amount to about £70 million, including about £9 million in the current year. We shall have to make a final estimate when the assessment is completed. For local roads the figure is enormous—some £600 million. An extra £27 million has been included in the public expenditure provision for 1989-90 to take account of the known position. I should make it clear to the House that these are not extra costs for the 40 tonnes-11·5 tonne axled lorries. The vast bulk of the expenditure is required in any event to make our bridges suitable for the modern heavier weights that they already carry.

The Commission report notes that the higher weights proposed may lead to faster deterioration of our roads and bridges. It cites data from earlier reports on the effects of increasing the maximum permitted weight from 32·5 tonnes to 38 tonnes. It notes that the Armitage report concluded that 38-tonne vehicles with five axles were less damaging than 32·5 tonne-four-axled vehicles. At the time of the Armitage report in 1980 it was generally accepted that heavier vehicles with more axles were generally less damaging to the road infrastructure. The Armitage recommendations were, of course, based on the premise that the drive axle weight of vehicles should be a maximum of 10·5 tonnes.

I agree with the Commission that the United Kingdom's bridges will not be suitable to carry the heavier-weight vehicles with the heavier drive-axle weights until there has been a major programme of bridge assessment and strengthening. Where I disagree—I believe that the House will share my disagreement—is about the scale of the problem. There are some 1,200 bridges on the non-motorway trunk roads that need strengthening, but the Commission says that there are 230 such bridges. On local roads, we estimate that there are about 11,250 bridges below standard, but the Commission estimates that there are about 4,000. The reason why there is such a difference of opinion between us is that the Commission has excluded bridges that have a capacity of 7·5 tonnes as it does not believe that those bridges will carry heavy loads. That is not true. Under the code the category includes all bridges that fall short of the next highest category of 16·5 tonnes. It is unrealistic, therefore, to imagine that the smaller bridges in this country will not be required to carry heavier loads if that was the requirement throughout the country.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): My right hon. Friend will notice that in paragraph 2(1) of the Commission's report the comparison that is made between the United Kingdom and other member states is confined to four other member states only. Seven member states are missing from its calculations. I have the greatest sympathy with the views that have been expressed by my right hon. Friend and I have grave reservations about the views of the Commission. Why is it that it has chosen only four other member states with which to make a comparison when there are seven others with which comparison could be made?

**Mr. Channon:** My hon. Friend raises an extremely valid point. I shall seek to convince the Commission that the report that I am sure it prepared in good faith is, nevertheless, misleading about the problem that the United Kingdom faces. I shall be careful in choosing my words, but my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that the report is inadequate in that respect as indeed, for the reasons that I have given, it is inadequate in a number of other respects.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): I support the view of the Secretary of State that the Commission's view seems to be wholly inadequate. However, will he confirm that the views of the interfering busybodies from the Commission could be endorsed following the passage of the Single European Act if a majority of states take the view that the Commission's report is right rather than the view of the Government of this member state?

**Mr. Channon:** The situation varies depending on whether one is considering two, three and four-axle vehicles or five and six-axle vehicles. On two, three and four-axle vehicles, we have no derogation and any directive put forward on them will be subject to majority voting under the Single European Act. For five and six-axle vehicles, we do not accept that derogation should end in 1996, as is proposed, because we do not think that our bridge infrastructure will be suitable and it would be unduly burdensome to meet that date. We would never have been willing to agree the derogation in the first place without the Council's commitment on seeking agreement to end it unanimously in relation to five and six-axle vehicles. I wanted to try to explain to the House that the two issues are linked and that, therefore, it is very important that hon. Members and people outside the House should understand the difficulty that we face and that we may have to face as early as next week.

The Commission has also made the suggestion of a partial network of major routes for heavier lorries. With a significant proportion of bridges weight-limited, it would be difficult to suggest a comprehensive network. As we all know, there are many journeys that begin and end off major roads and enforcement would be a difficult problem. We have begun a major programme of strengthening work so that the older bridges in the trunk road network will be able to carry a full range of modern-day goods vehicles. Local authorities will have to press ahead with similar plans for their roads.

It can be argued—and is argued—that there are substantial potential economic benefits from using heavier vehicles, as the explanatory memorandum describes. Those benefits have been estimated at about £76 million a year. The House will be interested to note that a more recent survey of business intentions carried out by the Freight Transport Association estimates that the potential savings to industry could be as high as £200 million a year. If that is so, benefits could be passed on to consumers in lower product costs and there would be other less quantifiable benefits to the public. Vehicles able to carry their full design weight need to make fewer journeys.

As the House realises, although I am not sure that everyone outside does, I must stress that the new heavier lorries are no bigger than the existing lorries. You, Mr. Speaker, or any member of the public would not be able to distinguish a 40-tonne lorry from an existing 38-tonne lorry. The only difference is the greater payload. That means that fewer of them would be needed on the roads, so it is argued that there would be an environmental benefit too. That argument would carry more force if those lorries were fitted with air suspension, which can not only reduce wear and tear on roads, but reduce noise and increase safety.

*[Mr. Channon]*

This is not simply a question of economics. The United Kingdom road infrastructure simply will not be able to carry the heavier vehicles by the date that the Commission proposes. I hope, therefore, that when I go to the Council next week, I shall have the support of the whole House of Commons. I draw the House's attention to the motion. It asks the House to take note of the various documents and then says:

"and supports the Government's intention to ensure that a premature end date to the derogations is not imposed on the United Kingdom."

That is what I am asking the House to agree tonight. I hope that it will be possible to agree that without a Division. I would like to be able to tell the Council that this was the unanimous view of the House of Commons.

**Mr. Snape:** If it becomes necessary, will the right hon. Gentleman use his powers to veto the proposals at the Council of Ministers?

**Mr. Channon:** I do not have the power to veto the proposals on the two, three and four-axle vehicles. *[Interruption.]* Well, I shall go through it again. The two, three and four-axle vehicles will be discussed next week. I do not have the power to veto those provisions but I hope that I have the power of persuasion and, fortified by the support of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), I should imagine that I shall be irresistible. Failing that, we shall see.

On the question of the five and six-axle vehicles, in answer to the hon. Member for Keighley——

**Mr. Cryer:** For Bradford, South.

**Mr. Channon:** Yes, I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon —I meant the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Times have changed and things were better in those days. The hon. Gentleman was less heavy in those days.

I have already explained to the House that the unanimity rule applies in relation to the five and six-axle vehicles, so that will not be an issue at the Council meeting next week. As I have already said, we expect that the Council will treat that as a matter in which unanimity is provided and I have also said that the House of Commons will be consulted, so there is no question of us giving way on that point at present—unless we can have a date that is acceptable bearing in mind that our bridges will have to be strengthened for the lorries to use them. That is not an issue between us at the moment and it is not something that the Commission has suggested. The proposed ending of the derogation is most unsatisfactory and I am asking the House to agree on that point——

**Mr. Prescott** *rose*——

**Mr. Channon:** Yes, I shall give way, yet again.

**Mr. Prescott:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. This is an important point and we appreciate that he is in the process of negotiation on two matters. However, is he prepared to say at the Council meeting that he is to attend shortly that he will be prepared to use his veto if the Council attempts to impose the 1996 date on him? I should like to hear him say that, yes, he will use the veto.

**Mr. Channon:** I am choosing my words with some care to try to maximise my chances of getting my own way. In his usual helpful way, I know that the hon. Gentleman will want me to get the result that is most satisfactory for the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Snape:** What is the Secretary of State's record on that?

**Mr. Channon:** As it happens, so far I have rather a good track record in the Council meetings, in spite of the hon. Gentleman's perpetual calls for my resignation, which we shall no doubt hear again next week—*[Interruption.]* Well, I shall try not to resign before Budget day.

As I have said, I have chosen my words with some care and hope to get a satisfactory result next week or, if not, to be in a position to report further to the House of Commons——

**Mr. Roger Gale** (Thanet, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Channon:** Yes. I have almost finished.

**Mr. Gale:** My right hon. Friend has mentioned several times—I understand that it is the basis of the directive —that the derogation is based on bridges. As he is taking a message from this House to Europe, will he take a clear message from the people of Kent who are worried not only about bridges but because we do not want heavier lorries until the entire road infrastructure is suitable for carrying them, which may be a long time ahead?

**Mr. Channon:** I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for his characteristic robust support. I think that the whole House will support me—I hope that it will— because that would very much strengthen my hand in the difficult negotiations next week. For tonight, I ask the House to support the Government's motion.

10.22 pm

**Mr. Peter Snape** (West Bromwich, East): The House will be grateful at least for the way in which the Secretary of State presented his case. We have seen a new and revitalised Secretary of State. In deputising for his hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, I can tell him that he is almost as good as the original when it comes to wit and humour. The Secretary of State will do very well.

In general, we welcome what the Secretary of State said, although I noticed that he was careful not to give a direct answer to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). There has been a surprising turnabout in the Secretary of State's attitude over the past few weeks——

**Mr. Cash:** Get on with it.

**Mr. Snape:** I shall explain in a minute. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) should curb his natural impatience and I shall tell him how the turnabout arose. The Select Committee on European Legislation recently considered these matters. On 21 February 1989 it issued an advisory brief stating:

"Although the conclusion of the Commission is unambiguous, and it has submitted a draft Directive which it suggests hopefully should be agreed by 1 July this year, the Department's EM is ambiguous, giving no firm indication of the Government's line".

The same Committee looked again at what was emerging from the Department on these matters on 6 March and said:

"The supplementary . . . now submitted is explicitly opposed to the Commission's proposal but complicates the issue by pointing out that the Government will be seeking at the next Transport Council to defend the United Kingdom's maximum 10·5 tonne drive axle weight in relation to two, three and four axled vehicles without the protection of unanimity."

While we welcome this dramatic conversion, I hope I will be forgiven for asking how it came about. Did it have anything to do with the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East sent the right hon. Gentleman a letter, a copy of which I have with me, urging him to veto the regulations?

That letter was dated 1 March. By 3 March the new Channon had emerged, and the man who will be heading for the EEC on Wednesday has been strengthened by the support he has received from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I know that he welcomes that support—he told us earlier that he did—and I hope that he will defend British interests as robustly as he implied he would and will tell his fellow Ministers that this House agrees with him—or perhaps I should say that he agrees with this House—that the regulations should be opposed.

**Mr. Cash:** As a member of the Select Committee, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that he is being less than disingenuous in criticising the Government for their ambiguity because the Select Committee said in its most recent report:

"The Committee notes that the Government disagrees with the Commission's proposal."

In that context, I cannot see how he can claim that the Government are being ambiguous.

**Mr. Snape:** I do not want to get bogged down in a discussion about who said what. I was quoting from an advisory brief from the Committee dated 21 February, so I cannot be accused of being ingenuous——

**Mr. Cash:** I said "disingenuous."

**Mr. Snape:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for correcting me. One gets free instructions from a solicitor when taking part in these debates late at night. It is rare for them to give anything away for nothing, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stafford for his efforts.

The fact that the Secretary of State has changed his mind is to be welcomed, although he could not resist going in for the usual propaganda by claiming that the introduction of heavier goods vehicles into this country will mean, first, that they will carry more and, secondly, that there will be fewer of them. We have heard that story frequently over the years and we may be forgiven our wry smiles on hearing it yet again.

Looking back at the history of legislation on heavy vehicles, it is interesting to note how often it has been stated that the latest demand for heavier vehicles would, if approved, result in fewer such vehicles being on our roads. The first time I heard that argued was in 1943 when, making a plea to remove the then 20 mph speed restriction on heavy goods vehicles, the organisation which is now known as the Freight Transport Association claimed:

"Enabling heavy goods vehicles to go faster will mean that there will be less of them on our roads."

That song has been sung for nearly 50 years. It was not true in the 1940s and it is not true now. Conservative Members know it is not true because they have heard it being sung for as long as I have, and my recollection in the House goes back 15 years.

**Mr. Tim Smith** (Beaconsfield): It is a fact.

**Mr. Snape:** The hon. Gentleman who represented Ashfield until they rumbled him—now the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith)—says it is true. If and when he is released from the confines of the House, which we hope will be sooner rather than later, and he takes a look outside, he will find that even in the short time that he has been back here as a Member the number of heavy goods vehicles on our roads has increased dramatically. I hope that I do not have to spend the few minutes available to me explaining those realities to Conservative Members.

As for the argument that speeding up the vehicles will help—again an argument that has been around for 50 years—if hon. Members look at the congestion on the M25 I hope they will recognise that it is immaterial from the point of view of reducing numbers how much the vehicles carry. If they are not going anywhere in any case, we can easily see that there might be more of them rather than fewer.

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): We are waiting for the hon. Gentleman to say something pertinent to the documents we are considering. Having attacked the interesting contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), the hon. Gentleman went on to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), without saying anything of substance. Does he not agree that the trend should be to encourage the gradual development of heavier lorries, coupled with the logical and rational zonal and local restrictions which are needed? If we compare what happens here with what happens in France, in Paris juggernauts are prohibited and there is trans-shipment into smaller vehicles, which seems to work well. Why does not the hon. Gentleman support with more enthusiasm the excellent provisions of the Dykes Act—the Heavy Commercial Vehicles (Control and Regulations) Act 1973—drafted by me, aided by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford? It has contributed to some 675 schemes up and down the country for restrictions on the access, parking and movement of heavy lorries.

**Mr. Snape:** I am a great advocate and proponent of the Dykes Act. It is sad that more local authorities did not adopt it as enthusiastically as a handful have. On the first part of his intervention, I will tell the hon. Gentleman why things do not work as well here as they do, for example, in Paris or in other parts of the EEC. It can be summed up in one simple word—enforcement. The enforcement of the law on heavy goods vehicles is scandalously low. I will give some statistics to illustrate that in a moment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is somewhat wearily shaking his head. I think it is a bit late for him to be out. Of course, he is a great man for talking about a crackdown on cowboys in relation to heavy goods vehicles. When it comes to cracking down on cowboys, he is about as successful as the Indians in the films that I used to watch when I was a boy. On enforcement, it is the hon. Gentleman's bow and arrow against the repeating rifles of the cavalry, I am afraid *[Interruption.]* The officers had swords; I am talking about the Under-Secretary.

*[Mr. Snape]*

Enforcement is the great problem. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who is such a great European enthusiast, ought to recognise that one reason why my hon. Friends and I are sceptical of these and other proposals about heavy goods vehicles is that the level of enforcement in this country is as low as it has ever been.

**Mr. Conal Gregory** (York): In view of the comments the hon. Gentleman has just made about enforcement, will he deplore the attitude of the Transport and General Workers Union in not acting more strenuously in regard to its members, exposed in "Transport Week" last week, who indicated that they will continue to flout the law? Is he relying upon the state rather than his powers in that trade union?

**Mr. Snape:** We all know well that if individual drivers in the heavy goods vehicles and road haulage business were to tell their employers that they intended to abide by the law, it would be an open invitiation for them to be shown the door. The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory), whose anti-union credentials are well known in the House, is a most enthusiastic supporter of legislation undermining the rights of individuals, including lorry drivers, at their place of work. I would be grateful for a period of silence on the hon. Gentleman's part with regard to enforcement.

In these matters I rely on articles in a recent publication, "Transport Week", which set out starkly and categorically the Department of Transport's failings in connection with heavy goods vehicles. I have met Karen Miles only once, when she came to a press conference at the House. I have no reason to suppose that she is a member of the National Union of Railwaymen, so I would not have thought that we could automatically mistrust what she has to say about the Department and enforcement. We are concerned by the fact that enforcement is so appallingly weak.

Although I hope that I do not have to quote from Karen Miles, article too extensively, her article states:

> "Research by Transport Week among the 219 traffic examiners"—

and that is all there are throughout the country—

> "responsible for ensuring HGV and PSV operators comply with operators' licence regulations, including drivers' hours limits, has revealed a growing feeling of powerlessness to control the rising tide of law breaking."

The article went on to state that

> "Detailed discussions with traffic examiners and senior traffic examiners in 6 of the 9 traffic areas have uncovered some startling failings in the enforcement system."

The article explains that in the north-east, in Leeds, there is no money to bring prosecutions of HGV offences until April. The Conservative party may be proud of that level of enforcement, but I must stress that Labour Members are extremely unhappy with that deplorable level of enforcement and we shall demonstrate that unhappiness through our determination to ensure that there is no easing in terms of axle and all-up weights of heavy goods vehicles until we get some assurances about these problems.

I hope that I have at least partially answered some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Harrow, East and that I can take him some way towards believing that enforcement is vital, but is not receiving the important consideration that it deserves from the Government at the moment.

The Government's whole attitude to intermodal traffic and traffic that could be partially carried by rail is called into question by the regulations and derogations. The Department of Transport's inactivity over the past few years has led directly to a transfer of freight from the railways to the roads. That is directly contrary to the general principle running throughout the Community and is directly contrary to regulations that the Community introduced as long ago as 1975.

I urge the Secretary of State and his colleagues to consider the way in which other EEC countries have, in various ways, subsidised their road haulage industries. The normal reason given by those countries for having such subsidies is that they want to encourage the transfer of traffic from road to rail. However, I hope that the Secretary of State will agree that the British road haulage system's dependence on market forces has not been particularly successful, especially with regard to United Kingdom-continental traffic.

Three years ago British-based hauliers carried over 60 per cent. of United Kingdom-continental traffic. They now carry 42 per cent. according to the Freight Transport Association. There are signs that the decline in Britain's share of that traffic is accelerating rather than being reversed. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider the examples set by some of his ministerial counterparts and will do what he can to reverse that trend. For example, he could encourage his opposite numbers in various parts of the EC to look at some of the developments taking place for road and rail vehicles in this country.

Developments are being undertaken in the private sector by companies such as Tiphook, whose piggy-back wagon, it believes, is capable of revolutionising the United Kingdom's continental road haulage network. It wants, not financial encouragement—it is not coming cap in hand for a subsidy from the Department—but, as I understand it, some degree of publicly expressed support. It also wants support within the EC for these newer methods of haulage, and for the Government to follow the example of other EC countries and reverse this country's apparently unique trend of transferring freight from the railways to the roads.

We are grateful for the Secretary of State's earlier comments, but we would still like to hear from him, or any other members of the entourage that he will no doubt take with him on Wednesday, of his determination to use, if necessary, his veto on some of these proposals. If the Secretary of State does that, he can be assured that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and I will stand shoulder to shoulder with him, which should please him—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] The Secretary of State will be relieved to know that my hon. Friend will shortly be returning to stand shoulder to shoulder with him—probably when I have finished the speech that I am making on his behalf. I hope that the Secretary of State will not weaken. We welcome his transformation into the tough and witty man he has become over the past few days. Long may that transformation continue, because it has our support.

10.42 pm

**Mr. Robert Boscawen** (Somerton and Frome): Enforcement or no enforcement, we have wanted derogation from this order for a long time. Not for the first

time, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have the fullest support of everyone who lives in the part of the world which I represent.

We are debating a very important issue, at the centre of which is the quality of life. The order refers mainly to bridges but it will also affect small roads, villages, houses and the general quality of life in the rural areas of this country. The euphemism "local roads" is used, but they are really country lanes. If anyone thinks that they are suitable for 40-tonne vehicles carrying 40-tonne loads he is wrong. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—I know that he is capable of it—will make sure that his partners in the EC are put right on that issue.

I represent an area which is the principal source of the stone required for roads and buildings in the south—certainly the south-east—and know that heavy-vehicle traffic on country roads is essential and cannot be avoided. It has to travel on country roads before it can get near the major trunk routes. The numbers of movements past some of the small farms, villages and towns in my area are inevitable. One particular lorry route from the quarries in my constituency handles 600 movements a day, which cause an immense amount of damage, not only to bridges but to everything.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has my fullest support to ensure that the limitations on these heavy vehicles remains in place for as long as possible.

10.44 pm

**Mr. Matthew Taylor** (Truro): I, too, welcome the Secretary of State's clear statement that he will resist these European measures. A major factor in the demand for road upgrading is the perennial problem of heavy lorries. Although road haulage is often sold as cheap and efficient, the hidden expenses for taxpayers involved in supporting the moving of freight on the roads are considerable.

The Audit Commission report on road maintenance stated that 50 per cent. of damage was caused by heavy goods vehicles with more than four axles. In Somerset, the cost of road maintenance has trebled in less than a decade. The Audit Commission also said that damage caused by lorries to roads costs £600 million a year. That does not take into account the grave damage that the Secretary of State described to bridges, buildings and under-road services.

Inquiries such as those conducted by Foster, Armitage and Wood examined the problems of heavy lorries, but most of their recommendations have not yet been implemented. I regret that the tendency has been to implement them half-heartedly, if at all.

Document 4311/89 from the Commission claims that by 1996 a substantial part of the United Kingdom's road network will be ready to take heavier 40-tonne, 11·5 axle vehicles. In its explanation, the Commission largely concentrates on the conflict between keeping down road transport costs and the damage to roads. The more heavily a lorry operator loads his axles, the more goods he can transport at least expense—but the greater the expense to the public because of the increased costs of the maintenance and provision of roads adequate for these weights.

The Commission states:

"Recent studies in the USA and elsewhere have shown that increases in gross vehicle weight and axle weight can be justified in terms of overall benefit to the economy, in spite of the additional infrastructure costs."

The Commission sees these costs as moderate, but the increased costs of road building and maintenance have yet to be evaluated and it is clear that roads and motorways will have to be built and rebuilt to more expensive specifications to take account of the punishment they are likely to receive. I suspect that that is at the root of the Secretary of State's and the Government's unwillingness to accept what the EEC is saying.

I should like to take this further, and it is a shame that the Secretary of State did not. It is questionable whether the extra weights that the United Kingdom is being urged to comply with are necessary in the vast majority of cases. The road haulage industry has proliferated over the past few years to such an extent that many other aspects of the infrastructure of this country have been ignored. Railways come high on the list of such aspects. At the same time, the road system is crumbling under the pressure put on it by heavy lorries. I deplore this as an unnecessary use of resources and despoliation of the environment.

Since the Armitage report, some additional expenditure has been permitted in the form of constructing bypasses to alleviate the worst effects of the decision to allow an increase in the permitted weight to 38 tonnes on five axles, but I consider even the present situation—let alone that to which Europe wants us to move—deeply unsatisfactory. Design standards have proved inadequate to cope, and the damage attributed to these vehicles may be underestimated by as much as a factor of three. On motorways and heavily used roads the damage factor, as road designers call it, has more than doubled since 1970, and forecasts have suggested that that damage factor will treble and rise by as much as 340 per cent. by the year 2005.

**Mr. Tim Devlin** (Stockport, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the reasons for the problems to which he has pointed is that Department of Transport forecasts for road usage are usually painfully wrong, and that we need to move to a different system of forecasting? Furthermore, talking of motorways for the next century, does he agree that a motorway to the north-east of England is an urgent priority?

**Mr. Taylor:** I am happy to agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that he agrees with me that underestimates certainly occur in respect of road links to the south-west. One reason for that is the Department of the Environment's failure to consider the effect of the traffic that is brought on to new roads. An obvious example of that is the A30, and the efforts of myself and other hon. Members to introduce a dual-carriage standard.

There may be certain operations where the Commission's "larger means fewer" rule applies. That said, it is important to acknowledge that new roads, as well as large vehicles, have made lorry-kilometres and tonne-kilometres by road much cheaper than they would be otherwise. In a sense, a few major road schemes have reinforced the problems and inconvenience caused to those living off those schemes, along routes to which lorries are directed after they have covered the longest part of their journey, if not the longest in terms of time.

The dominance of road transport over other forms of transport has been reinforced by the Government's policy of calculating the economic values of different schemes. It is clear that the public is dissatisfied with certain road

*[Mr. Taylor]*

developments and Government priorities. National surveys on road traffic and the environment undertaken in the late 1970s showed that millions of people were disturbed by lorries in a variety of different ways. National studies have been carried out since then, and perhaps it is just as well for the road transport lobby that the Secretary of State's arguments cannot be reinforced by the findings of those studies when he goes to Europe. I do not doubt that lorries still account for a major part of the environmental problems that people experience, and that they are disliked as widely as ever.

If I drive from Truro to St. Austell in my own constituency, I find myself following heavy lorries through a series of tiny villages—Tresillian, with its hairpin, and another at Probus, and then down the hill to Grampound, where there are both speeding lorries descending, and others struggling to climb the hill, before reaching Sticker, and so on. That route almost defines the kind of problems that heavy lorries can cause.

**Mr. Cash:** Is not the hon. Gentleman attacking one of the mainsprings of his own constituency's economic activities—the china clay industry, and all the heavy lorries that carry that product?

**Mr. Taylor:** The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Clearly, he is not familiar with my constituency, because the route that I described runs from the west of Cornwall towards the direction of the china clay industry. No lorries transporting china clay would be found on the route that I described. The hon. Gentleman displays an ignorance of my part of the world that is not altogether surprising, but he would do better to resist the temptation to intervene.

I refer also to the problems of villages such as Treviscoe, at the heart of china clay country. That village recently experienced problems as a result of lorries transporting quarry materials for the new runway at RAF St. Mawgan in Newquay—not only all week but on Sundays, from as early as 6 o'clock in the morning. There may be some economic benefits for the area's industry, but I believe that the economic disbenefits to the village—90 per cent. of whose population probably work in that industry—probably outweigh them. It was certainly the villagers' unanimous opinion that a brake should be placed on that transport.

Last summer, I visited properties in the road that runs through the village of Mevagissey, in which floors are coming away from walls, and furniture moves across the floor because there is no banning of the kind for which the Act of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) allows, and which has my support. In villages such as Mevagissey, the proper facilities for the transportation of heavy goods just do not exist. Underinvestment in the infrastructure allows such problems to continue.

The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) raised a question about the transport infrastructure for St. Austell and for the china clay district. The problem is that St. Austell, which is not only the largest town in the county but at the heart of its economy, is entirely cut off from the major road system. No road investment has been made in that area. That is partly because the grants system for that area has been removed. I was in St. Austell at the launch last week of a report by the Action 2000 Committee which pressed for the major road links that are needed. That report gave an illustration of how lorries have to negotiate tiny country lanes and small towns. Without the infrastructure that I have mentioned, the Secretary of State is right to resist what Europe proposes and should go further and try to take heavier lorries out of many areas.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that problems are caused in his constituency and in most areas of the south-west by the continual closure and rundown of the railways and the loss of the possibility of rail freight taking heavy loads over long distances? Road haulage causes serious environmental damage and there is great pressure by the road haulage industry to have bigger and bigger lorries which will cause greater and greater damage to the environment.

**Mr. Taylor:** I accept that. I said that earlier in my speech but perhaps I should mention it again. The problem must be considered in a far more fundamental and broader way than Europe or, I regret to say, the Minister has looked at it. We must examine the entire infrastructure and look at how we can best meet the need of people for goods to get from one place to another. That is more important than the need of the road transport lobby to get goods moved cheaply.

If we looked properly at the overall environmental and economic costs of transport, we would see the need for far more emphasis being placed on railways and on building main trunk routes and facilities for offloading to smaller vehicles. Neither the European Commission nor the Minister place enough emphasis on those matters. We have much under-utilised transport infrastructure, particularly on the railways. That is a disgrace and is leading to many of the problems that I highlighted in my constituency.

The Democrats are well known to be committed to the maintenance and improvement of the transport infrastructure. I have no doubt that the ending of the United Kingdom derogation on lorry weights would benefit British business, but I am convinced that it would be of no benefit to the British people. No one could accuse me of being anti European and I am quite prepared, if I must, to accept petrol in litres, butter in kilogrammes or, indeed, kilometres—although I should prefer not to. The derogations are about more fundamental issues. They are about people's properties, the environment and the standard of life of people in many villages that still have to put up with heavy traffic. In many cases people have to put up with danger as well.

I regret that the Secretary of State did not go further in recognising that, in supporting greater investment in the railways and in evening up his attitude to investment in roads, as it is called, and what is called subsidy to the railways. Nevertheless, I support him in resisting what the European Commissioners are trying to do and hope that he is successful.

10.58 pm

**Mr. Gary Waller** (Keighley): It is already apparent that there is opposition to the Commission's proposal on the ground that at the Commission's behest we are asked to implement a significant change in our practice. I often have a great deal of sympathy for that attitude, but one needs to draw a distinction between cases in which there is a genuine Community interest and those in which there is

not. In the latter category, I place many road safety measures. It is quite unacceptable, for example, to propose directives to bring our provisions designed to deter drink-driving into line with those of our Community partners. In the case of lorry weights and dimensions, there is a genuine Community interest which cannot be denied. On this occasion, therefore, I would not side with the case which, I am sure, my hon Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) would have put if he had been here.

If we accept that point, we have to consider whether there is any overwhelming reason why we need a very great deal of time to fall into line with other European countries which have already accepted lorries of 40 tonnes and, indeed, more. It is worth going back to the decision that this House made in November 1982 to permit on our roads lorries of 38 tonnes, with their weight distributed over five axles, compared with lorries of up to 32·5 tonnes, which was the maximum until then.

Hon. Members will remember that the change that was made at that time incorporated one of the recommendations of the Armitage report on lorries, people and the environment. That report included many recommendations which have been implemented—in particular, new controls on height and length, a requirement for side guards and rear under-guards to bring about greater safety. New mud-spray protection has also been introduced.

Having studied carefully all the evidence at that time about the load on road surfaces and bridges, Professor Armitage and his colleagues recommended a maximum 40-tonne vehicle on five axles. I think it was well known at that time—the press recorded the fact—that the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), was undecided between 38 and 40 tonnes. The decision to opt for 38 tonnes was ultimately made, not because it was thought that Professor Armitages's technical conclusions were wrong, but because it was felt that, in political terms, and in the context of public opinion, there was a cliff to be scaled. It was felt that the rise of 5·5 tonnes was acceptable, whereas one of 7·5 tonnes was not—and at that time it may well have been right. Hon. Members will recall that at that time the Government had a majority in this House of just over 40, and, despite the gravest forebodings of the Patronage Secretary, there was a majority of 63 in favour of 38 tonnes, on a vote which took place at 10 o'clock, in circumstances designed to ensure that the views of the House as a whole were fully expressed. Many subsequently asked why such caution had been demonstrated at that time.

Since 1982 we have had a chance to test some of the hypotheses that were set out in that debate, during which many were sceptical about the claim that heavier lorries, even though they were only marginally longer to accommodate a bigger cab, would mean fewer lorries on our roads. Hon. Members were not then assuaged by the argument put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford that, for each tonne of freight carried, the new five or six-axle requirement must mean much less damage, because 38 tonnes could be carried with the same average axle weight as the 32·5-tonne vehicle, involving the need for fewer vehicles. However, in fact, there are now very many fewer lorries on the roads than would have been the case if we had stayed at 32·5 tonnes.

**Mr. Roger Moate** (Faversham): How does my hon. Friend know?

**Mr. Waller:** I am asked how I know. I refer hon. Members to the Department of Transport statistical bulletin 88/44, which reveals that in 1987 the total was 7,800 fewer than would have been the case if we had had the lower limit.

Since 1987 there has been an unprecedented increase in the amount of goods carried by heavy lorries, and it would probably be no exaggeration to say that the saving in the number of lorries of essentially the same size as before is, by now, 10,000. That is why I claim, with some confidence, that the increase in lorry weights has been extremely friendly to the environment. Where we should be now if we had to accommodate all those extra lorries on our roads I shudder to think.

The environmental and economic factors that applied in 1982 are just as valid today, although we are talking about a much smaller weight difference. Freight movements continue to increase in number and scale. However much we would like to move traffic off the roads and on to the trains, there can be no doubt that something like 90 per cent. of all our inland freight will continue to move on the roads. Even if we were to increase the volume of goods carried by train by 50 per cent.—which I should like—there would still be a reduction of only 4 per cent. in the volume carried on the roads.

**Mr. David Nicholson** (Taunton): I hope that my hon. Friend will start to take into account the effects that the Channel tunnel will have on the movement of freight off the roads and on to the railways, as those of us who support the tunnel hope, so that we may exploit the major intercontinental railway system.

**Mr. Waller:** I agree entirely. Indeed, I have just made that very point. But I go further: if we were to double the volume of goods carried on our trains—and I do not think that anyone believes that that would be possible—we would still have only an 8 per cent. decrease.

**Mr. Moate:** Four per cent.

**Mr. Waller:** It would be 4 per cent. if it went up by 50 per cent. There would be an 8 per cent. decrease in the amount carried on the roads. We know that in one recent year there was more than an 8 per cent. increase in the amount of goods on the roads.

On this occasion we can categorically state that there will be no increase in vehicle size when the derogation ends. In effect, existing lorries will be able to carry a payload which is 2 tonnes greater. That will enable our operators to compete more effectively, and it will guarantee that fewer lorries will travel on our roads than would be the case if we had stuck with the 38-tonne limit. Therefore, environmental factors clearly point to an early uprating.

In economic terms also, the case is strong. The increase in vehicle weights which took place on 1 May 1983 saved our industry and consumers about £250 million by 1986, and produced a saving of £60 million in road wear, to the benefit of the taxpayer. Taking a further step of two more tonnes would provide an additional saving of at least £76 million.

**Mr. Cryer:** Where did the hon. Gentleman get the statistics, on what are they based, and what calculations are involved?

**Mr. Waller:** The figures are well known, and they are certainly obtainable from numerous sources.

**Mr. Snape:** The Road Haulage Association.

**Mr. Waller:** They certainly were not produced to me by the Road Haulage Association. They have been produced by the Road Transport Association. The Transport and General Workers Union has also been in favour of higher weight lorries on our roads. The arguments are put by many organisations.

Freight is a significant contributor to company costs. It has been pointed out that a 10 per cent. rise in freight costs leads to a 1 per cent. increase in average prices. When margins are tight and international competitiveness is vital, that could be the crucial factor.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out that, in any event, the bridge improvement programme on which the Government have embarked will be necessary to cope with existing 38-tonne lorries, regardless of whether we decided to move up at an early date.

As the Commission said, it makes nonsense to take into account bridges with a capacity of 7½ tonnes. One county surveyor mentioned to me that he knew of a 38-tonne lorry which had gone over a bridge with a maximum limit of 7½ tonnes without causing any apparent damage. We can assume that, to all intents and purposes, whether lorries of 38 or 40 tonnes use such bridges, it will not make a crucial difference. Therefore, the number of bridges that we need to consider is not so great. Bearing in mind the substantial benefit to industry and the environment, we could surely, if necessary, speed up the bridge programme. The return on investment could hardly be bettered. In my book, a one-off payment of £70 million to produce a clear return, which has been estimated at between £76 million and £200 million per annum, seems a pretty good deal.

Other considerations have to be taken into account. If we are seen to be dragged kicking and screaming into line with the rest of Europe the sovereignty issue will unnecessarily be brought into the argument, when, as I have already said, it need not properly apply in a case in which there is a genuine Community interest from which we and our partners can benefit.

**Mr. Snape:** The hon. Gentleman gave the House figures about the cost of the bridge-strengthening programme. The estimated cost of that programme is £600 million, is it not? The estimated benefit of the heavy lorries, which the hon. Gentleman is passionately advocating in the brief which he is reading so well from the Road Transport Association, means that we are paying all that for the benefit of £70 million. That is a ratio of almost 10:1. Is that decent economics?

**Mr. Waller:** First, I am not reading out any brief. I am referring to my own notes and making my own speech. Let that be absolutely clear.

Secondly, the figures relating to the cost of improving bridges depend on the number of bridges that one believes need to be improved, and that is one of the main arguments.

We should remember that arguments in the Council of Ministers involve trade-offs. If we hold out on this matter, we may have to be more malleable on something else. It is surely better that we should put our foot down somewhere where it really matters and demonstrate our Community commitment here, where our industry and environment can benefit from a relatively small concession of two tonnes.

Yes, there is a public relations argument to be won, but this time the case is a strong one because we can point to experience related to the environment and to the economic situation. We should accept a derogation to 1995-96, certainly no later, or, better still, move more quickly towards change, thus demonstrating that it is not the wicked European Commission which has driven us but our recognition that logic is on the side of economic and environmental benefit.

**Mr. Corbyn** *rose*——

**Mr. Waller:** This is a case where the pound signs all have green edges. This, I believe, must be a time for boldness.

11.10 pm

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): I was not sure whether to make a short speech or a long intervention, but I decided in the end in favour of a short speech about just one bridge. The sad and salutary tale of the Severn bridge may be very instructive and supportive for the Secretary of State when he makes his case in Europe.

What we have seen with the Severn bridge is an example of a variant of the problem that Governments in the 1970s had with their incomes policies, that of wage drift. Bridges in this country tend to suffer from weight drift—that is, the constant upward movement of the demands of the designers and users of lorries, coupled with those who operate the weighbridges not always doing so precisely. The maximum weight tends to go above the design weight of the bridge. There is also the overload factor of a fair proportion of the large lorries that we have on our road system: to use a rough figure, probably 10 per cent. of our lorries are running at more than their design weight.

What has happened with the Severn bridge? It was opened in 1966, and 16 years later it was starting to be shaken to its very foundations. It was unable to take the kind of vehicles that were then passing along it, because lorries were running in far greater numbers than had been anticipated and they were tending to run in convoy: they were also far heavier than had been anticipated. The bridge was then unable to cope with that amount of weight.

Lorries in convoy do far more damage than lorries on their own. Lorries which have to stop on a bridge for any reason do far more damage than lorries that are moving. So we can picture a bridge that was designed to carry a certain amount of moving traffic. Suddenly the number of lorries, as a proportion of the total traffic, is doubled. Then we picture the traffic jams on that bridge, which leads to dead load around the main pillars of the bridge. Then suddenly the bridge has to be rebuilt.

The Severn bridge cost £8 million to build in the mid-1960s: it is now being strengthened at a cost of £33 million. Allowing for inflation, it is probably costing roughly the same today to rebuild and strengthen, to cope with exactly the kind of problem that the Secretary of State will be talking about for the generality of Great Britain next week.

Bridge designers design bridges to carry a specific load. If the bridge has to be completely redesigned, it costs as much as it would to build the bridge all over again. This is the problem created by this constant upward drift on the part of the lorry manufacturers and designers and of the people who load and look after the lorries, particularly in the fairly "easy come, easy go" enforcement atmosphere that we have in this country compared with Germany.

The plea that I make to the Secretary of State, for him to carry to Europe, is that everyone should learn from the example of the Severn bridge. That bridge, not long after it was opened and fully running, is almost falling down, and has to be rebuilt.

The only other solution for this country is to have bridgemasters. There are some countries where lorries are not allowed free access to bridges: they are hauled off the bridge and spaced out between 30 and 40 cars to make sure that they are never in convoy. They are never allowed on to the bridge in a traffic jam or in slow-moving traffic, because of this exponential wear and tear on the bridge and its foundations when three or four lorries are caught in a convoy near its main pillars.

What is the alternative? Will the Secretary of State have bridgemasters in this country as the only way of controlling the wear and tear? Would the road haulage industry like to see bridgemasters brought in to prevent the free access of lorries to bridges? That is probably totally unacceptable in Britain, but bridgemasters are found in exceptional circumstances here and there.

**Mr. Corbyn:** My hon. Friend is advancing an excellent argument on lorry weights. I ask him to reflect that the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and others contend that 44-tonne lorries could have lower axle ratio weights. Surely that is irrelevant when we are dealing with the problems of the Severn bridge, for example, where the total weight of a vehicle, and often its dead weight, damages the construction.

**Mr. Morgan:** That is correct. In such circumstances the axle weight becomes far less significant than the dead load, especially around the main pillars of the bridge. My hon. Friend has raised an issue on which I have not placed sufficient emphasis. I ask the Minister to take the message to Europe that it is unacceptable that there should be a continuous upward poaching of limits by the road haulage industry, which imposes colossal problems on some of our major estuarial crossings. Let him consider the disappointment that it causes to all those who have been involved in trying to create new jobs in Wales since the great closures in the steel industry in the early 1980s.

The great selling point for Wales was its connection to the motorway system. When an industrialist comes to consider whether he would wish to accept the Government grants that are available to occupy an empty Welsh Development Agency factory, he stops at the Severn bridge, where he sees the traffic jams and the cones. He sees the massive scaffolding around the bridge as it is being reconstructed and he thinks, "This is not the region that I was told about; it is only half connected to the national motorway system." This has proved one of the major disincentives for industry to move into south Wales. It is the result of the continuous poaching by the designers of lorries, which militates against the design of the Severn bridge and other estuarial crossings.

When the Minister goes to Europe he must emphasise that a bridge must by its very nature adhere to its design, whereas the weight of lorries increases by a couple of per cent. a year. The increase in lorry weights must stop at some stage.

11.17 pm

**Mr. Roger Moate** (Faversham): Only a few months ago I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State whether he was under any pressure to increase lorry weights because of the movement towards harmonisation within the Community, or whether there was any desire on his part to do so. In both respects his answer was effectively no, and I am sure that that was a genuine response.

That makes me feel even more aggrieved, because somehow we have been effectively hijacked into an urgent, not a long-term, decision. Suddenly it has become a matter of urgency, before a Council meeting next week, that the House should come to a decision. That is grossly unfair, especially when we consider that many of us have been involved in an intensive debate for the past decade over whether we should agree to an increase in lorry weights.

Four years ago we arrived at a serious compromise. The result was the United Kingdom securing a derogation. That meant, in effect, a maximum lorry weight of 38 tonnes as opposed to the Community's 40 tonnes. No date was attached to the derogation, which was achieved after a long debate on what we thought was in the best interests of the country. It was settled that we should have a 38-tonne limit and 10·5 tonnes axle weight limit.

What has happened within a short period to persuade the Community to introduce a proposal that we should conform with the limits that apply in the rest of the Community? What sort of Community is it that tries to enforce upon a member state by diktat something that the United Kingdom deems to be against its interests? My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in October 1988 that he was not in favour of an increase in limits. Similarly, the House is not in favour of an increase. I should like the robust message to go forth from both sides of the House that it does not want a change in limits to be forced upon it. I hope that there will not be a Division. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to say next week to the Community that Britain believes that to be in the national interest, although there are arguments for and against the proposition that is now before us, until such time as we deem it right to accept a change in our national interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) has spoken in favour of a change in limits. There is a sense of déjà vu about that as no one changes his view. My hon. Friend was urging strongly for an increase in lorry weight some years ago, but we settled on a limit of 38 tonnes.

I accept, of course, that there is an argument in favour of a 40 tonnes, 44 tonnes, or 50 tonnes limit. There is an economic argument for carrying heavier and heavier weights. If we settle on the 40 tonne limit for which the Community is asking it will not stop there. Other Community members have internal weights of 44 tonnes or 50 tonnes.

I accept that the Freight Transport Association may argue that its members will benefit from an increase in lorry weights, but the House must judge the balance of argument. Many years ago the House considered the

*[Mr. Roger Moate]*

environmental effects and the road costs and decided that the balance of advantage lay with the 38 tonne limit. It was agreed that our roads and especially our bridges, of which there are 85,000, were not capable of taking heavy lorry weights. Who will tell the people that our roads and our country lanes are ready to carry heavier lorries? One could tell the county councils that they could impose lorry weights and width restrictions, but let them try to get those restrictions secured. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who introduced the worthy Dykes Bill, knows all about this. It is wonderful to have lorry routes, but how many have we got?

It will be many years before we can decide whether we are ready to accept much heavier lorries. We have been through all this before. Why has the matter suddenly arisen again? What good does it do the Community to force upon us something that we have decided, collectively, is not in our interests?

Currently I believe that we have veto rights on whether to increase the 38 tonne and 10·5 axle weight limits. My right hon. Friend should go to the Community and emphasise that that right should be open-ended and that until we choose, as and when, to try to change that limit to secure a commercial benefit which we might then deem right, it should remain a permanent or rather open-ended derogation. We have done it with the pint of milk, the pint of beer and the mile measurement.

I am told that at the Council meeting next week the Community might well say that on 2, 3 and 4 tonne axle weights, which are not subject to derogation, it can impose higher limits on us. We are entitled to further explanation about that. My right hon. Friend should not sacrifice our veto over the heaviest lorries and the heaviest axle weights for some short-term benefit which we might secure on the smaller vehicles. All we will gain on the deal will be one to three years. My right hon. Friend should keep the veto power because the one thing that matters to us is our right to ensure that the heaviest vehicles do not inflict the damage that we know they will inflict on our unsuitable roads.

Ultimately I am sure that in our lifetime—it may vary from Member to Member—we will have harmonisation. Whether that is achieved in this century or the next, which is not far away, should be a matter for our judgment. By doing so we are not doing down our competitors; if anything we may be doing down ourselves. We are not putting impediments in the way of free trade as the same rules apply to European vehicles coming into this country as apply to British vehicles. By urging the retention of the 38-tonne limit as opposed to the 40-tonne limit we are not imposing a great burden on industry. My right hon. Friend has already explained to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry that any subsequent extra road costs could be offset by higher vehicle excise duties. It does not follow that there would be any net benefit to members of the FTA from increasing the limit.

I am not suggesting that we should hold on to our right to derogate for ever, but it should be in our power to decide if and when it would be in our interests to harmonise with other Community members.

11.24 pm

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I want to add to the bipartisanship tonight and send our wishes to the Secretary of State when he goes to speak for Britain in Brussels. He is right. It has nothing to do with the fact that this year is European election year and that sometimes, in some quarters, it looks good to take on Brussels. The Secretary of State is doing this because it is right. It is right to let the Council know that we shall decide when and if British roads and bridges are ready to take the heavier loads.

I want to make two small constituency points because many heavy lorries run through my constituency. The M6 motorway, which has miles of viaducts which are nothing more than a continuous bridge in a technical sense, runs through the heart of Birmingham. The viaducts have been badly damaged over the years and a fortune has had to be spent in continually keeping them in good repair. That is a small part of the cost involved and there would be an extra cost if the lorries became even heavier.

My second point concerns the time when the bridge strengthening programme is under way. The Birmingham container port is in my constituency. When hon. Members drive up the M6 through Birmingham, they may see containers stacked high on both sides of the road. It is the vast car park area of the container port. The heavy lorries carrying the containers cannot get from the motorway to the container port. There is a private tunnel under the M6 motorway which is technically a bridge. Heaven knows that what is needed is a direct access from the motorway to the container port. All the heavy lorries have to come off the motorway at Gravelly Hill, Spaghetti junction, or the Great Barr interchange and then travel on ordinary suburban roads, some of which have bridges which will need strengthening. When the planning is done for such container ports alongside motorways, we could spend some money in the next few years on the bridge strengthening programme to save much more money in the years to come. If we could get the lorries immediately off the motorway into the container port areas, there would be less damage to road surfaces, less danger and less damage to buildings in ordinary suburban roads.

I make no apology for making essentially constituency points and they add weight to the arguments of the Secretary of State. I hope that when the planning is done for the expenditure on bridge strengthening, such practical points for saving money in the future can be taken into account.

11.27 pm

**Mr. Channon:** My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) made a——

**Mr. Cryer:** By leave of the House.

**Mr. Channon:** I ask the leave of the House, but I think that I am entitled to speak now as it is my motion anyway. If I need the leave of the House, I shall ask for it. I do ask for it, but if the House says no, I shall not mind very much.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley in his powerful speech made the economic case for the 40-tonne lorry and the change that he thinks would be right. However, I am sure that he would agree that the majority of hon. Members do not take that view at this stage. There has been near unanimity that I should, next week, try to stand firm at the Council meeting and deal——

**Mr. Cash:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Channon:** In a second. There has been near unanimity that I should try to stand firm and oppose the Commission's proposal on the two, three and four-axle limits.

**Mr. Cash:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the House is very full and that the Commission should note that the House of Commons is taking an extremely active interest in all this?

**Mr. Channon:** It will become perfectly clear that the House of Commons takes an extremely active interest in this question and is anxious that we should not give way on the question of 40-tonne lorries on our roads. The Commission is saying that we should not be compelled to do so until our bridges are in a fit state. The point of serious disagreement is about when that point will be. For the reasons that I have already given, I do not believe that what the Commission says about our bridges is in any way accurate when compared with what we say.

I have only two minutes and should like to make several brief points. In his excellent two-minute speech my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) referred to trying to get as long a derogation as possible. I take that to heart. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) took us on a charming tour of Cornwall and referred to the cost of road maintenance. I take his point but should point out that we are the only country in Europe that covers its track costs in relation to lorries. However, if the damage that lorries cause to roads were to increase, we should have to increase vehicle excise duty accordingly to ensure that we cover our track costs. We are trying to get the rest of the Community to cover its track costs but so far we are making slow progress.

*It being one and half hours after the commencement of proceedings,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14(1)(b).*

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4311/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 6th March 1989 on the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles; notes the development of the circumstances which justified the derogations accorded to the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland from certain provisions of Directive 85/3; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that a premature end date to the derogations is not imposed on the United Kingdom.

## REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

*Resolved,*

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 26th October 1988, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

*Resolved,*

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st February, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

*Resolved,*

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 8th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

## CRIMINAL LAW

*Resolved,*

That the draft Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (United States of America) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 8th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

## NORTHERN IRELAND

*Resolved,*

That the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 16th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

## REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

*Resolved,*

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 16th February, be approved. —*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

## SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 23rd March at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 17 (Questions to Members), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit Questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at half-past Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

## Northern Ballet Theatre

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

11.31 pm

**Mr. Stanley Orme** (Salford, East): This debate is about the threatened closure of the Northern Ballet Theatre—a ballet company that is based in Manchester, with a national and international reputation. The debate is timely, and, although the company is threatened with closure following a report commissioned by the Arts Council, I hope to prove that the responsibility for its survival rests firmly with the present Government.

What are the facts? The Arts Council commissioned a report, which has now been produced, called "Stepping Forward"—I have a copy with me—which was compiled by Graham Devlin. It states bluntly that the subsidy of £661,500 granted to the Northern Ballet Theatre should end. Graham Devlin is honest enough to admit that, as a drama specialist, he is not qualified to make detailed artistic judgments about dance.

What is the case for the Northern Ballet? I have already mentioned its high standing and only recently it won national and international acclaim for its most celebrated production, a dance drama based on the life of L.S. Lowry and called "A Simple Man".

Not only is it a provincial company, but it resides within an inner-city area of Manchester. In fact, this organisation creates employment for upwards of 100 people which, in an area of high unemployment, is not to be lightly discarded. It is based in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), and close to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). I am pleased to see so many of my hon. Friends in their places, not least my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), and many other hon. Members of all parties.

The Northern Ballet Theatre itself admits that the artistic standards of the company were variable prior to Christopher Gable's arrival. However, his skill in training has transformed the company. It is important to give Christopher Gable three to five years to develop the company. The well-known dancer and choreographer, Dame Ninette de Valois, always said that it took up to five years to get anything accomplished in the world of ballet.

The artistic director of the Bolshoi, Andre Petrov, recently visited the United Kingdom to evaluate the Northern Ballet, as he was considering mounting a work on the company and taking some of its young dancers, average age 21, to Moscow to work with the Bolshoi in a filmed version of the work. He liked what he saw and was highly enthusiastic about the project. It is now being seriously planned with BBC North-West. His is surely a judgment not to be ignored. That is one example of the exciting plans that Christopher has for the company, which may never reach fruition.

Let us consider the hard financial facts. The Northern Ballet Theatre's box office income for 1987-88 was £556,862. The company is beginning to raise significant amounts by way of sponsorship and private funding. From a low base of £14,000 in 1987-88, it hopes to raise £70,000 this year, although that target may not be met, as potential sponsors are, understandably, nervous about the company, and businesses are delaying committing themselves because of the threatened closure. The Minister revealed recently that the Northern Ballet Theatre continued to receive less than half the seat subsidy given to any other major dance company.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd** (Stretford): Give the figures.

**Mr. Orme:** I will do that. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford in his place, because the company is close to his constituency.

The figures are revealing. The Festival Ballet receives subsidy of £11 per seat; the Royal Ballet, £20·25; Sadler's Wells, £16·55; London Contemporary Dance, £9·50; Ballet Rambert, £12·25; and the Northern Ballet Theatre, £4·60. That last figure speaks volumes, especially considering the work of this company.

In 1987-88, the Northern Ballet Theatre gave 196 regional performances and had a total audience of 157,780. It received an Arts Council subsidy of £661,500. The Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells and the Festival Ballet combined gave 186, not 196, regional performances. They had a total audience of 248,258—only slightly higher than the Northern Ballet's total audience—and the Arts Council subsidy for those three companies was £7,256,500. That shows the strength of the Northern Ballet Theatre's case.

Graham Devlin makes the point in his report that dance is under-funded in Britain. His suggestion to cut Northern Ballet is made on the premise that the Arts Council—and, implicitly, the Government—will not be able to increase the dance budget. The targeting avoids the need to fund Northern Ballet properly. Mr. Devlin admitted in his report that the company is under-funded to the tune of £100,000 to £150,000. Those are the financial facts.

On the Government's role, it is not a policy of robbing Peter to pay Paul. I welcome support for London-based companies, just as I support regional development in dance, theatre or music. There are outstanding examples in the arts in Manchester; apart from dance, we have the Hallé orchestra and the Royal Exchange theatre. In Leeds there is Opera North. Then there are the Welsh and Scottish opera companies, among others. They cover the whole spectrum of the arts, which are crucial to our cultural life.

The report paints a devastating picture of what is happening to the live arts in Britain. The central issue is that the Arts Council is starved of the necessary money to fund the live arts, whether in London or the provinces. If the report is adopted when the Arts Council considers it in detail in April, it will be the provinces that will suffer major cuts. It is another example of the north-south divide in society and we cannot stand for that.

I understand that the Arts Council's main problem arises from the fact that it can give an increase for the next two years of only 2 per cent. to all organisations, although inflation is running at 7 per cent. Something has to give. What will give initially is the Northern Ballet Theatre, because, against many other artistic developments, it is seen as expendable. It is a northern company; it is out of sight and does not matter. That view will be taken by some people.

The Government should increase the grant to the Arts Council to cover the rise in inflation. Compared with what is contributed by the Governments in West Germany and France, our contribution is minimal and it should be

increased. I understand that the Arts Council has applied for an increased grant. I ask the Minister to give the House tonight the Government's reply to that application. That will help resolve the problem. I urge the Minister to accept the arguments that I have put forward and to save an outstanding artistic company.

10.43 pm

**Mr. Robert Litherland** (Manchester, Central): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on his initiative in bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I am grateful to him for allowing me a few minutes of the precious time allocated to him.

Millions more will congratulate my right hon. Friend if he is successful in achieving his aim—the continuation of funding for the Northern Ballet Theatre. I, like other hon. Members from the north-west, have received numerous expressions of concern about the proposal by the Arts Council to cease funding. Without financial support, the Northern Ballet Theatre will not survive. What a tragedy. That ballet company comprises young enthusiastic dancers, musicians and stage staff who have all worked extremely hard and are dedicated. However, they all face redundancy. The pleasure that they give to so many people will be tragically lost.

Although the Northern Ballet Theatre is situated in my constituency, it reaches a much wider audience. It often appears in medium-sized theatres and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East said, it has won national and international acclaim with its ballet "A Simple Man" based on the artist Lowry, who hailed from Salford.

I doubt whether people in the south would understand what Lowry's paintings were about. People in the south do not understand what the Northern Ballet Theatre is about. It is England's only regional ballet company and something about which the north-west is proud. In comparison with other regions, the north-west has been deprived in many ways. We talk incessantly about the north-south divide. The disparity between the seat subsidy for London-based dance companies and the Northern Ballet Theatre is a glaring example of that bias, because the Northern Ballet Theatre receives less than half the subsidy given to any other major dance company.

To deprive us further by killing off this young company would be a further erosion of our standard of living and a diminution of our culture. As north-west Members, we strongly protest about this threat to the Northern Ballet Theatre and we urge the Government not to act like Pontius Pilate, but to ensure that the company is not starved out of existence. As the *Manchester Evening News* reminded its readers, the Minister needs to be told in no uncertain terms that culture does not end north of Covent Garden. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East said, we would like a positive answer tonight.

11.46 pm

**The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce):** I begin by congratulating the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on raising the very important topic of the Northern Ballet Theatre and its future and the much wider question of the funding of the Arts Council. The presence of nearly 18 hon. Members in the Chamber tonight is impressive for any Adjournment debate and I acknowledge the importance that hon. Members are paying to this issue. I am also very glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) is present tonight, because he has already made representations to me on this issue.

I understand the concern expressed by the right hon. Member for Salford, East about the future of the Northern Ballet Theatre and I will return to that specific issue in a moment. First, I want to put the issue into its proper context in terms of the future of dance in this country and more generally against the whole question of arts funding.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East implied that the threat to the future of the Northern Ballet Theatre is a direct result of the Government's failure to fund the arts adequately. I cannot accept that because that view simply does not square with the facts.

Since taking office we have increased spending on the arts by one third in real terms after allowing for general inflation. Within that figure, our grant to the Arts Council has increased by 13 per cent. over the same period. In November 1987 I announced a new departure in arts funding. The figures for the arts budget were set for three years, providing cash increases of 10 per cent. for 1988-89 and 17 per cent. for the period to 1991.

**Mr. Orme:** Has the Minister taken into account the £25 million with regard to the abolition of the metropolitan counties?

**Mr. Luce:** When I quote figures, I will explain their context. The increase of 10 per cent. for the Arts Council this year over last year's figure and of 17 per cent. to 1991 is considerable.

On 3 November 1988 I announced the rolling forward of the three-year programme to 1991-92 with an expenditure increase of 6 per cent. over the period 1990-91. By any yardstick, those are substantial improvements. This is particularly important in the context of taxpayers' support. I entirely accept that the taxpayer has an important role to play in supporting the highest standards of excellence in the arts. However, this must also be seen against the background of the need for the private sector to play an increasingly important role.

I was glad that the right hon. Member for Salford, East mentioned the important part that sponsorship can play, but I hope that he will agree that, for the private sector, the size of the box office is even more important than sponsorship in generating extra revenue for the arts organisations—that is, in addition to taxpayers' support.

I should place on record that many of the most exciting developments that I have seen have taken place outside London. The right hon. Gentleman reinforced the point that many of the exciting developments are taking place in the north of the country and Scotland, in great cities such as Glasgow. We have been experiencing a renaissance in the arts in the great regional centres, with the emergence of Glasgow, Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester, as well as many other towns and cities, as the focus for renewed interest in every kind of artistic activity. That has been helped by a shift of resources to the regions.

In 1984, the Arts Council adopted its "Glory of the Garden" strategy to devolve more of its money and responsibilities to the 12 English regional arts associations. The council's grant to the regional arts associations—excluding abolition money—has doubled in real terms since 1979-80, and today—including abolition—amounts

*[Mr. Luce]*

to £30 million. Within that context, the regional arts association now spends more than £3 million annually on dance and mime, in addition to the £11·5 million that is given by the Arts Council to dance in one form or another in this country.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** If the Minister's contention is that there is better national funding and the Arts Council has been more sensitive to regional needs, why is Northern Ballet under threat?

**Mr. Luce:** The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly reasonable point, but if he will allow me to develop my arguments he will find that I seek to answer it.

In 1987, I asked the Arts Council to earmark a certain proportion of its grant to increase touring in the regions. It set aside £1·5 million and, in the current financial year, its new Great Britain touring fund has financed, among other things, 12 weeks of dance—both classical and contemporary—in the regions. One hundred and twenty thousand pounds of this money has been made available to dance companies, and £30,000 of that to Northern Ballet. Dance has been able to play a significant part in this expansion. Audiences for classical ballet have increased and tent seasons have afforded reasonably priced seats and newer, younger audiences.

However, the picture is not entirely rosy. Audiences for modern dance have declined in recent years and there has been criticism of the classical touring circuit for lacking imagination and direction. This is part of the background to the independent report entitled "Stepping Forward", which was commissioned by the Arts Council, and which has brought about tonight's debate.

The main point that I would like to emphasise is that the report is not just about the Northern Ballet Theatre. It is an analysis of the whole range of dance in England and sets out a strategy for its future. In particular, it recognises that the Arts Council needs to resolve clients' uncertainties about what is expected of them, and to take on a strategic role in long-term planning. It recommends that the overall objective must be to create a healthy climate in which major touring companies—not all of them necessarily based in London—play in large theatres and are complemented by a range of smaller companies based in smaller-scale venues.

Within this overall context, the report examines the current activities of all the leading companies and makes a number of recommendations about their role. This includes an examination of Northern Ballet Theatre and its future.

I know that the Arts Council is conscious of the valuable work done by the Northern Ballet at theatres throughout England. Before April, there will have been time to examine all the options to ensure the future development of dance. The council also wishes to make it clear that at no time would it consider withdrawing funding from a regional client and directing it to London. Its priority is to increase support for regional work.

It is not my job to make artistic judgments. I would be subjected to much criticism if I sought to do that. It is a job for the Arts Council and its advisers. I do not fund arts organisations directly, either. I fund the arts on the arm's length principle adopted by successive Governments. I allocate a sum of money to the Arts Council and it is for it to decide, after making its expert assessments, which groups to fund and what funding strategy to adopt.

I can say, however, that the Arts Council has not yet reached a decision on the recommendations in the report. That is the important point. Neither has it reached a decision on the Northern Ballet Theatre. The report was issued for consultation last month and the council will want to consider carefully all the representations that it has received before coming to a conclusion. I understand that so far a number of respondents have commented positively on the imaginative and comprehensive nature of the proposals.

Of course, concern has been expressed about the future of the Northern Ballet Theatre, and I am quite sure that the Arts Council will carefully note the views expressed in the House this evening. I shall go beyond that and ensure that the chairman and secretary general are made aware tomorrow of the views expressed here tonight.

**Mr. Orme:** Can the Minister confirm that the Arts Council has applied for an increased grant this year?

**Mr. Luce:** At this time of year, the Arts Council tends to come forward with proposals for funding for future years. I have not yet received its proposals, but I look forward to doing so.

The independent report is a welcome review of the provision of dance throughout England. This is not a matter of the north against the south, or London against the provinces. The Northern Ballet Theatre performs across the country. The right hon. Member for Salford, East and the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) made that point forcefully. Other major companies perform regularly in the north-west. Sadler's Wells royal ballet and the London festival ballet hold regular seasons in Manchester, for example, and I and the Arts Council want that to continue and expand.

What must matter most to us is that excellence in all art forms should be available to a growing number of people throughout the country. That is why I have substantially increased the Arts Council's budget for supporting touring, and, in the context of dance, I have supported the move of the Sadler's Wells royal ballet to Birmingham, with a taxpayers' award of £500,000 to help the process. I want everyone to be able to share in the country's artistic heritage and strength. That is my major objective.

The policies of the Government are doing much to ensure that this is fulfilled, and I know that the Arts Council is determined to support us in this. Against that background, I will ensure that the House's views about the funding of the arts in all parts of England, and the tributes paid to the Northern Ballet, are well and clearly understood by the Arts Council.

11.57 pm

**Mr. James Lamond** (Oldham, Central and Royton): The Minister mentioned that 18 Back Benchers were present to hear the debate. That is important. I want to explain why I have come, as my constituency is a little removed from the site of the Northern Ballet Theatre. I came to emphasise the spread of population surrounding this centre of culture in Manchester.

It is necessary to realise that this affair has implications far beyond the bounds of culture of the north-west. Oldham council puts out a brochure to attract

industrialists to the north-west and mentions the cultural activities there. We believe that if we are to attract major companies, their executives will be more willing to come to the area if we can provide the cultural activities to which they have been accustomed in the larger cities. Support for the arts is important for that reason, as well as being very important for culture itself.

I welcome the remarks made by the Minister, who has revealed a chink of hope. If he receives an application for an increase from the Arts Council, I sincerely hope that he will bear in mind the strength of feeling that exists among right hon. and hon. Members representing the north-west.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Twelve o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 9 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*
CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*
REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 16 March.*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Tuesday 14 March at 7 o'clock.*

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*
INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL *(By Order)*

*Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.*

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL *(By Order)*

*Read a Second time and committed.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Nurses (Regrading)

2. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether a comparative study has been carried out into the grades awarded to nurses in each health board area in Northern Ireland; and how many nurses have been regraded upwards after appeal and formal interview to date.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers):** Of the 15,400 nurses in Northern Ireland, some 6,000 have requested informal reviews with their nurse managers. The number of reviews that have been completed is 4,280; 682 posts have been upgraded; 2,574 cases are proceeding with formal appeals; and in 26 of those cases, posts have so far been upgraded.

**Mr. Beggs:** I thank the Minister for the information. Hon. Members will note the very large number of nurses who were totally dissatisfied with their initial grading. I can assure the Minister that many of those nurses are quite disgusted with the appeal procedure that they went through. They felt that the procedure was phoney, and they are still not satisfied. Is the Minister aware that these nurses are now making comparisons not only with grades awarded under other boards but between grades allocated to nurses in hospitals within board areas? School nurses also feel that they have been very badly treated, with the low grades awarded to them. Night sisters reckon that no consideration has been given to the special service and back-up that they provide to staff nurses. Young nurses attempting to obtain higher qualifications for the benefit of their profession in general see no recognition for their extra qualifications. What action will the Minister take to remove this overall dissatisfaction and see that nurses in general are given decent pay awards?

**Mr. Viggers:** The hon. Gentleman's remarks are totally unjustified. It was always recognised by both staff and management representatives that such a massive exercise of regrading would lead to variations. For this reason, all staff who were dissatisfied were given the opportunity to request informal reviews with their nurse-managers. The fact is that over two-thirds of nurses were satisfied with their regrading, without any appeal at all.

**Mr. Kilfedder:** Will the Minister, who is very conscientious and caring, look at this matter again? Nurses, who deserve the support of the community, feel extremely dissatisfied. Because of their grave dissatisfaction will the Minister look into their complaint?

**Mr. Viggers:** Absolutely not. Nurses' pay has increased by more than one third in real terms since 1979, and the average increase this year for nurses was 17·4 per cent. That is a generous settlement which reflects the important work done by the nurses.

**Mr. McGrady:** In view of the Minister's reply, will he arrange to meet the senior management of the Down unit of management in order to remove the obvious injustices and anomalies which have arisen from the clinical

regrading in that area? In view of the new regime, will he also arrange a meeting with that senior management to ensure that the grading of the various ward nurses is adequate? Great injustices and anomalies have arisen as a result of the regrading and the Minister must intervene to resolve the difficulties.

**Mr. Viggers:** I stand firm behind the general principle of the regrading, but if there is a particular problem I shall pass it on to my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) the Under-Secretary of State, who is responsible for health matters, who is currently on a visit overseas.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Does my hon. Friend agree that this was the most generous settlement ever for the nurses —much more generous than the settlement at the time of the Ulster Unionist-Labour pact of the 1970s? Does he also agree that, looking further ahead at demographic factors, nurses' pay will have to rise significantly over the next decade if we are to have sufficient nurses?

**Mr. Viggers:** My hon. Friend is right. The agreement reached on regrading was in parity with a similar one reached in the nursing and midwifery joint negotiating council in Great Britain. But in Northern Ireland a further £32 million was made available in order to allow the regrading.

**Ms. Mowlam:** Does the Minister agree that the Government's handling of the nurses' pay award has been matched in its incompetency and unpopularity only by their handling of the NHS review? Therefore, will he explain to the House this afternoon why he will not risk a ballot for hospitals that want to opt out? If opting out is about self-government, why is it only he who has a vote?

**Mr. Viggers:** The hon. Lady's remarks are not justified. The criteria recommended by the nurses' pay review body were agreed nationally and accepted in full by the Government. The nationally agreed criteria were implemented by health and social services boards in Northern Ireland following agreement by staff and management representatives on the nurses and midwives joint staff councils, so there has been a broad consensus in the regrading and there is nothing for the Government to regret.

## Short Brothers

3. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response has been received to the offer by Her Majesty's Government to sell Short Brothers Ltd.

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King):** I advised the House last week that six preliminary proposals for the purchase of Shorts had been received, and that two—Bombardier Inc. and GEC/Fokker—were being asked to submit final proposals by 30 April. I also said that I was considering whether a further proposal should be included in the short-list. I can now inform the House that I met MBB yesterday and have agreed to add its name to the short-list.

**Mr. Colvin:** It would be wrong to ask my right hon. Friend to state a preference for any of those three bids, but will he note that of the three on the short-list MMB is busy with the takeover by Daimler-Benz? The GEC/Fokker consortium bid looks like a bit of a carve-up of the company, and only Bombardier can meet those requirements set out by the company for privatisation which have been endorsed by his Department. For the record, will my right hon. Friend refresh our memory on those requirements and give an undertaking that he will decide which bid is to be successful without any delay after the deadline date in order to remove the uncertainty hanging over the company.

**Mr. King:** To avoid any misunderstanding, it is MBB, not MMB, that is bidding—in case anyone thinks that the Milk Marketing Board is indulging in a rather unusual diversification.

My hon. Friend rightly said that I should not indulge in any advance speculation, and then he took the opportunity to do so. I do not intend to prejudge the matter. I invited each of those companies to put forward final proposals by 30 April because I judged each of them to be of substance and with an involvement in the industry to be able to make a substantial contribution to our objective—which is to see Shorts go into the private sector on a basis that offers the greatest benefit to the Northern Ireland economy and the best possible future for the people who work in the company.

**Mr. Peter Robinson:** The Secretary of State will recall that, when giving evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, he paid particular attention to the importance of the three divisions of the company remaining intact. Do any or all of the three bidders envisage keeping together the company's three divisions, and do any or all of the three bidders intend to proceed with the FJX project?

**Mr. King:** Short Brothers plc does not yet know the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question and has not put forward any proposals. It wishes to go forward with the FJX. Everyone who has expressed an interest is absolutely aware that our preferred course is to return the company, as a single unit, to the private sector. These matters are being considered and—as the hon. Gentleman knows—each of the groups of companies that I described knows Short Brothers extremely well. Some are already partners with Shorts in different activities, and are well aware of the different divisions of Shorts and the way in which they contribute to the total enterprise.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** Following the submission of the three proposals in April, how long does the Secretary of State require before he reaches his final decision?

**Mr. King:** I cannot give a specific answer, but I am anxious to reach the earliest possible decision and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will support me in that. It is clearly desirable to bring this period of uncertainty to an end and I am hopeful—from what I have already heard and discussions that I have had with the three groups concerned, and because there is also now an upturn in airliner activity and a considerable demand for aeroplanes —that there is a good opportunity for us to do so. I can certainly confirm that the Government are determined to do all that they can to bring the matter to a speedy and successful conclusion.

**Mr. Jim Marshall:** We appreciate that the Secretary of State has difficult decisions to make on this matter. However, I must press him further on the three bids. Will

he give an assurance that, when considering the bids, he will favour the one that offers the best prospects for the survival of the three component parts of the present company when it is privatised?

**Mr. King:** I have made clear our preferred option, and that is the basis on which we invited bids. I must also make clear my determination to achieve the best possible outcome. This is one matter over which there is no doubt, and which nobody seriously challenges. I am grateful for the support of the Select Committee, composed of hon. Members from both sides of the House, on this. It is of the greatest importance to end public ownership of Shorts as soon as possible so that it can move into the private sector. Public ownership has not been a good friend of Short Brothers plc and the sooner it ends the better.

## Republic of Ireland

4. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next meet representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland; and what matters he will discuss.

**Mr. Tom King:** I shall meet representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland at the next meeting of the intergovernmental conference. I expect this to take place shortly, but no date has yet been set. The agenda for the meeting has not yet been drawn up.

**Mr. Hunter:** What discussions about 1992 does my right hon. Friend, or his officials, propose to have with Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Ireland? Will the opportunities of 1992 be maximised to the benefit of the economies of the Republic and Northern Ireland?

**Mr. King:** We certainly believe that 1992 could have significant benefits. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) has already jointly chaired with the industry Minister of the Irish Republic a conference of the Irish Institute of European Affairs at Louvain, to talk about the implications of 1992. Further discussions and decisions will be necessary on harmonisation of tariffs, customs duties, monetary compensatory amounts and a number of other matters which will have considerable implications for the border. It is our ambition to eliminate any distortions and help to stimulate trade and reduce the opportunity for what is euphemistically called the import-export business.

**Mr. William Ross:** When the Secretary of State meets the Government of the Irish Republic, will he be perfectly truthful and straightforward with them and tell tham that they do not have a cat's chance of obtaining a power-sharing devolved Government? Will he also tell them that the Government accept that there is a need for an improved system of government in Northern Ireland, and that, as there is not a power-sharing devolved Government, other means must be found?

**Mr. King:** I am not sure whether the Irish Government are waiting on the edge of their seat to hear that announcement from me. They have made no proposals to me on such matters. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are at present having discussions and inviting interested parties to let us have their views on what they consider the best way forward. I am glad to say that a number are responding, and I hope that all who care about the situation in the Province will make their contribution to the discussions. My hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough, (Dr. Mawhinney) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—whom I have asked to help me —will be very interested to hear any views that are expressed.

**Mr. Gow:** Does my right hon. Friend anticipate that Irish Ministers will complain to him at the next meeting that whereas the enormous benefits of the community charge are to be heaped on his constituency and mine, they are to be withheld from the people of Northern Ireland, whether they be nationalists or unionists?

**Mr. King:** I shall not respond to that question in any way. As I think that the main thrust falls elsewhere, I shall leave it to lie where it falls.

**Mr. Ashdown:** While we are on the subject of meeting representatives of the Irish Republic, will the Secretary of State join me in welcoming the moves to establish the parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

I fully recognise that the Secretary of State does not make decisions about who those representatives should be, but will he join me in hoping that they will be as broadly drawn as possible? In particular, may I ask him to suggest to his right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that there should be a representative of the alliance party in Northern Ireland in the Upper House?

**Mr. King:** I hear what the right hon. Gentleman says, and I hope that the parliamentary tier will be as broadly based as possible. I hope that every party will take part in the recognition that this is a relationship between the sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom and the Parliament of the Irish Republic. If, as I understand, some unionists have reservations about taking part, some of us will be left wondering what on earth they are willing to take part in. They have reservations about the North-South relationship. If they have reservations about the east-west relationship as well, where are we?

**Mr. Cash:** In the context of the European Economic Community and the question of frontier controls, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is in the interests of neither the United Kingdom nor the Republic of Eire for us to abolish such controls, and that there is a good deal of misconception in the European Commission about the need to do so?

**Mr. King:** That will clearly require considerable discussion. It has major security implications, and we understand that very well. Indeed, it has a number of implications for important issues that affect both the island of Ireland and Great Britain—such as animal health, to which we all attach importance. There is no doubt that the economic distortions that have existed across the border have led to a significant smuggling industry, which I should like to see substantially reduced.

**Mr. McNamara:** Whether or not we see a reduction in the smuggling industry—which I think we would all welcome—it is surely in the greatest interests of the island of Ireland as a whole that the parts of the island that are capable of co-operating on an industrial and economic rôle should be able to do so, in the interests of both the people of the North and the South and the relationship between the two communities.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the greatest thing about the interparliamentary tier is that people come from two sovereign Parliaments, and that those who are prepared to go abroad on Inter-Parliamentary Union delegations should be prepared if necessary to use an IPU umbrella to partake in a relationship between two sovereign Parliaments which will not in any way impinge on the integrity or status of those taking part, but could do a great deal to heal wounds in Ireland and bring a degree of peace to the North?

**Mr. King:** I think that that is right. My understanding is that, unless the position has changed, every party in the House is in favour of talks, and of meeting and co-operating on matters in respect of which it is beneficial to do so. That is true of all the democratic parties in Northern Ireland, which have never tried to argue against economic co-operation, contacts and discussion. This proposal—which is separate and is being discussed, under the auspices of the IPU, between the sovereign Parliaments of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland—seems to me to be a very sensible one to which all parties should subscribe.

**Mr. Temple-Morris:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and myself, and all those who have been conducting these talks, which are now in a stage of advanced discussion, are very grateful for the support of my right hon. Friend, Her Majesty's Government and the House? My right hon. Friend should be left in no doubt that whenever we see hon. Members from the Unionist party, they are very welcome.

**Mr. King:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His leadership in the matter is much appreciated. I recognise the depth of ignorance and misunderstanding that exists between our two countries in so many areas and I welcome the prospect that hon. Members of the House of Commons and hon. Members of the Parliament in the Irish Republic will have opportunities to talk and meet together. We may not agree, but I hope that it will be helpful in clearing up many of the misunderstandings and the distrust that can exist.

## Students (Benefits)

5. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning full-time students who can not avail themselves of social security benefit because of their full-time status.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney):** From 1 September 1988 to 28 February 1989, 12 representations had been received, mainly from hon. Members of this House.

**Mr. Mallon:** Is the Minister aware of the growing number of young people who are students who have no visible means of support because they do not qualify for educational maintenance allowance or income support and if, in addition, their parents are on income support, those parents will lose the dependent child premium? The problem is made worse by the fact that many colleges deem people to be full-time students when, in effect, they are part-time students, as a result of which they cannot receive income support. Will the Minister assure the House that his Department and the Department of Social Security will look on the plight of those approximately 2,000 people and see what can be done, as a matter of urgency?

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern. It is my understanding that if the students' course is under 21 hours and they satisfy other relevant conditions, income support is then payable. If they are attending for more than 21 hours, they may apply to their local education and library boards for a discretionary award which, if awarded, could cover tuition fees and, subject to means testing, a maintenance grant.

**Mr. William Ross:** Will the Minister confirm that most of the concerns that hon. Members have put to him in the communications that he has received refer to the very point raised by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)? In the light of that, will he look at the question put to him and his answer because he is not quite right in what he said? Will he and the Northern Ireland Office also consider that this question highlights a real problem, in that the only remedy would appear to lie at United Kingdom level, yet we find ourselves having to ask the question of a Minister of the Northern Ireland Office, when it should go to the relevant Minister of the Department of Social Security in the United Kingdom?

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that I based my answer on the best advice available to me. I recognise that there is concern and I recognise the United Kingdom dimension of that concern. There is, of course, nothing to preclude the hon. Gentleman from drawing his concern to the attention of Ministers at the Department of Social Security as well.

## Drugs

6. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to dissuade young people in the Province from becoming involved in drug misuse or drug trafficking.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The incidence of drug misuse in Northern Ireland is relatively small compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. Government policy is, therefore, aimed at preventing young people from becoming involved in the drug scene. The main emphasis is placed on health education in schools and on youth organisations.

**Mr. Rathbone:** All hon. Members will welcome that beneficial comparison between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, sad though it is for the rest of the United Kingdom. Will my hon. Friend endorse the role of drug education co-ordinators in Northern Ireland and confirm that there will be continued central Government funding for them?

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The fact that the incidence of drug misuse in Northern Ireland is lower than in other parts of the United Kingdom is due to a number of factors. However, my hon. Friend correctly highlights the important role of health education and drug education in the schools. We provide extra materials for such courses and we also provide training courses for teachers, to help them in developing teaching about drugs within the health education programme in schools. My

hon. Friend will know that under our education reform proposals, health education will become a compulsory cross-curricular theme.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** Does the Minister agree that there could be a tendency to be complacent when comparing the incidence of drug abuse in Northern Ireland with that in the rest of the Kingdom? Is not the lower incidence of drug abuse in Northern Ireland to a large extent due to the success of the drug operations unit of the RUC, which only recently has uncovered drug supplies?

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The hon. Gentleman is right on both counts. We are not complacent, and we must guard against any chance of becoming complacent because our incidence of drug misuse is lower than that in the United Kingdom as a whole. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to that fact and I endorse his appreciation of the RUC drugs squad, which is very effective and makes a significant contribution to the low incidence of drug misuse in Northern Ireland.

## Anglo-Irish Agreement

7. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a consultation paper on his review of the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

**Mr. Tom King:** I invited members of the public, political parties, and other interested groups and bodies to submit their views on the working of the intergovernmental conference. A number of representations have been received and these are being carefully considered, together with the most appropriate way to publish our conclusions.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that one of the major shortcomings of the present agreement is that it contains no allowance to enable Northern Ireland politicians to make an input into the meetings of the conference? Does he agree that if the Anglo-Irish Agreement is to be an effective piece of political machinery, it should seek to improve relationships not just between London and Dublin, but between London, Dublin and Belfast?

**Mr. King:** My hon. Friend's question gives me the opportunity to explain the position. His first assertion is not true. I want to make it clear that there is every opportunity for input into the conference—for advice and consultation in advance of it and for discussions afterwards about its outcome. Representatives of other parties have come to see me to discuss the conference, and I am always willing to discuss with the parties and with hon. Members ways in which their input might be increased.

**Mr. Duffy:** Will the Secretary of State take into account in his review the rejection by the Home Secretary of political solutions on the BBC "Today" programme, as reported in today's edition of the *Evening Standard*? Do the Home Secretary's remarks represent a shift in Government policy, and did he have discussions with the Secretary of State before he made those remarks?

**Mr. King:** I have not seen the newspaper to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I heard the interview. My right hon. Friend was on his way to the conference of the Trevi Ministers, who co-ordinate the response to terrorism across Europe. His comments seem to me to be manifest good sense. I was not aware that my right hon. Friend's remarks contained a startling new announcement of Government policy.

**Mr. Stanbrook:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Home Secretary's words were refreshingly welcome? Will the Government seek again—this time, we hope successfully—the co-operation of the Irish Government in the matter of extradition?

**Mr. King:** We have discussed these matters and the Irish Government are aware—we have recently let them have our views on the matter—of the problems that exist under the present extradition system. I shall not comment further because, as my hon. Friend will know, there are at the moment three cases on which judgment is reserved. Everyone knows the importance that the British Government attach to effective extradition arrangements between our two countries.

## Kincora Boys' Home

8. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what compensation payments have been made to ex-residents of the Kincora boys' home.

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart):** A number of claims for compensation have been received by health and social services boards from ex-residents of Kincora boys' home. To date, settlements in respect of three of the claims, amounting to £22,500 plus costs, have been agreed between the parties.

**Mr. Livingstone:** As we now seem to be getting out-of-court settlements shortly before a court case is due to be heard and the matter is, therefore, not being debated in open court, and as the Terry inquiry report has never been published, will the Minister consider an open inquiry into the events at the Kincora boys' home, especially in the light of the disturbing information that five of the key witnesses interviewed by the RUC have met violent deaths —three were murdered and two allegedly died by their own hand? Even by the standards of violence that we have become used to hearing about in Northern Ireland, that is far too much to be a coincidence.

**Mr. Stewart:** As others have said to the hon. Gentleman from this Dispatch Box, if he has evidence of wrongdoing I hope that he will put it to the appropriate authorities. The House is not much impressed by those who make allegations but do not substantiate them. Out-of-court settlements are a normal part of compensation claims and it is to the great advantage of all parties concerned if such settlements can be reached.

**Mr. Flannery:** Is it really in order for the Minister to ask my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) to produce evidence when he has asked for an inquiry—*[Interruption.]* If you could shut up for a moment and let me say——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman was not referring to me.

**Mr. Flannery:** Thank you for your help, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Minister again what my hon. Friend asked him. Will he institute an inquiry into that group of deaths and into the background of what happened at Kincora

boys' home? Many of us would like to know the facts but cannot get at them and we have a right as Members of Parliament to know them.

**Mr. Stewart:** Thorough inquiries were carried out a few years ago by Sir George Terry and Judge Hughes who found no evidence to suggest that the matter should be taken further or reopened.

**Mr. McNamara:** The Minister cannot get away with that reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)—*[Interruption.]* Well, he should not get away with it. It is one thing for the Minister to say offhandedly that inquiries have been held, but it is another for him to admit that £22,000 has been paid in out-of-court compensations. If the Terry and Hughes inquiries have found nothing to be worried about, why have those large sums been paid in compensation? Who is being asked to keep quiet by not going to court?

**Mr. Stewart:** The hon. Gentleman has got the whole thing wrong. Everybody knows that three staff at the Kincora boys' home were convicted of serious sexual offences in 1981 and were given sentences of several years. Nobody has denied that there was wrongdoing at that time. However, the other allegations relating to claimants or former residents of the Kincora boys' home are not substantiated, and, unless there is some basis on which they can be followed through, I accept the evidence of the investigations that were carried out by an eminent chief constable and an eminent judge a few years ago to establish the position.

## Prison Visits

9. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to place further restrictions on visits to prisoners in Northern Ireland's prisons; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** We have no current plans to restrict either the number of visits or their duration in prisons in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Maginnis:** Will the Minister assure me that abolishing Monday visits is not under consideration, or that if it is under consideration, such a decision will not be taken? The Minister must realise that prison officers have a difficult enough job already without his Department creating further disruption in the prisons due to changes in visiting. Will he also tell us why £1·25 million worth of machinery bought from the prison budget for workshops in Maghaberry was transferred, free of charge, to a Scottish Department?

**Mr. Stewart:** I require notice of the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, but on his main point about changes in visiting arrangements, several measures have been under consideration at official level to try to establish better ways of reducing delays for visitors to prisons and to introduce better visiting conditions. No proposals have been put to me about that and discussions are at a purely consultative stage. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that no such decisions have been taken.

**Mr. Alton:** While the Minister is considering the question of visits to the Maze and other prisons in Northern Ireland, will he say whether he has considered the proposals put to him by the Campaign for Lifers? In particular, will he say whether he will improve ease of access for visits to prisoners in the mixed wings, and look at ways of weaning people away from the paramilitary wings and into the mixed wings of prisons like the Maze?

**Mr. Stewart:** As the hon. Gentleman may know, the regime at Maghaberry prison is designed for exactly that purpose. The life sentence review boards have already established release dates for prisoners in well over 100 cases. The board is working satisfactorily in that respect. I am aware that certain representations have been made for changes, but I am not convinced of their merits under the present circumstances.

**Mr. Molyneaux:** Can the Minister explain the background to another type of visit, which was made last Sunday to Maghaberry prison in my constituency and took the form of a march by 150-plus Republicans, led by Mrs. Bernadette McAliskey, complete with the starry plough flag and all the rest of it? Can the Minister say whether the required notice was given to the police and, more important, whether the Northern Ireland Office authorised the use of the prison grounds for the march and the protest meeting at the prison gates?

**Mr. Stewart:** I shall investigate the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman and reply as soon as I can.

## Local Government

11. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has made to provide for the restoration of local government in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. King:** I have no current plans for changes to the existing structure of local government in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Gow:** What objections does my right hon. Friend have to conferring traditional powers on the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland, and to setting up a regional council for the Province, as promised in our 1979 manifesto?

**Mr. Tom King:** I should like to hear the attitude of those who might take part in such an activity. That is why I have asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to work with me on establishing views on this and other approaches, to see which might attract the support of people in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. McGrady:** Does the Minister recall that of the nine causes of civil unrest that were found by the Scarman tribunal, seven were laid at the door of local government in Northern Ireland? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that the history of local government in Northern Ireland since that time with regard to fair employment and participation of minority parties in local government shows that local government in Northern Ireland has a very long way to go before powers can be restored to it?

**Mr Tom King:** Of course I understand that. Some of the behaviour of some councils reinforces what the hon. Gentleman says. At the same time, we have sought to address those areas of grievance, whether in housing or electoral law arrangements. I am sure that my hon. Friend

the Under-Secretary would not envisage changes unless they were accompanied by adequate safeguards to ensure that there could not be malpractices.

### Cross-border Security

13. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he has had recently with the Government of the Irish Republic on cross-border security; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Tom King:** I discussed security co-operation with members of the Irish Government at a meeting of the intergovernmental conference on 8 February. A copy of the joint statement issued afterwards has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Bellingham:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that although cross-border co-operation is improving the whole time, there is still some way to go? When my right hon. Friend next meets his counterpart in the Irish Republic will he raise the question of hot pursuit across the border by both forces, and look at that issue seriously? Surely it will play a major part in the fight against terrorism?

**Mr. King:** My hon. Friend may be aware of two events that took place yesterday—first, a substantial find of mortar bombs made by the Garda Siochana and also, sad to say, the tragic murder last night of two soldiers on the edge of Londonderry. I hope that I speak on behalf of the whole House in expressing our deep sympathy to the families of those young soldiers who were brutally murdered. Those two incidents clearly bring home to me the vital importance of co-operation, so that wherever terrorists may be, we can effectively bring the security forces to bear, to bring the terrorists to justice.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** As the railway line across the border is now generally closed due to lack of security, has that matter been discussed with the Republic of Ireland Government? As the Northern Ireland authorities are improving security in that region, have the Dublin Government decided on any initiative to improve security on the railway line?

**Mr. King:** As the right hon. Gentleman knows, disruption to the railway line was, unfortunately, caused within Northern Ireland. We are certainly concerned. One recognises that the attack by the terrorists, which jeopardises or threatens to jeopardise the jobs of a number of people and disadvantages many local people who depend on the railway line in one sense or another, emphasises the importance of co-operation between us.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher):** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be presenting the north-east business man of the year awards.

**Mr. Duffy:** Is the Prime Minister aware that my constituents, who are flanked by the two filthiest rivers in Britain—the Don and the Rother—are increasingly worried about their drinking water, and are soon to be saddled with a large-scale, opencast mining operation? They ask me why the Secretary of State for the Environment continues to focus on profits and ownership in basic services such as water and energy instead of addressing growing threats to the quality of their lives.

**The Prime Minister:** Drinking water for the hon. Gentleman's constituency is supplied by the Yorkshire water authority's grid system, which takes water from the river Derwent near York that is piped into South Yorkshire. That is a high-quality supply which regularly meets EC drinking water directive standards. As to the rivers that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, they are in that 10 per cent. of rivers that are of neither good nor fair quality, and some are bad. About £25 million will be spent on improving a 63 km stretch of the River Don, so that it will be capable of supporting coarse fish life. Improvements to the remainder of the Rother will be made through the extension of sewage treatment works' capacity, which should enable the Rother to be upgraded to class 2 quality. If no profits were made, there would be no investment in public services. Someone has to make profits, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be very grateful that many private sector businesses make profits, to supply the nationalised industries with the means of improving the quality of water.

**Mr. Onslow:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that while the report of the Environment Select Committee on toxic waste highlights many shortcomings going back over many years, particularly at local level, it fails to emphasise that the Government have brought forward proposals for major legislation that will deal with those matters? May we expect that legislation in the next Session of Parliament?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is right. In the Select Committee's report, there is a list of waste consultative documents and of the technical proposals that have been made—in particular, a major paper of 1986—and several waste management technical advice papers published since 1986. My right hon. Friend will also be aware that we announced last November proposals on precisely how we would update Labour's Control of Pollution Act 1974 and deal with some of the local authority problems that he rightly highlights. They are autonomous local authorities and are responsible for waste disposal, but the law needs amending. The drafting is well in hand, and I hope that that legislation will come forward in the next parliamentary year.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Is the Prime Minister aware that the whole House will be relieved at the discovery of the explosives and weapons in north Yorkshire earlier this week, and also strongly agrees with the decision to make no change in planned programmes? Such changes would be concessions to the kind of beings who caused the atrocities in County Tyrone on Tuesday and who killed the soldiers in Derry last night.

Will the Prime Minister please tell us who will have to foot the bill for the extra £5 million that must be found for the Channel link?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course we shall go ahead with the plans for conferences. We are all immensely grateful to the police and security services which enable the free speech of democracy to go ahead.

With regard to the British Rail link, I understand that the right hon. Gentleman has dropped a couple of noughts somewhere. It is much more likely to be £500 million, but it is Government policy that the users of the new line should pay for the full costs, including environmental costs.

**Mr. Kinnock:** I only hope that my errors will have the same effect of increasing finance as did the Prime Minister's errors.

In view of the confusion that followed BR's statement, and as many people who are directly affected by the rail development are confused and dismayed, exactly what is the Prime Minister's view of what proportions of the extra cost should be found from the public purse?

**The Prime Minister:** I wish that the right hon. Gentleman would listen to my replies. I made it quite clear that it is Goverment policy that the users of the new line, rather than the generality of taxpayers, should pay the full costs, including environmental costs. The alternative methods, whether they be aircraft or ferries, are not subsidised.

Q2. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Coombs:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proposed National Health Service reforms are not a prelude to privatisation, and will leave the service free for those who need it and give a better service for consumers? In view of the huge extra resources that have been put into the Health Service by this Government, does she agree that the campaign of disinformation and half-truths that has been embarked on by several National Health Service unions and, to a certain extent, even by the British Medical Association, unduly alarms patients and shows scant regard for professional responsibilities?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no question of privatising the National Health Service, nor could there ever be any question of privatising the service. We do not and should not pay for the service at the point of use. It remains a national Health Service. We are anxious that the enormous amount of money that is spent on it should give the best value. After all, the average family of four now spends in taxation about £34 a week on keeping the Health Service going. That is a great deal more than when Labour was in power, because we are a great deal more prosperous now. We therefore have a service which is a great deal better.

Also, the proposals will give a good deal more choice, including choice for patients to change their doctor more easily if they wish to do so. It will give more choice and more responsibility in hospitals to doctors and nurses.

**Mr. Turner:** It has been almost a decade since the Prime Minister stood at the portals of No. 10 and uttered the beautiful words of St. Francis of Assisi. In view of the massive divisions that still exist between the rich and poor and the north and south, and in view of the poverty and hopelessness among our people, will she now concede that her Right-wing ideological experiment with Britain has failed?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman is looking very well on it, isn't he? Extremely well. So, indeed, are all the Opposition Members. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the standards of living of people in this country have gone up beyond all recognition, as has the standard of social services everywhere. That is something that he should be very pleased about when he remembers the terrible circumstances and strikes that beset us in 1978-79, which helped to turn out the Labour party and put in the best Government that we have had for many a long year.

Q3. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Curry:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that high-speed rail links are operating or are being built in France, Germany, Italy and Spain and are planned in Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands? What would be the economic cost to Britain of not being part of an integrated high-speed rail service, particularly for those parts of Britain that are not in the south-east and especially in view of the creation of a single market in Europe?

**The Prime Minister:** I know that my hon. Friend is a great enthusiast, as I am, for the effective operation of the single market, but, as we had only some 24 hours ago the proposals for a single high-speed rail link and as that will have to go through the private Bill procedure, when all representations can then be made, to go further now would be a little premature.

May I just point out that the railway links from all the main commercial centres into London are already in place and could well carry more freight than they do at present without extra provision?

**Dr. Owen:** In view of the urgent need to attract more capital investment in road and rail, particularly private investment, would the Prime Minister consider launching an infrastructure bond with tax concessions to get the investment that is urgently needed?

**The Prime Minister:** No. We are already attracting a good deal more private investment, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. The Channel tunnel is being built totally by private investment as is the Dartford bridge. What the right hon. Gentleman proposes would be a subsidy, and at the moment we are getting the extra investment without that. There is a good deal more scope for private investment in road and rail.

**Mr. Heath:** Reverting to the fast link, will my right hon. Friend reconsider the decision that she has just announced? Is she aware that the extra £500 million that British Rail has now undertaken to spend relates to the protection of the environment, whether in the weald of Kent or in the gardens and homes of people in the London boroughs? As the Government and the Prime Minister herself, in particular, have set the protection of the environment at the top of their objectives, it is right that this should be met out of Treasury funds and not solely by the commuters of Kent. Moreover, is it not true that

wherever else the environment is protected, for example on the motorways, it is not the user who pays, as the cost is met from general expenditure on roads? This should, therefore, be a comparable example. I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider the whole situation.

**The Prime Minister:** I have enunciated correctly the general principle. We do not subsidise the airways to the continent; we do not subsidise the ferries to the continent. One could say, in fact, that motorists perhaps pay more in road tax than is spent on roads. We believe that British Rail will consult the private sector over ways of offsetting the extra cost. At the worst, it is British Rail's view that the extra costs do not render the project unviable.

**Mr. Boateng:** Does the Prime Minister agree with the Select Committee on the Environment that more resources should be applied to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution? If so, will she tell the Secretary of State or do we have to wait for another duff briefing?

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Gentleman looks at the report very carefully he will see at the back a whole list of measures that we have been taking for many years and the way in which we have been steadily improving the amount spent on the environment, which is way above what was previously spent. Of course, I understand the hon. Gentleman's difficulty. He knows full well that we have to amend Labour's Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the arrangements made then. That is very much a need. The hon. Gentleman is aware that many of the problems lie with local authorities. We shall consider his suggestion carefully, but I must tell him that most of the legislation is already being prepared and that we hope to bring it to the House next year.

Q4. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Squire:** At the risk of repetition, I welcome my right hon. Friend's earlier answer on toxic waste. Against the background of improving the standard of our rivers and of air pollution, will my right hon. Friend undertake to look closely at the unanimous report of the Select Committee which details problems going back to 1974, and in particular to adopt all or almost all of the radical solutions contained in that report so that in that area, too, we may set an example to the rest of the Community?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Yes, the quality of our rivers is generally improving. Indeed, 90 per cent. of our rivers are of good or fair quality compared with only 75 per cent. of rivers in the European Community. As my hon. Friend knows, we have major programmes to improve the quality of sewage disposal and major environmental programmes in which a considerable amount of capital is being invested. As my hon. Friend knows, we have announced certain proposals in the House last November, and a major consultation paper came out on 29 January. We will consider everything that has been said because I recognise that the Committee spent a great deal of time on this. I think that my hon. Friend will be the first to compliment the witnesses from the Department of the Environment who gave such excellent evidence to the Committee. We will consider the report and come forward with a detailed reply.

## Channel Tunnel Rail Link

3.31 pm

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the announcement by British Rail yesterday on the definitive route for a high-speed rail link across the county of Kent.

**The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo):** I recognise that since British Rail published proposals last July for a new railway line from the Channel tunnel to London, the matter has been a cause of great concern to a number of right hon. and hon. Members whose constituencies were affected, including my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold).

I welcome the fact that blight has now been lifted for a large number of people living in Kent and London. I also welcome British Rail's approach to compensation, which will help those most directly affected who could otherwise face difficulty in selling their property. I particularly welcome the emphasis which British Rail has placed on environmental protection. Roughly 23 miles of the route will be in tunnel and 30 miles will follow the existing railways or the line of the M20. British Rail is proposing only 15 miles of new surface route. In drawing up its proposed route, I know that British Rail has sought to follow as closely as possible the criteria established by Kent county council, which has played a notable role in guiding British Rail in the significant changes which it has made to its original proposals.

It is British Rail's intention, after further consultation on the details of the route alignment, to introduce a private Bill in November. It will also be exploring the options for participation in the project by the private sector. In considering whether the Government will be able by then to support the introduction of such a Bill, we shall want to be satisfied that the route has been subjected to a full environmental assessment, so that the Bill may be accompanied by a satisfactory environmental statement, and that any British Rail investment would be likely, within a reasonable time, to earn a proper commercial return. British Rail will be refining the forecasts of traffic, revenues and costs.

The project creates major concerns for those close to the line. It can also offer important benefits to international travellers, Kent commuters and British business.

**Mr. Arnold:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his report inasmuch as the matter is of considerable concern to people in south-east London and in Kent. While thousands of people on the discarded routes will feel considerable relief this morning, and while thousands on the route, who see the £500 million worth of environmental improvements working in their favour, can also feel relief, there remain thousands of people, notably in north-west Kent, who will still be exposed to environmental damage.

Will the Minister comment especially on the predicament of the people of Istead Rise and New Barn? Last July British Rail issued a document showing that those villages would be protected by the north Downs tunnel which would have been extended to Longfield in the west. In October British Rail brought out a new document that brought that line back to the surface. Yesterday, when British Rail made its announcement, apparently nothing had been done to help the people in those villages. It was only subsequently—thanks to the courtesy of my hon. Friend the Minister in providing some maps that in turn he had received from British Rail—that we could see the exact line of the route.

On looking at those maps, we found that there has been a small and improved realignment in that area. Will the Minister assure us that British Rail will take considerable pains in the future months to make further adjustments to protect the environment—especially to the vertical alignment of the track—and to provide protective shielding where residential areas would be otherwise exposed?

**Mr. Portillo:** I certainly recognise my hon. Friend's difficulties with the proposal. I know that British Rail is offering to buy, I think, 37 properties in his constituency. I am glad that he has recognised that the alignment through his constituency is more southerly than the original and that much of it will pass through cuttings. I hope that my hon. Friend will pursue his detailed points with British Rail. I know that he has made arrangements to meet British Rail shortly, and I hope that that meeting will be productive.

**Mr. Andrew Rowe** (Mid-Kent): I hope that my hon. Friend is aware that yesterday's announcement has brought precious little comfort to the people in my constituency—whether at Lenham Heath, which up to now has not been involved, or at Hollingbourne, which will still be desecrated—or, indeed, to the many villages not directly on the route but whose pattern of traffic will be completely disrupted by the creation of a major Parkway station. Will my hon. Friend confirm that this railway line is only a part of a major realignment of the British Rail network that will need to be capable of taking Berne gauge freight wagons throughout the British Isles? Will my hon. Friend recognise, too, that many people believe that British Rail's obsession with the centre of London is bad news for everybody in the United Kingdom —including the people of London?

**Mr. Portillo:** I believe that my hon. Friend underplays some of the changes to the realignment. After all, the new line avoids Charing and the central village areas of Hollingbourne, Harrietsham and Lenham, all of which are important to him. The speed of the trains through his constituency, which he feared would be 186 miles per hour, has been reduced to 140 miles per hour. The number of households that British Rail is offering to buy in his constituency is now 86.

I do not believe that my hon. Friend makes a valid point when he says that this is a part of a re-creation of the British Rail network. The cost of converting the whole of British Rail to the Berne gauge would be absolutely prohibitive. My hon. Friend will know that this railway line is designed principally to take passenger traffic, and I feel that his fears are misplaced. The capacity on the existing railway lines for freight is greater than that of the Channel tunnel.

**Mr. Bob Dunn** (Dartford): Is my hon. Friend aware that British Rail's proposals for route 2 to be the preferred choice for a fast rail link show massive concessions to London, but do little for most of Kent? Does my hon. Friend agree that British Rail must revise the

environmental protection content of its proposals if it wishes to eliminate the anxieties of the people of north-west Kent? Will my hon. Friend accept that the compensation package so far announced is completely and woefully inadequate to deal with the damage that is being done to people's properties and lives?

**Mr. Portillo:** My hon. Friend's constituency is very badly affected, and I have every sympathy with him. I would point out that the speed of trains going through his constituency will be 125 miles per hour, which is much lower than he would have anticipated. My hon. Friend was among the many hon. Members who called for important investment in environmental protection in the project. He, among others, called attention to what the French have done. They are quoted as paying 16 per cent. of the costs of environmental protection. The figure for this line is 30 per cent. However, I recognise that British Rail has offered to purchase about 500 properties in his constituency. I stress that that applies to properties within a 240 m corridor which is much more generous than the equivalent available if a road were being constructed.

**Sir John Stanley** (Tonbridge and Malling): As the——

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): What about hon. Members on the Opposition Benches?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I hope that the House would agree that those constituencies which are most——

**Mr. John Prescott** (Kingston upon Hull, East): This is a national issue.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I hope that the House will agree that hon. Members representing the constituencies which are most directly affected should be called first.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I have called Sir John Stanley.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We understand that some hon. Members have a special interest, but this argument extends to Scotland, and repeated representations have been made to you. We must have fairness.

**Mr. Speaker:** The line does not go through the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He will be aware that, after the sad rail disaster in Scotland the other day, the Scottish Members directly concerned were called first.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd** (Stretford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Sir John Stanley:** As it has just been confirmed that there will be no public subsidy for the high-speed line, will my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not give approval for British Rail to introduce a private Bill in this House unless the commercial viability of the project can be shown?

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** On a point of order. Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Portillo:** The point that I was seeking to make in answer to the private notice question is that a great deal of work must be done on traffic, costs and revenue forecasts. British Rail has no doubt—and I see no reason to doubt it—that the line will be viable at some date. However, the date when it will be viable has not yet been settled and we need more information before we can reach a conclusion on that.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Prescott:** I think that you will recognise, Mr. Speaker, that the Opposition maintain that the Channel tunnel is a national project affecting the north and the south of the United Kingdom. I am surprised that the Secretary of State today is not giving his response at the Dispatch Box and appears, yet again, to be avoiding his responsibilities.

Will the Minister ask the Secretary of State whether he is satisfied that such a major investment decision as this should be settled by a private notice question? Will he again consider the possibility of making a full statement to the House so that all hon. Members can give the matter the kind of close questioning that is necessary on a statement which affects all parts of the United Kingdom?

In view of the controversy over the amount of resources that are planned for the route, is the Minister aware that in his announcement yesterday the chairman of British Rail made it clear that while he thought that nearly £0·5 billion extra resources would be required, the figure might be anything up to £1 billion extra? If that is so, and in view of what the Prime Minister said to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, will commuters in north Kent have to pay four or five times as much in fares to travel on the route to London, when the route was advertised as a benefit to the people in north Kent?

Has the Minister considered the idea that I put to the Secretary of State in a letter on 2 February, that the 16 weeks which British Rail is allowing people in the north of England, the south, Kent or anywhere else, to consider the proposal is totally unsatisfactory? British Rail's credibility on this matter leaves a lot to be desired and the only way to deal with the matter is through an independent assessment before the private Bill comes before the House.

**Mr. Portillo:** With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first point, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may have felt that he has been monopolising the House this week, having appeared in the Chamber every day so far. On the other hand, we might have been surprised at the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) did not stay for the debate on lorry weights yesterday. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. These are very serious matters; let us get back to them.

**Mr. Portillo:** The hon. Gentleman said this is no way of settling the investment question, but the investment question is not being settled. The whole point is that a route has been announced; there are further consultations to be undertaken; there are further forecasts to be worked out on the revenues; the costs and all the aspects of the line. So no decision is being taken at this stage. The hon. Gentleman says that the costs could be higher. That is true, the costs could be higher, but the costs could also be lower, and the revenues could be higher. All these things have to be settled.

I can say to him quite definitely that it is far too early to reach any decisions about the fares that will be charged on the line, but it must be recognised that if there are faster, more comfortable services, they may well command a premium price.

*[Mr. Portillo]*

The hon. Gentleman refers to 16 weeks not being sufficient, but that is merely a portion of the entire consultation. This has been going on since July last year and it is apparent that a great deal of notice has been taken of the points that have been made since then in Kent and elsewhere. There will be an opportunity for further consultation before the private Bill is introduced.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the past, when there have been specific questions about the north-west region and my hon. Friends from that region have been excluded when you have called hon. Gentlemen from outside the region——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member has not been excluded. I hope the House will agree that when we are dealing with a matter of great sensitivity concerning individual members' constituencies they should have some priority in putting questions. Nobody has been excluded.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that in successive Scottish questions and answers over the course of this Parliament, there have been many Tory Members from 400 miles away asking questions and taking up time on sensitive Scottish issues. If it applies to Scottish questions, it applies to this.

**Mr. Speaker:** There is no parallel at all.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden** (Dulwich): I would like my hon. Friend to be aware of the sense of desolation and despair experienced by my constituents who live in the neighbourhood of Warwick gardens when they learned two days ago that British Rail proposed to construct a sub-surface junction for the Waterloo link. I shall be asking British Rail to reconsider these proposals. I shall be asking my right hon. Friend to ask British Rail to reconsider its proposals to run this link underground. If this were to go ahead there would be 10 or more years of desolation and devastation in the area of Warwick gardens.

**Mr. Portillo:** If I did the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) an injustice a moment ago, I hope he will accept that I was driven to it by the injustice that I felt had been done to my right hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) has my sympathy because 130 properties are affected in his constituency and it is something that he did not anticipate and that was not on the original route alignment. It is, of course, the intention that Warwick gardens should be restored after the works have been carried out, but I can well understand that my hon. Friend will wish to discuss this very carefully with British Rail to see what arrangements are available for his constituents.

**Mr. John Fraser** (Norwood): Is the Minister aware that the route from Warwick gardens to Waterloo cuts a swathe through my constituency? Can he give an undertaking that British Rail will do what it has not done so far and consult my constituents about the effect of the extension and the use of lines upon their lives, homes and businesses? Secondly, will he undertake that compensation and other environmental protection will go to my constituents, notwithstanding the fact that British Rail may choose to use existing lines? Will he recognise that the increased intensity of freight and passenger traffic and other use of the lines means that the present lines will be used for an entirely different purpose and that it would be quite wrong to let British Rail rest on some kind of legal immunity to deny my constituents compensation and protection?

**Mr. Portillo:** I understand the hon. Member's concern for his constituents, but the problem of intensification of use is one faced by the constituents of many hon. Members regarding both railway lines and roads. There is no guarantee what the use may be in the future, but I certainly believe that, even though it is on an existing railway line, British Rail will do well to consult the hon. Gentleman and I will certainly urge it to do so.

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): May I alert my hon. Friend to the view, widely held in Kent that taxpayers' money should play a part in environmental protection? Does he agree that the reason for this view is that those people appreciate that this is a matter of national concern and that the Government are giving such high priority —rightly, I believe—to ensuring that the line is environmentally acceptable, as well as to current broad policy on environmental matters?

**Mr. Portillo:** I hope my hon. Friend will agree that the important thing is that he should be satisfied that the environmental protection which is guaranteed under the new plan is sufficient. British Rail has gone a long way in proposing a fair degree of environmental protection, which greatly exceeds anything available in France. The question of how that should be funded is a matter on which it is impossible to take decisions at the moment because there is so much information that we do not yet have. Ports and airports are expected to be environmentally acceptable, yet no Government subsidies are available for that purpose.

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is the Minister aware of the united opposition from the three Southwark MPs—members of three different parties—and all members of Southwark council, which met last night and agreed unanimously, to the idea of an overground route from Peckham to Waterloo? Does he agree also that there is some scepticism as to why the 12 miles of the Greater London route from Swanley to Peckham, all through Tory-controlled areas, are underground, whereas the four and a half or five miles of route through non-Tory areas are above ground? Is not the reality that the Minister and his friends are buying off Tory areas while leaving the people who have the worst environment already with worse still as a result of this policy?

**Mr. Portillo:** I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) would have something to say about that, because his constituency is to bear the brunt of the construction in London. I remind the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that the route passes through a number of Conservative constituencies in Kent before reaching London.

**Sir Hugh Rossi** (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is my hon. Friend aware that this is not the first time that Parliament has been concerned with a controversy of this nature? The whole of the British Rail network would never have been constructed had our Victorian predecessors not had the wisdom to adhere to a particular principle in their legislation: that if the individual is required to make a

sacrifice for the benefit of the community as a whole, he should be compensated more than generously. Indeed, compulsory purchase measures provided for market price plus 10 per cent. May I suggest that the legislation adopts the principle of that excellent measure, the Land Compensation Act 1973, whose purpose is to help people whose properties are affected but not acquired. All these provisions should be incorporated in any Bill coming before this House.

**Mr. Portillo:** I think my hon. Friend will find that British Rail is going further than is necessary under statutory requirements. Indeed, it is not waiting for the private Bill to make compensation available; as from today, it is willing to purchase properties that are within a 240 m corridor. It will pay full market value, plus the fees involved in moving house, plus a disturbance allowance, which will be in line with the statutory compensation scheme.

**Mr. Stanley Orme** (Salford, East): As this is a national issue, I should like to ask the Minister what effect any increased investment by British Rail in the Kent area will have on the north-west of England, Yorkshire and Scotland. Will it mean a reduction in the investment that is needed so urgently, and who will meet the bill?

**Mr. Portillo:** Six hundred million pounds is already being invested in improving British Rail's Channel tunnel services, quite apart from this new railway link. Part of the reason for investing that money is to improve the links to the north of England and the other regions. Of the freight that will use the Channel tunnel, 75 per cent. will be coming from or going to points beyond the south-east of England. It is already planned that international freight sites should be established around the country, the first of them at Leeds. It is clear that others will be needed in Strathclyde, Manchester, Birmingham and Teesside, and discussions are well under way concerning others in south Wales and the north-west. Let me give the hon. Gentleman an example. The anticipated door-to-door rail delivery time from Manchester to Milan, when the Channel tunnel is open, is 36 hours.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): Can my hon. Friend confirm that the ferry workers of Dover can be confident that there will be no back-door Government subsidy under the proposals, in complete contrast with the Opposition's statements, which would do down the ferry workers of Dover.

**Mr. Portillo:** I know what great importance my hon. Friend attaches to section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act, which forbids any subsidy to Channel tunnel services and he will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has had to say on that.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): Will the Minister confirm that not long ago the Government believed that the Channel tunnel would be viable without a direct, dedicated fast rail link? Why have they changed their mind and when did they do so? Is it because they have discovered that the tunnel will not be viable without it? The Minister has said that he does not know how much traffic there will be or what the cost of the line will be, so how can he tell whether it will be viable? Would in not have been much better, and still be better, for the Government to have a wide-ranging public inquiry into this route, and the advantages and disadvantages of other routes, before a Bill is introduced in the House?

**Mr. Portillo:** The question of the Channel tunnel's viability has never been raised in the discussions. The question is what is the capacity of the railway lines for freight and passengers passing through the Channel tunnel. I have said that I do not know when the new railway line will be viable, but it is now the commonly shared opinion of nearly everybody who comments on these matters, including the consultants to Kent county council, that more capacity will be needed, and most people believe that it will be viable sooner or later. However, we do not yet have the information to know at what date it will be viable. It is in the best interests of the people of Kent in particular to get on with this as fast as possible through the private Bill procedure, which is well established, so that all the uncertainty can be resolved.

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): Is my hon. Friend aware that one particular feature of the new proposal is particularly crucial to people in east Kent? The welcome decision to take the line through Ashford rather than cutting north, ruining the Wye valley, is not only environmentally sound but ensures that north-east Kent's economy is firmly cut into the new line instead of being cut off by it. It should also take some of the pressure off our roads which are vastly more congested than any of the roads in the constituencies of those Opposition Members who have been complaining.

**Mr. Portillo:** My hon. Friend is right. There were strong representations from Ashford that the line should pass through Ashford. I know that my hon. Friend will be cheered to think about journey times from Canterbury to London being reduced from the present 90 minutes to 50 minutes in future. He is also on to a good point in saying that the more capacity that there is on the railway line for freight, the fewer lorries will need to use the roads of Kent, which are congested.

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Now that differential speed limits are being imposed on different stretches of the proposed line, can the Minister tell us what, in return for the vast expenditure that the new line will entail, is the anticipated saving in time for a passenger going from London to the Channel mouth on the proposed new fast link, and what it is on the existing rail line?

**Mr. Portillo:** The saving in time is about 30 minutes during the day and more like 44 minutes at peak times when trains would have to use a more complicated route. That brings the journey time down to about 40 minutes as opposed to 70 minutes at off-peak and 84 minutes at peak times at present.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): The odd English freight depot at Leeds is no guarantee that British Rail will not withdraw resources from provincial areas and run down rolling stock, track and equipment in order to pour money into this high-speed project. Can the Minister give a cast-iron guarantee that British Rail will not do that? The Government have denied assistance for a few short yards of track in Bradford to link two stations, but they seem happy to allow British Rail to pour billions of pounds into this rail link which, after all, only arises as a

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

result of a peccadillo of the Prime Minister's, has nothing to do with transport, but is meant to integrate us further into the wretched Common Market.

**Mr. Portillo:** The hon. Gentleman, concerned as he is about investment in the sectors which are non-commercial and supported by the taxpayer—such as the provincial sector—should be relieved to know that we want this line to be commercially viable so that it does not put pressure on the subsidised section of the railway. In the provincial sector, 80 per cent. of the rolling stock will have been renewed between 1983 and 1991.

**Mr. Tony Favell** (Stockport): While northern Members have considerable sympathy with the worries of the constituents of Kent Members, may I ask whether the Minister is aware that northern Members are absolutely convinced that the high-speed link is essential for the region, and that whatever has to be done should be done quickly?

**Mr. Portillo:** I understand my hon. Friend's point. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that British Rail is working hard to introduce a private Bill in November, which will fit his requirements.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** What conclusions will the rest of the country draw from the fact that the Government were prepared to sanction a high-speed link across Kent but not extending to other areas of the country? Will he answer the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) who asked whether the money that was to be made available by British Rail for the high-speed link would be to the detriment of British Rail's spending elsewhere in the nation?

**Mr. Portillo:** On the hon. Gentleman's first point, if this line is built through Kent, its speeds will be broadly comparable with those already enjoyed by people in other parts of the country. No decision has yet been made as to whether the investment in the Kent railway will be made by British Rail or the private sector. If it is made by British Rail, it will be on commercial terms and I do not see why it should impose a burden on the subsidised section of the railway.

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that most people want a transport system that is suitable for the 21st century and not the 20th century? Does he further accept that, while the detail of the announcement is causing concern, many people in the country welcome the fact that it shows a commitment to a more modern transport system, which will bring benefits throughout the country?

**Mr. Portillo:** I well understand my hon. Friend's point. Any transport project creates difficulties. He and I share parts of the north circular road. In my constituency, 367 houses are being destroyed for the north circular road. Any transport infrastructure presents problems but, my hon. Friend is right to say that these must be balanced with the needs and wishes of the majority of the British travelling public and British business.

**Mr. Skinner:** Now that it has been established that the Channel tunnel is a national issue—indeed, a north versus south issue—why does not the Minister, instead of bullying British Rail into providing £500 million, tell it that many people in the north, the midlands and elsewhere in Britain, would like that money to be spent on, for example, midland electrification? Instead of upsetting people in Kent, the Minister would do better to advise his hon. Friends to block up the tunnel and get out of the Common Market. That would satisfy everyone.

**Mr. Portillo:** The important thing for people in the north of England who are in business is to be able to reduce their journey times to parts of Europe. It is preposterous to pretend that journey times can be improved by electrifying one line north of London if there is a bottleneck in the south-east of Britain which prevents traffic moving smoothly. The project is designed to help every part of Britain, including the north and Kent. Of course, in Kent it presents serious environmental problems.

**Mr. Frank Dobson** (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. All hon. Members recognise the problems that you and the occupants of the Chair face when there is a preponderance of hon. Members coming from one or other party who are interested in a particular topic. As you know, there was considerable discontent —particularly among my Scottish and Welsh colleagues —about your refusal on principle to call them in series, without alternating with Tory Members. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] Generally speaking, it is true. There is considerable concern on the Opposition Benches today about your decision—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman's remarks are addressed to me.

**Mr. Dobson:** There is considerable concern about your decision to call a substantial number of Government Members before calling any Opposition Members— *[Interruption.]* I am sorry if you cannot hear what I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker. I checked on the practice that you followed when there was a statement on the Scottish rail accident. You called no fewer than three English Tory Members before you called some Scottish Members. Therefore, I should be grateful if you could consider what you could do about such incidents, particularly as some Opposition Members have constituents which are as directly affected by these proposals as any of those of Conservative Members. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) had to wait a considerable time before he was called.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think I should apologise to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), whom I should have called earlier. However the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) should look up the criteria for private notice questions, as opposed to those for a statement. This matter is not party political—it affects some constituents more gravely than others. I hope that the House will think it fair that when an issue affects certain constituencies rather more savagely than others, hon. Members representing them should receive precedence. Nobody was cut out today.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware of the concern expressed by Conservative Members about Scottish questions. This is no criticism of you; I believe that you are doing an extremely difficult job very well. The shadow

Leader of the House suggested that Scottish Members were disadvantaged. May I remind him and other Scottish Members that, during the past two sessions of Scottish Question Time, Scottish Opposition Members asked two thirds of the questions and Conservative Members asked one third

**Mr. Speaker:** I hope that the House will show some consideration for those of us in the Chair who have to make extremely difficult decisions on such matters. It is our endeavour to be entirely fair.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker—particularly that of my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House—is it not a fact, as you pointed out, that with private notice questions different considerations apply? I can well understand that, although a number of Members could conceivably have submitted private notice questions with good reason, you must choose a different form of procedure. Would it not have been better for everyone, including the Chair and the House, if, instead of a private notice question, a statement had been made by the responsible Cabinet Minister, if not the Prime Minister? The Secretary of State for Transport, who has been with us the whole time but who has not been subjected to questioning by Members on either side, certainly should have made a statement. If any difficulty arises, the Government decide not to make a voluntary statement. When difficulties arise, they should land in their lap, not in yours, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Today it was a private notice question on the proposal for a high-speed rail link across Kent.

## Business of the House

4.9 pm

**Mr. Frank Dobson** (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham):** The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 13 MARCH—Motion for the Easter Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No.2) Bill.

TUESDAY 14 MARCH—My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will open his Budget Statement. European Community documents relevant to the Budget debate will be shown in the *Official Report*.

Supplemental timetable motion on and consideration of Lords amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH—Continuation of the Budget debate.

THURSDAY 16 MARCH—Continuation of the Budget debate.

FRIDAY 17 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 20 MARCH—Conclusion of the debate on the Budget Statement.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords amendments that may be received.

*[Tuesday 14 March*

*Relevant European Community Documents*

*(a) 8887/88 Annual Economic Report 1988-89;*

*(b) Unnumbered Annual Ecomomic Report 1988-89 (as adopted by the Council)*

*Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee*

*(a) HC 15-iii (1988-89), para 4;*

*(b) HC 15-xi (1988-89), para 5.]*

**Mr. Dobson:** I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when we will get the long-promised debate on the report of the Fennell inquiry into the fire at King's Cross which was published as long ago as November? Along with other hon. Members, certainly Opposition Members, I have been receiving representations from the relatives of people killed in the fire asking when we will get round to a debate, and I hope that we shall be given some commitment soon.

Next week will see the first anniversary of the publication of the Griffiths report on care in the community. Will the Leader of the House tell us whether the Government will manage to make a statement on it before that anniversary arrives on Thursday?

Will he also tell us when we are likely to get the promised debates on student loans and on the Government's review of the National Health Service?

Finally, will he tell us when the Government will present a Bill to outlaw the buying and selling of human organs? It is almost four years since Health Ministers promised me that they were considering such legislation.

**Mr. Wakeham:** The hon. Gentleman asked me five questions about next week's business. First he asked me about the Fennell report. I am sorry that the arrangements that we originally made for a debate did not prove

*[Mr. Wakeham]*

acceptable to the Opposition. There has, however, been discussion through the usual channels with a view to identifying a suitable date for a debate.

As I told the House last week, active consideration is being given to the Griffiths report, and we hope to be in a position to announce our proposals in the near future. We have no plans to publish proposals next week, however, nor can I speculate on a date at this stage.

The White Paper asked for responses on a number of points relating to top-up loans for students. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is considering them. Meanwhile he is preparing for implementation of the Government's plans in the autumn of 1990, and to that end is holding discussions with a variety of financial institutions and other potential agents about the administration of top-up loans. I do not feel that this is the right time to have a debate on the subject.

Reaction to the White Paper "Working for Patients" has been positive. The Government have published a series of working papers outlining some of the key proposals in more detail, and we shall be discussing their implementation with interested parties in the coming weeks. I cannot agree to find time for a debate in the immediate future, but the Opposition may care to consider using one of their days for the purpose.

The Government have given their view on the legislation on the selling of kidneys, and are at present considering the contents of an appropriate Bill.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend find time at an early date for a debate on food and hygiene? Hon. Members on both sides of the House feel that higher standards are desirable, although that does not seem to have percolated through to Opposition Members who signed early-day motion 540, entitled "Directives on Veterinary Checks in Community Meat Trade", which states that there is no need for

"additional veterinary involvement in trade either for the domestic or export market"

or for

"local authorities to employ veterinary surgeons".

Could we have an early debate to enable us to appreciate the finer points of those arguments?

**Mr. Wakeham:** We have had several debates that have touched, at least in part, on some of those subjects. I think that we have had three in recent weeks. I cannot promise my hon. Friend another debate in the near future, but the Government are determined that measures necessary to achieve the single market should, as far as possible, accommodate the arrangements that have served us so well for many years. The Government are pressing for recognition of the professionalism of environmental health officers, and are seeking to secure a continuing role for them in the supervision of meat production for the domestic market.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that, when the Government's proposals in response to the Griffiths report are produced, a statement will be made in the House of Commons rather than outwith its precincts?

Does the right hon. Gentleman not consider it slightly disgraceful that never—at least in my experience—have we had a debate on the National Health Service in Government time? Debates on that important subject have always been arranged on Supply or Opposition days. The "Working for Patients" proposals raise more questions than they answer: there is considerable uncertainty, particularly in general practice. Is it not time that we answered some of the questions to which GPs want answers?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I am not sure whether that is strictly correct, but there have certainly been a number of debates on the Health Service, and I do not think that I can add anything to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

I cannot anticipate whether there will be an oral statement on the Griffiths report until I have spoken to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, but I recognise the strength of the hon. Gentleman's feelings.

**Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes** (Wimbledon): My right hon. Friend may be aware of the major disruption of postal services in the south-west London area over the Christmas period following unofficial action by the Union of Communication Workers, which caused immense anger and frustration among my constituents. Does he agree that the time has come to examine the Post Office's general record of management and its privileges, with particular reference to the sealing of post boxes on a questionable legal basis? In view of yesterday's report by the Post Office Users National Council, will he consider giving time for us to debate the subject?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I cannot promise my hon. Friend time for a debate, but it has been reported in today's press that after a general ballot members of the Post Office unions have accepted their unions' recommendation that they accept the improved local incentives for better postal services. My hon. Friend is quite right, however: the Post Office's letter monopoly is a privilege, not a right.

**Mr. Greville Janner** (Leicester, West): Can we please have an early debate on the quality of the water in rivers in the midlands, which has deteriorated for four successive years? Last year there were 209 complaints about sewage, compared with only about 70 the year before. Should we not take into account the secret plans revealed by the *Leicester Mercury* to relax quality controls on sewage discharged into Leicestershire's rivers by the Severn-Trent rivers and regulations division, at the same time as it is planning to spend millions of pounds on a glossy advertising campaign to prepare for privatisation? This scandal ought to be revealed on the Floor of the House.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I do not know whether it is because he spends a lot of time reading the *Leicester Mercury*, but the hon. and learned Gentleman seems sometimes to bring to the House rather a one-sided and biased view. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just said how much the quality of water in a number of our rivers has improved over the years and how much better they are than many rivers on the continent. The hon. and learned Gentleman, who I know likes to be fair, should take that into consideration. He has made his point, however, and I will refer it to my right hon. Friend.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson** (Newbury): If we are to have an organ transplant Bill, should it not be rather more

comprehensive than a Bill relating simply to the sale of organs? Could it not include such matters as amending the donor card, and the procedure known as required request?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I know that those are important issues, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will recognise that at this stage in the parliamentary Session to bring in an additional Bill would require us to restrict somewhat the number of subjects that it could cover.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement to the House tomorrow on the accidents on the M6 in which four people were killed this morning and up to 10 injured, some critically? Will he ask his right hon. Friend to instigate an urgent investigation into the use of the motorways by heavy goods vehicles to carry dangerous substances, which is an increasing problem and danger to every motorist?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I am sure that the whole House would want me to express sympathy and understanding to those who were bereaved or injured in that road accident. It is a serious matter. I extend also our thanks to the emergency services, who rose to the occasion, as on so many previous occasions. We are grateful to them. I shall refer my hon. Friend's point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend find time in the near future for a debate about the activities of an organisation known as the London Food Commission, which has played a prominent role in recent scares concerning infection and additives, such as those concerning salmonella and listeria? The organisation sounds eminently respectable but it was recently described in the BBC programme "Farming Today" as being something of a confidence trick. Apparently, its pedigree goes back only five years, when it was established by the notorious GLC. It was funded by a £1 million grant and subsequently launched several campaigns against the food industry and the Government. Its activities are described in its own remit as being designed——

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is not an Adjournment debate. Will the hon. Lady ask her question?

**Mrs. Gorman:** —to further the interests of trade unions in the food industry. It is causing a great deal of despondency and worry among the British public.

**Mr. Wakeham:** My hon. Friend is right to raise questions about that organisation and to suggest a debate. In the past, I have had occasion to make one or two comments about it at this Dispatch Box. Next Monday, there will be two occasions when my hon. Friend may be provided with an opportunity to make the points she seeks to make more widely known.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman have a chance this week or in the coming week to discuss with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with the shadow Cabinet spokesman for Northern Ireland the apparent confusion about the British-Irish parliamentary tier that was obvious in exchanges in the House today? Also, in the interests of future good long-term relationships between the United Kingdom and Iran, will the Leader of the House use the good offices of the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) to establish a British-Iranian parliamentary tier?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I indicated that discussions are in progress to set up a British-Irish parliamentary tier to increase understanding between Westminster and Dublin, which is something that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House would want to support. In the course of those discussions I have spoken to the Leader of the Opposition and to other party leaders. I shall continue doing so until such time as we are able to make an announcement.

**Sir Philip Goodhart** (Beckenham): My right hon. Friend will recall that there have been statements this week on two tragic rail accidents that killed a total of seven people. As 14 people are killed on our roads on an average day, may we have a proper debate soon on the North report on road traffic law? Also, can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that there will be a major road traffic Bill in the next Session?

**Mr. Wakeham:** My hon. Friend's second question tempts me, but it is not a matter on which it would be appropriate for me to speculate. I acknowledge that both road traffic law and the North report are important, and I wish that I could find an early date for a debate on them. I shall certainly bear my hon. Friend's suggestion well in mind.

**Mr. Peter L. Pike** (Burnley): The Leader of the House will recognise the concern shown by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House during Prime Minister's Question Time arising from the Select Committee report on toxic waste that was published yesterday. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the House is given the earliest possible opportunity to discuss that matter, so that the Secretary of State for the Environment may be saved from the fate that he might otherwise suffer under the Prime Minister, who is rapidly changing ever more green? Perhaps I may make a helpful suggestion. Would it not be wise to drop the privatisation aspects of the Water Bill and use the opportunity provided by its Report stage to make the National Rivers Authority an environmental protection agency? That would receive the overwhelming support of the public, who are opposed to water privatisation.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I do not want to disappoint anyone who wants to be helpful, but I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister finds the advice of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment more helpful than the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. The Government will respond to the Select Committee's report in the usual way——

**Mr. Dobson:** Yes—they will ignore it.

**Mr. Wakeham:** Many of the report's recommendations for improved control are in line with the Government's comprehensive review of waste legislation, which is now nearing the end of public consultation. Legislation to implement the new policies is being prepared and will be introduced at the earliest possible opportunity during the course of this Parliament.

**Sir John Stokes** (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the important

*[Sir John Stokes]*

subject of immigration, which has not been debated for a long time? That would enable many right hon. and hon. Members to discuss the Salman Rushdie affair and the difficulties that are caused by newcomers to this country, who perhaps do not fully understand our ways—giving rise to difficult questions concerning free speech and suitable behaviour.

**Mr. Wakeham:** My hon. Friend raises an important point. I should like to meet his request by arranging a debate, but with the legislation going through as it is, it will be difficult to find a day.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): Can there be an early debate on the plotting by Bradford's Conservative council to transform Bradford into a compassion-free zone? Is the Leader of the House aware that that council's latest act of civic vandalism is that of cutting funding to voluntary organisations that help pensioners, children and the disabled? Will the right hon. Gentleman have urgent discussions with the Conservative Chief Whip with a view to persuading Conservative right hon. and hon. Members not to visit Bradford to support the activities of the Monday Club, which is trying to incite racial tension in the city? Will he also urge the chairman of the Conservative party to agree to a request that I made to him yesterday that the party conducts an urgent inquiry into the infiltration of Right-wing organisations, including the Monday Club, into Bradford Conservative association and the influence they exert on the Conservative council group?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I have no idea what that matter has to do with next week's business. However, I detect in the hon. Gentleman and in his hon. Friends the Members for Bradford a streak of disagreement and unhappiness at being the losers in Bradford. They had better get used to that, because they will be losers for a very long time.

**Mr. Michael Latham** (Rutland and Melton): In order to save public money in Budget week and to improve the environmental record, which we all want to do, may we start with ourselves and with the Order Paper? Eight pages of today's Order Paper contain a virtually identical question. Is that not a complete waste of public money? Would it not be better to do without printed questions and to have a Prime Minister's Question Time when Mr. Speaker could simply call speakers from among those right hon. and hon. Gentlemen who try to catch his eye?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I am always tempted by my hon. Friend's suggestions for saving public money. However, if I agree to change the Order Paper simply at his suggestion, we would get into trouble. Changes to the Order Paper must be the subject of discussions and consultations through the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee. The best plan is for my hon. Friend to write to that Committee in the first instance.

**Mr. Frank Haynes** (Ashfield): When will the right hon. Gentleman give the House an opportunity to have a real go at the Executive on the question of air pollution? I have just about had a bellyful of the Prime Minister's starry front about pollution, of her claims about what she is and is not doing about it, and all the flipping rest of it. Is the Leader of the House aware that there has been serious interference with the manpower structure of air pollution inspectors? If we are going to get, as suggested, a serious reduction, how can they carry out their job properly in the interests of the people in the community? Let us have a debate so that I can have a go at her.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I thought that the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question was an attack on free speech itself, but in the end I understood what he wanted. I wish I could meet his requests because I always like to do so, but I cannot offer a debate next week.

**Mr. Bowen Wells** (Hertford and Stortford): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 500?

*[That this House joins with all other parliaments throughout the Commonwealth in the observance of Commonwealth Day on Monday 13th March; and recognises the importance of the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which brings together parliamentarians throughout the Commonwealth who share a community of interests, respect for the rule of law and a commitment to promote the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy.]*

Will my right hon. Friend express on behalf of the whole House our continued support for the ideals of the Commonwealth? Does he agree that it is a potent force for freedom, peace, understanding and friendship in the world? Does he agree that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, by strengthening parliamentary democracy in the Commonwealth, plays a vital role in upholding those ideals?

**Mr. Wakeham:** The Government wholeheartedly support the statements expressed in the early-day motion. I hope to have a drink with a number of members of the Commonwealth this evening.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on how the EC allocates its aid through the structural fund? Is he aware that it was disclosed yesterday that Halifax has, yet again, been left out from receiving any aid in spite of the fact that 95 per cent. of those on our borders gain from this aid? That leads to serious dislocation of industry. Is he further aware that since we submitted our application under objective two, Halifax and Calder Valley have lost almost 1,500 jobs? Can we have an urgent debate on the subject because it is leading to great hardship and is destabilising the local economy?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I would like to be able to organise the debate, which would give the hon. Lady the chance to explain why her Labour council put up rates last night by 15 per cent.——

**Mrs. Mahon:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is no Labour council in Halifax or Calder Valley. There is no overall control.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Whether or not there is a Labour council there is not a matter for me.

**Mr. Andrew MacKay** (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are many Conservative Members who would welcome yet another debate on transport so that they could express the repugnance of their fair-minded constituents at the behaviour of Opposition spokesmen, who have sought to gain political capital out of the deaths of innocent people in recent rail

accidents and who have wrongly demanded the resignation of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport for accidents that have been no fault of his?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I have many responsibilities, but I certainly do not have responsibility for Opposition spokesmen's conduct and words. However, I do not believe that any fair-minded person would accept the proposition that my right hon. Friend does anything other than conduct himself with the highest possible standards in public life.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Can we have a debate next week on a specific area of procedure —that is, privilege? Does the Leader of the House care to express a view about whether he believes that a person who feels aggrieved as a result of an abuse of parliamentary privilege should have a right of reply? Does he think that that right of reply should be printed in the *Official Report*? Can I ask him to reflect at the Dispatch Box on those matters about which he has, historically, shown great concern?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I shall reflect on that, of course, but the methods of dealing with privilege in the House are laid down by Standing Orders and the rules of the House and I have no plans to change them.

**Dr. Keith Hampson** (Leeds, North-West): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the importance of early-day motion 521 which is on university examinations and was signed by 50 of our hon. Friends?

*[That this House welcomes the recommendation of the Executive of the Association of University Teachers to call off the action on university examinations by seeking arbitration; supports the case for increased funding for universities to enable them to pay an adequate increase in salaries for 1989-90; and believes that university lecturers should receive similar treatment as those covered by the recent Pay Review Bodies reports.]*

If the boycott of the examination system by lecturers continues for another two or three weeks, it will jeopardise final examinations. My right hon. Friend knows that I have an interest in these matters. However, over all the years that I have been involved with universities, I have seldom found such strength of feeling on such a matter, if only because there is no understanding why the pay offer has been about 3 per cent., when we are offering school teachers an increase of 6 per cent.

**Mr. Wakeham:** It is for the university authorities to negotiate the pay of their staff. They have made representations to the Government for extra funds and those are being considered urgently. Representatives met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 8 March to explain their case and my right hon. Friend is meeting them again soon. Meanwhile, university academic staff, as responsible professionals, should surely work normally, as that is in the essential interests of their students.

**Mr. Keith Vaz** (Leicester, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that today a number of hon. Members representing inner-city seats received a letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announcing the closure of a number of task forces? The Leader of the House will recall that the establishment of a task force in Leicester was a plank of the Government's inner-city policy and that I and other hon. Members pointed out to Ministers that task forces would not be successful unless they had the co-operation of local authorities. I find it difficult to accept that hon. Members should be informed on such a major policy issue by letter rather than by a statement or debate. Will the right hon. Gentleman speak to his right hon. Friend to ensure that we have a statement on this important aspect of policy and a debate about why the task force in Leicester has failed?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I do not think that that would be the right way to proceed. The report published today is a progress report announcing developments in existing policies and future priorities. It is not a new policy statement; it is available in the Vote Office and it has been made available generally. I understand that it has also been sent to hon. Members with constituency interests, and that is the right way to proceed.

**Mr. Mark Fisher** (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), will the Leader of the House persuade the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement on the three accidents this morning on the M6 in which four people died? He will be aware that today's accidents mean that there have been seven accidents in the past five years on that stretch of motorway in which 58 people have died and that all those accidents have involved heavy goods vehicles. Hon. Members need an opportunity to ask the Secretary of State for Transport to reconsider his policy of deterring freight on the railways so that it goes on the roads. The danger of the weight of traffic on our roads is now becoming acute. More accidents such as these will happen unless the Government offer positive incentives by subsidising freight on the railways to take it off our roads, as all other European countries do.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I recognise the importance of that and I expressed to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend my concern about those accidents. I have said that I shall speak to my right hon. Friend, but perhaps some of the important points he made, which may be controversial, are not matters that are easily dealt with in a statement with questions and answers and are more wide-ranging policy questions. I wish that there was time for a debate on all these issues, but I cannot find time in the immediate future.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House find time to debate the prayer tabled by the three hon. Members from Bradford constituencies against the devolving of powers from the residuary authority to Bradford local authority? We feel strongly that because Bradford is in the hands of the "Conservative and City Mayor party", it is no longer fit and able to carry out such duties, having sacked a number of people in administrative positions as well as attacking community facilities for those most in need in the city, sacking dinner ladies and carrying out the other outrageous actions of the Right-wing clique on Bradford council. It would be handy if we were able to debate the prayer so that we could argue whether the city council is capable of carrying out the duties that the Government seem prepared to devolve on it.

**Mr. Wakeham:** When I talked about bad losers I knew that the hon. Gentleman would not be long in getting in on

*[Mr. Wakeham]*

the act. The arrangements that we have for discussions through the usual channels represent the best way of deciding how to deal with Opposition prayers.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House recall that a few weeks ago I referred to the need for a statement from the Government about miners who have been subjected to the restart scheme, even though they have been made redundant under the mineworkers scheme? Is the Leader of the House aware that, although many weeks have elapsed since the Secretary of State for Energy and the Secretary of State for Employment began to discuss the matter, they have still not reached any conclusion? Will he try to impress upon his right hon. Friends the urgent need to resolve this matter next week, if possible, with a statement? If he cannot do this, will he knock their heads together?

**Mr. Wakeham:** I have nothing to say to the hon. Gentleman today, but I recognise his concern about the matter and I shall certainly refer his question to my right hon. Friends.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd** (Stretford): Is the Leader of the House aware that it is three and a half years since the disaster at Manchester airport, and that the report of the inquiry into that disaster will be published on Monday? Will he tell the House whether the Secretary of State for Transport, who has rightly come before the House—I say this with no disrespect to the right hon. Gentleman—when other disasters have happened, will make a full statement on the findings of that inquiry? It is considered that those findings are likely to be controversial, so it is important that the House should be given an opportunity to discuss them.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I am not in a position to answer that question. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport thinks it appropriate to make a statement, he will do so, although I do not think that that will necessarily prove to be the right course. I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

## LAW OF PROPERTY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL *[Lords]*

*Ordered,*

That the Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill [Lords] be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

## Royal Air Force

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

4.43 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert):** I am pleased to have this opportunity to open the first RAF debate since my appointment as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. In my relatively brief time of acquaintance with the RAF, I have attempted to see as much of the service as possible and to talk to senior colleagues at the Ministry of Defence about the aims and aspirations of the services. During the past three months, I have visited Headquarters RAF Strike Command at High Wycombe and the RAF bases at Coningsby and Leeming.

I have found that the service is in good heart and have been enormously impressed by the professionalism of the men and women serving in it. I believe that the RAF is confident—as it should be—that the Government will continue to accord it the priority that it requires. Since 1979 we have allocated very consierable extra resources to the RAF, amounting to some £9·2 billion, over and above inflation and this demonstrates the Government's commitment to the service.

I intend this afternoon—as is normal on these occasions — to give an account of the role, work and activities of the Royal Air Force, and I will, in addition, address three matters which I know are of special concern to the House —flight safety, low-flying training and manning in the service. I do not propose, however, to attempt to catalogue all the major improvements that have been made in equipment. The details will be set out in the annual statement on the defence estimates to be published in a couple of months' time, and if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement succeeds in catching your eye later this evening, Mr. Speaker, he will be able to deal with any point of interest that may have arisen concerning equipment.

The House is well aware of the vital contribution that the RAF continues to make to our main defence roles in NATO. The RAF contributes to all four roles—nuclear forces, defence of the United Kingdom, forward defence of the European mainland, and maritime forces. I shall not rehearse the details of those roles now as they do not change fundamentally from year to year, but in the past 13 months the outline of the RAF of the future has become clearer. What is certain is that, even with the welcome improvements in East-West relations, it is essential that we maintain a policy of deterrence, which includes the maintenance of a strong Royal Air Force.

The role that most people associate with the RAF is, I imagine, the air defence of the United Kingdom. To this, the RAF contributes interceptor aircraft, of which I will say more in a moment, Bloodhound and Rapier missiles and Skyguard radar-controlled guns.

In the past year the second and third squadrons of the Tornado air defence variant have been declared operational, and a fourth squadron has been formed and will become operational later this year. To sustain the ADV force into the future, we have ordered an additional 15 aircraft for delivery in the early 1990s. As new aircraft

enter the stage, so old ones exit and since our last debate the Lightning has been finally withdrawn after nearly 30 years' service.

For the longer term, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced last April that the Government had decided to proceed with the full development of the European fighter aircraft in collaboration with the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Spain. EFA will be a major project, costing the United Kingdom about £7 billion, and will provide the RAF with an agile, high performance air defence aircraft. It will replace the Phantom and, using its secondary ground attack role, the Jaguar at the end of their service lives, and will complement the Tornado ADV. As my right hon. Friend said, the specification for EFA has been rigorously and realistically examined in comparison with a number of alternatives. Moreover, its development will benefit from the exacting procurement disciplines which have been introduced over the past few years, and of which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement may speak further, later this evening.

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): I thank my hon. Friend for his obvious interest in the Royal Air Force and for the work that he has been doing. On the subject of EFA, I guess that we are now beginning to approach the crucial decision about the radar sensor system. Can my hon. Friend tell us what progress has been made in that regard? My hon. Friend will forgive me for saying that it appears that MSD 2000 radar sensor system has a slight edge in terms of its putative attributes. Will he tell us the latest state of play and assure us that the crucial choice between the two systems on offer will be made as soon as possible?

**Mr. Neubert:** My hon. Friend will understand if, at this early stage in my late-flowering career, I do not immediately answer him, but direct him instead to the answer given on Tuesday by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who may be able to answer him in more detail later.

We are confident that EFA will benefit from those exacting procurement disciplines, and that EFA will prove the best and most cost-effective option to meet this essential military role.

Behind the scenes, work is progressing well on the seven Boeing E3 airborne early-warning aircraft which the Government have ordered to replace the redoubtable Shackleton from the early 1990s. We should salute the Shackleton on the 40th anniversary of its inaugural flight.

Let us consider the other roles of the RAF. The service contributes strike-attack and offensive support and air transport forces to the defence of the European mainland. The mainstay of our strike-attack forces is the Tornado GR1. Those aircraft would carry out long-range interdiction against enemy airfields and lines of communication to prevent them from applying their full weight to our forces in the central region. To do that, the Tornado would have to penetrate increasingly comprehensive and sophisticated air defences, and it is that requirement which gives rise to the need for low-flying training of which I shall say more later.

I am pleased to tell the House that, subject to the satisfactory resolution of contractual and other issues, we intend to proceed with a mid-life improvement for the Tornado GR1 strike-attack aircraft. The programme will contain a package of measures to provide the Tornado with an improved night and all-weather capability and so maintain the effectiveness of this highly successful aircraft as we move into the next century. Much of the work done under the programme will be placed in the United Kingdom and so should help sustain procurement opportunities in the United Kingdom aerospace industries.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): On the question of the usefulness of the Tornado, my hon. Friend will be aware of its value in respect of its strike capability and in terms of arms control talks on how far we should reduce our strength in the central region, but can he add anything to the statements that have already been issued about the future of the stand-off missiles that may be equipped in the future for use by the Tornado aircraft?

**Mr. Neubert:** No, I cannot do so, but perhaps my hon. Friend will turn to that point when he replies to the debate.

To sustain the Tornado GR1 force in the future, we have ordered an additional 26 aircraft for delivery from the early 1990s. After the inevitable delay caused by the unfortunate accident in October 1987, the first squadron of Harrier GR5 offensive support aircraft is now forming and will be declared operational later this year. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement announced last May that we intended to order a further 34 GR5s to sustain the force in the future.

This is a debate about the RAF rather than air systems, but it would be appropriate to record here a further significant milestone in the modernisation of our armed forces, namely the successful launch of the Skynet 4B satellite on 11 December 1988 by an Ariane 4 rocket from Kouron in French Guiana. The satellite is now on station. The first super high frequency channel became operational on 1 February 1989, and we expect the whole satellite to be operational by the end of this month.

Turning to the question of exercises and deployments, I am pleased to tell the House that the RAF consistently earns high marks during the regular exercises held under the direction of the NATO commanders to test the operational readiness and proficiency of our defences. Indeed, the ratings scored by the RAF during those exercises—the so-called "tacevals"—are second to none throughout the Alliance.

Outside the NATO area, I have been impressed to learn about the recent deployment by the RAF in Exercise Golden Eagle, designed to demonstrate the capability of the Royal Air Force to operate worldwide when appropriate. The exercise was mounted by four Tornado F3s—our latest air defence aircraft—with other supporting aircraft including TriStars, a VC10 tanker and a Hercules, with their equipment and personnel. The exercise was designed to enable the Tornados to take part in the five-power defence arrangements—FPDA—air defence exercise under a long-standing agreement with the Government of Malaysia, codenamed Lima Bersatu 88.

I should like to apologise at this point for all the code names, initials and acronyms. I seem to have exchanged the anonymity of the Government Whips Office for the acronymity of the Ministry of Defence.

The exercise provides opportunities for the aircraft to carry out some joint training with other nations in that area.

*[Mr. Neubert]*

The deployment encompassed visits to Malaysia; to Thailand to conduct joint training with the Royal Thai air force; and to Singapore where further training was undertaken and where the opportunity was taken to exhibit the aircraft to potential customers. The aircraft then spent 10 days in Australia taking part in the celebrations marking the Australian bicentennial, followed by participation by the Tornados in two air displays in the United States.

That global deployment drew favourable comments from all of the many nations that were involved. It was indicative of some of the attractions still available to the young men choosing a career in the modern Royal Air Force and was a splendid testimony to the safety and reliability of the Tornado F3 aircraft.

That leads me to mention the safety of the aircraft of the RAF, which is a high priority for us, and is an area in which the RAF can be justifiably proud of its record.

It is perhaps all too easy to forget just how recent is man's conquest of the air. The RAF has only just reached its three score years and 10. However, we should never forget that safety in the air, just as at sea, can never be guaranteed even with the most sophisticated of aircraft.

The RAF suffered a number of tragic losses in 1988. Each loss is, of course, investigated thoroughly in an effort to ascertain just what went wrong and to try to prevent a recurrence. Unfortunately, the very nature of military flying means that it is impossible to guarantee that there will never be any accidents. What we can and must do is to ensure that our aircrew are fully trained and our aircraft designed, built and maintained to the highest standards possible. Only then can the risks inherent in military flying be reduced to the minimum possible. I can assure the House that the RAF is taking all these steps, with the full support of the Government.

Progress in flight safety can sometimes seem painfully slow, and when we get down to the current relatively low level of accidents statistical fluctuations from one year to another can assume disproportionate significance. Over the longer term, however, the record can be ascertained more realistically and the trend is clear and encouraging. Thus, in 1957—which was then the best year on record for RAF flight safety—149 lives and 157 RAF aircraft were lost in accidents. Last year, by comparison, 17 aircrew died in 18 accidents, resulting in the loss of 19 aircraft.

Even though the service has reduced in size over the past 30 years, it is clear that the major accident rate has been cut dramatically, so that in recent years it is down to only one aircraft being lost for every 30,000 hours flown. I hope that hon. Members will join me in congratulating the RAF on the outstandingly professional way in which it carries out on our behalf the difficult flying operations that are so essential to our nation's defences.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): If it is absolutely essential to lose all those lives and the hundreds of millions pounds-worth of planes, including the 12 Tornado aircraft that fell out of the sky, why does West Germany not adopt the same criteria? Because of its losses, including Tornado aircraft, West Germany has cut its low flying and reviewed the necessity for it. As West Germany is a member of NATO, surely we can follow its example rather than continue with assertions that low flying is absolutely essential when it costs so much money and so many lives.

**Mr. Neubert:** The hon. Gentleman is not correct. The amount of low flying in this country is broadly comparable with that in West Germany. The hon. Gentleman knows that this matter is under review at the moment and that no decisions have been taken or announced.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that a great problem facing us today in Europe is that the morale of the West German air force, especially its aircrew and specifically its pilots, is low because they are aware that they cannot carry out the tasks that they have been assigned because they do not train properly or effectively enough to do so?

**Mr. Julian Brazier** (Canterbury): West Germany has too many men like the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in its Parliament.

**Mr. Neubert:** The point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) must be one of the most important factors to be taken into account.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Will the Leader of the House give way on that point?

**Mr. Neubert:** Well, I am not yet the Leader of the House, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Perhaps the Minister will point out to his hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) that Conservatives in the West German Government have also complained strenuously about such matters.

Will the Minister tell me why, when I have three witnesses, each half a mile apart, who reported a near-miss on the boundary of Keswick a few months ago and when I submitted all the evidence from those independent persons to him in written statements, he has refused to accept that there was such a near-collision?

Why was he willing to accept the statements of the pilots who had not even reported the fact that a near-miss had taken place? Does he not understand that pilots have an interest in telling lies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] Oh yes, they have an interest in telling lies, not the truth —when they know that they have been involved in near-misses such as the one that was reported by my three independent witnesses?

**Mr. Neubert:** I refute that assertion. As the hon. Gentleman knows, every pilot in the air has a direct and personal interest in the matter of air misses——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** They have been telling lies.

**Mr. Neubert:** The hon. Gentleman has no evidence for his assertion. He will have to contain himself until we reach a more appropriate point for deaing with his concerns.

While on the subject of flight safety, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that we have now conducted a thorough review of our arrangements for military participation in flying displays and for air shows held at military establishments. Full account has been taken of the Civil Aviation Authority's recently announced guidelines for civil aircraft and displays. I am pleased to observe that the review confirmed that existing MOD regulations were generally very satisfactory. A number of relatively minor modifications are, however, being introduced and these should improve safety still further.

Particular attention was, of course, paid to the Red Arrows, the nation's premier flying display team. Changes are being made to the Red Arrows' routine, primarily to eliminate formation changes while aircraft are pointing towards spectators. To allow the team to be seen properly by spectators, a few over-flights of crowds will still be permitted. However, these will be at a minimum height of 1,000 ft rather than 500 ft as previously. In addition, no aerobatics or manoeuvres will be performed above crowds.

The chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority will accept Ministry of Defence assurances as to the safety of performances by the Red Arrows at any United Kingdom civil displays to which the team may be invited. I am sure that the Ministry of Defence review, together with the steps taken by the Department of Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority, will lead to a successful 1989 flying display season, with millions of spectators being entertained safely and professionally.

I know that low-flying training is of particular interest to hon. Members. The letters that I receive leave me in no doubt that some people question this intrusion into their daily lives. I can assure them that the Government and the Royal Air Force recognise the inconvenience that this training can cause and are keenly aware of the need to minimise it.

To maintain a credible capability to penetrate today's sophisticated enemy radar and defensive systems, our pilots must be able to fly as close to the ground and as fast as possible, using the terrain to screen their aircraft. Such a capability can be maintained only by realistic training and practice in peacetime. The procurement of modern and capable aircraft is not sufficient on is own.

Since assuming my appointment, I have taken a close interest in low-flying training and its effect on those on the ground. The sudden noise of a low-flying aircraft can be alarming. The recent air accidents, even if unconnected with military low-flying training, have heightened public awareness of all air activities.

It is 10 years since a restructured system was introduced in 1979. Previously, the United Kingdom had some small areas for low flying that were linked by connecting routes. But they were inadequate. As the then Under-Secretary of State for the Royal Air Force in the previous Labour Government explained to the House at the time, the old system channelled flying into particular areas, impeded training and led to undesirable concentrations of flying in some districts, mainly resulting from the many detailed restrictions that were introduced in an attempt to minimise the disturbance to particular places. But those restrictions simply aggravated problems elsewhere.

The new system was designed to distribute flying training over a wide geographic area, spreading the burden more equitably across the country as a whole. Aircrew plan their sorties to give them the widest practice and experience of flying, and to reduce routine patterns of activity. Unfortunately, the distribution is not perfect for everyone. The location of operating bases and weapons ranges produces limitations.

I recognise that, in some areas, the need to avoid major conurbations, controlled air space and other features such as nuclear power stations can still cause some concentration of traffic, but within these constraints we make every effort in our management of the system to achieve the original aim of spreading the training more fairly.

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Allan Rogers** (Rhondda): Could the Minister define what he means by "major conurbations"?

**Mr. Michael Mates** (Hampshire, East): Towns.

**Mr. Neubert:** Yes, that is the simplest answer to give the hon. Gentleman. Major conurbations are dense concentrations of the population. It is as simple as that.

**Mr. Mans:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, as a result of that change in training 10 years ago to spread low flying throughout the country, areas such as Cumbria have a smaller percentage of low flying over them than in the years to 1979 and that hon. Members with constituencies in such areas should be very pleased at the change?

**Mr. Neubert:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

I welcome the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to his new, dual-capable role. As I believe that he will open and close the debate for the Opposition, I shall ensure that he receives the reply that he seeks during the course of one of his speeches.

**Mr. Rogers:** I shall not congratulate the Minister yet on his appointment. But to stay with the point about major conurbations, would he consider that the city of Swansea was a "major conurbation"?

**Mr. Neubert:** Of course it is a major conurbation. That is why the greatest care is taken when over-flying that particular area, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

**Mr. Rogers:** Then can the Minister tell me why RAF planes over-fly the city of Swansea, and will he now define what he means by "major conurbations" instead of listening to the inane cackling of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence?

**Mr. Neubert:** I suspect that further discussion now would be sterile. The incident to which the hon. Member for Rhondda may well be referring was an operation over Swansea airfield. That is a different matter altogether from over-flying the city itself.

I ask hon. Members to bear in mind what I have said about spreading training more fairly when they consider concerns within their constituencies. Each restriction on the system merely forces training into somebody else's backyard. Our objective is to balance individual concerns against the wider impact on the population as a whole.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Has the Minister heard of a Soviet missile called the SA-10B? If he has heard of that missile, to what extent does he believe that it prevents those pilots who have been trained in low-flying exercises from penetrating Soviet air space? Has the hon. Gentleman been influenced in his judgment about the value of the whole programme by the existence of that missile system?

**Mr. Neubert:** If the hon. Gentleman wishes to question the whole principle of our forward defences, he is entitled to do so, but I do not believe that he will carry many people with him in such a suggestion.

**Mr. Mans:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Neubert:** My predecessor in this role last year gave way 22 times, and I do not seek to challenge that record.

*[Mr. Neubert]*

The need to reduce disturbance to the public is also taken into account in other ways. The techniques of low flying over land demand particular skills, which cannot be developed by low flying over sea or by training at higher levels. In war, aircraft would need to fly below 100 ft and at speeds of over 600 knots. In peacetime, to minimise the nuisance caused by noise, most low-flying training in the United Kingdom is carried out at speeds under 450 knots and not below 250 ft.

Training in operational low flying at lower altitudes is mainly carried out overseas, in parts of the United States and Canada that are virtually unpopulated, apart from the occasional moose. Only very little operational low flying is undertaken in the United Kingdom, in three sparsely populated areas in Northern Scotland, in the Scottish borders and in central Wales. Such flying is infrequent and represents less than 1 per cent. of the total of low-flying activity in the United Kingdom. As hon. Members will be aware, special efforts are made to keep them informed of this activity.

Night and weekend flying is kept to a minimum. I am particularly conscious of the disturbance that is caused by night flying, but pilots must be capable of operating after dark, so strictly limited night flying is needed. No more activity is authorised than is absolutely necessary. We end flying at 11 pm whenever possible.

One of the questions raised with me by hon. Members is the possibility of carrying out more training abroad. While there is no substitute for training in Europe, across terrain that the aircrew would fly over in the event of conflict, we will certainly continue to look at opportunities for training abroad. But there are limits to the extent to which such training makes sense. It is expensive in resources which have to be found or deployed away from where they are needed operationally, and it is expensive in wasteful transit flying. But such deployments provide valuable training at very low levels which cannot be provided in Europe.

Some Members of the public suspect that pilots are irresponsible in carrying out their flying training. The image of the Spitfire pilot doing a victory roll over the aerodrome lingers, and it may mislead. It is a far cry from the professional, disciplined approach of today's RAF and from that required to fly a modern high-speed jet aircraft at low level. Pilots are fully aware of their responsibilities to the general public, and they plan and conduct their sorties as considerately as possible. As hon. Members are aware, the RAF police carry out surveys from time to time to establish whether height and other rules are being observed, and those surveys clearly show that there is a healthy respect for the regulations.

I have been very impressed with the thorough nature of investigations of individual complaints associated with low flying. I have been impressed also with the work of the RAF police. I can assure the House that any pilot found to be disregarding regulations will be severely dealt with.

Hon. Members should be aware also that, as a means of augmenting the existing system, we have been considering the use of a Skyguard fire control radar system to monitor the heights of low-flying aircraft. The system has been subjected to a series of trials, and I am pleased to announce that we have decided to deploy the system in this role. Although further work will be required before it is fully operational, in the meantime it will give us a limited capability to monitor low-flying training activities. This will provide a very valuable aid and, I hope, will be seen as an indication of our concern to ensure that the highest standards are maintained. I am confident that the results shown by the system will be yet further evidence of the service's professionalism.

The past 10 years have seen an increase in the level of low-flying activity in the United Kingdom, largely because of the introduction into service of the Tornado GR1 aircraft. The level of activity has reached a plateau in recent years, and we expect that it will remain fairly constant in the future. The new low-flying system has proved itself successful in accommodating this increase, in providing enhanced training value and in distributing this training more equitably.

I am satisfied that the basic structure of the system is correct, although there will always be a need to monitor its operation and adapt it as necessary to changing circumstances. The last thing that the RAF wants to do is to antagonise the people on whose support and forbearance it relies. Within the current system, I can assure hon. Members that it will continue to do all in its power to ensure that this essential training produces the minimum disturbance to those on the ground.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson** (Newbury): My hon. Friend has referred to low flying by fixed-wing aircraft. Do the restrictions to which he has referred relate in any way to helicopters operated by the Royal Air Force? Helicopters often fly at low altitudes in my constituency, and one wonders why they find that piece of terrain so attractive.

**Mr. Neubert:** There are different provisions for helicopter low-flying, but the principles remain the same as those for fixed-wing aircraft.

So far, I have spoken about the role of the RAF and some of its recent achievements. None would have been possible without the dedicated and professional personnel who make up the service. The trained strength of the RAF over the past year has been maintained at a level which has enabled it fully to discharge its operational commitments. There are some shortfalls in the officer branches and in ground engineering and support trades, but they are containable.

Interest in RAF manning generally centres on the aircrew branch and, in particular, on pilots. Manning strengths in this branch are broadly in line with requirements, although some ground and flying appointments are vacant. Both recruiting and retention have become more difficult over the past 12 months, largely because of increased competition from civil airlines, but I would not wish to over-estimate those difficulties, and I can confirm that it is forecast that the aircrew branch will continue to see strengths and requirements broadly in balance over the next 10 years, although there may be a shortage of junior officer pilots in the shorter term.

**Mr. Dykes:** My hon. Friend has already given way a few times, and I thank him for doing so again. The RAF involves not only pilots, aircraft and flying but physical buildings, sites and bases. My hon. Friend will know of our strong RAF presence, of which we are intensely proud, in the borough of Harrow, and the putative longer-term plans for the eventual closure of RAF Stanmore Park,

near RAF Bentley Priory. Incidentally, the local borough council will shortly be offering the freedom of the borough to the Royal Air Force.

If my hon. Friend cannot answer my question now, will he add it to the growing list of answers which our hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will give when replying to the debate? What is the latest outlook for the proposed eventual closure of RAF Stanmore Park? Although we are deeply proud of the role which that station has played over many years for the Royal Air Force and the defence of this country in its particular specialist requirements, we know that it is now becoming gradually superfluous to present and future activities. Although the next matter is not directly within my hon. Friend's province, Stanmore Park would therefore be a useful area for the future development of housing in the borough of Harrow. What is the latest state of play on RAF Stanmore Park and its proposed future programme?

**Mr. Neubert:** I am happy to answer what must be the last intervention. We are currently considering the position at Stanmore Park. I assure my hon. Friend that, should there be any proposals, we shall consult closely with the local authority, the London borough of Harrow.

The RAF is adopting several measures to improve current recruitment and retention. The training of fast jet pilots is particularly lengthy, rigorous and costly, and the service seeks constantly to improve the efficiency and economy of the training given, while preserving the high standards required. It is for that reason that retention of aircrew, especially pilots, remains of great importance. The RAF continues to encourage our trained and experienced aircrew to remain in service, through measures such as those aimed at reducing the turbulence to their home lives which can be sometimes caused by their service, and through improvements to terms and conditions. Moreover, the RAF is alert to the future demographic trend and, in addition to seeking better retention rates, is considering a wide range of measures, including the possibility of widening opportunities for the employment of women as aircrew, and attracting more members of ethnic minorities into the service than we have been able to do so far. There will also be a higher profile campaign of recruiting for the RAF.

The role of women is currently under review in each of the services. We are examining the scope for increasing employment opportunities for them. Within our agreed policy, which I reaffirm, that women should not undertake direct combatant duties, women are already employed, unless physical limitations dictate otherwise, in the full range of officer specialisations and ground trades. In addition, it is planned that female fighter controllers will fly as aircrew in the Sentry AEW aircraft in 1991. I hope that wider opportunities for women will result from the present study, although I would not wish to pre-judge its outcome.

On the ground, the RAF has decided to increase the number of ground airwomen over the next five years from 5,000 to 7,000 personnel, some 10 per cent. of the ground trades' trained strength.

Hon. Members will be aware of the results of the first year of the exercise to monitor the ethnic origin of applicants and recruits to the armed forces. They have shown that only 1·5 per cent. of applicants for service in the RAF are black or Asian, and this is a disappointing figure, given that it compares with 5·7 per cent. of blacks and Asians aged 15 to 24 in the United Kingdom as a whole.

We would like to attract more recruits from these groups, and, on a tri-service basis, we are considering a number of measures to achieve this aim. As a first step, we have commissioned from independent consultants a study to investigate the reasons for the current low rate of application and to consider how we can best attract more young blacks and Asians into the armed forces.

Given the demographic trends over the next few years, it will be particularly important that we make life in the RAF attractive to all young men and women entering the employment market. In this connection, I am pleased to say that the armed services youth training scheme continues to receive full support from the RAF; 750 training places have again been allocated for the coming financial year. So far this year, 73 per cent. of the overall vacancies have been filled or booked. Over 70 per cent. of the young people who enter the RAF subsequently transfer to a regular engagement.

In addition to this, the Air Training Corps is a thriving youth organisation which enjoys widespread support both within the Ministry of Defence and in the community. There are some 38,500 cadets, including around 7,500 girls, in a total of 920 squadrons throughout the United Kingdom. The corps provides a large number of recruits to the Royal Air Force and aims to develop worthwhile interests and the values of good citizenship in the cadets.

My review of the manning scene would be incomplete without reference to the RAF Reserve. The regular Reserve which comprises former officers and airmen, together with RAF pensioners, continues to grow in strength. So too do the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the RAF Volunteer Reserve, for which there is no shortage of recruits at the moment; their strengths have increased over the past year despite a higher turnover of airmen than we would have wished.

Royal Auxiliary Air Force and RAF volunteer reservists are highly motivated, highly trained and, should the need arise, are ready to take their places alongside the regular forces in a variety of roles, often in the front line. I pay tribute to their competence and commitment which are second to none. It is wholly appropriate that later this year the Royal Auxiliary Air Force will be honoured by the presentation of a royal colour by Her Majesty the Queen.

We will continue to consider the roles which our reserve forces play, and trials of reservists in certain flying roles are continuing. In addition, the trial of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force support force has demonstrated the viability of the concept and it is planned to become a permanent and expanding part of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

I am grateful to have had the chance to speak about a service which is so well equipped and well motivated. The RAF, through its dedication, skill and courage, performs a vital task in the defence of the realm; we should all be thankful for that. It also provides the chance for young men and women to build a career which offers unique challenges and opportunities, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. I shall be doing all I can over the coming months to ensure that that message is heard in the House and in the wider world.

5.21 pm

**Mr. Allan Rogers** (Rhondda): May I first congratulate the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on his appointment? It is a pleasure to see his non-mute status.

Opposition Members wish to express our sincere appreciation to all the service men and women who have given such dedicated commitment to the defence of our country. This dedication has, alas, meant, as the Minister said, 17 Royal Air Force personnel giving their lives in the past year. We convey our sympathy and support to the bereaved families. I am sure that the Minister is giving them all the support they need in the very difficult circumstances of a young life being taken away from a family, especially when, as is often the case in the services, it is the life of the only breadwinner. The dedication and unselfish attitude of RAF personnel is an example to us all.

While I hesitate to pick out one individual, I should like to mention Squadron Leader Stephen Fox who was awarded the Air Force Cross last year. Squadron Leader Fox successfully landed a severely damaged Harrier in West Germany. The citation praised his high degree of courage, professionalism and coolness in deciding to remain with his aircraft when the simplest option would have been to eject and possibly risk many civilian lives. Squadron Leader Fox is a brave man and certainly deserves the highest decoration that can be awarded in peacetime.

I also congratulate Air Chief Marshal Sir David Craig on his assumption of the post of Chief of the Defence Staff. He is a person of great integrity, and I am sure that he will be outstanding in his new role. I am also sure of his political impartiality and I know that my hon. Friends are looking forward to working with him in the early 1990s when we assume government.

**Mr. Mates:** I just saw a pig fly by.

**Mr. Rogers:** And I am quite sure that the hon. Gentleman will still be Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence.

I am not happy, however, about the Government's politicisation of the post in the new system of appointing. Sir David Craig's appointment confirms the end of the old informal system of appointing chiefs of the defence staff from each service in rotation. There is now no discernible system in operation and it has been reported—I am sure that there is no truth in it—that Sir Nigel Bagnell was passed over because his views were embarrassing to the Government. I trust that that is not the case, but I should welcome before the debate is over an explanation from the Minister of why the old system of rotating appointments has been abandoned.

It is always difficult to speak from the Opposition Benches in a service debate. Criticism of the Government is always distorted by them and their Back Benchers into the idea that the Opposition are not supportive of the armed forces.

**Mr. Spencer Batiste** (Elmet): Hear, hear.

**Mr. Rogers:** The Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary says, "Hear, hear." That shows his complete ignorance of the matter. It is patent nonsense to imply that we do not support the armed forces. The Labour party is committed to the defence of this country, and its record in government since the war shows that this is so. There may be individual Opposition Members who do not support all the policies of the Labour party. [Hon. Members: "Ah!"] A substantial number of hon. Members who were on the Government Benches did not support Mr. Churchill in the 1930s and spent their holidays with the Nazis in Germany and with the Fascists in Italy. But never mind about that. We accept that sometimes, when a Conservative Government are in power, there may be some Tory Members who will not agree with them. But what was pretty awful about that period was that there were Ministers who were happy to consort with the fascists of Europe.

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): The hon. Member suggests that there may be Labour Members who do not agree with the Labour party's policy. But surely three unilateralists out of five Labour Members present is a 60 per cent. record. That is an overall majority who do not agree with Labour party policy.

**Mr. Rogers:** That is absolutely right. It is just that my colleagues reckon that I can manage and do not need much support.

It is important to remember in this debate that all of us in the Labour party represent constituents who come, in the main, from working-class backgrounds. We live in our constituencies. Our homes, our jobs, our savings and our future are in this country. We have no other place to go, unlike many Conservative Members who belong to and sometimes work as consultants for companies who have been expatriating their funds over recent years and may well expatriate themselves in times of difficulty. We on the Opposition side have nowhere to go. We and our families have nowhere to go and that is why we are completely dedicated to the defence of our traditions and our values. I find it gratuitously insulting for Conservative Members to suggest otherwise.

I say that at the outset simply to emphasise that we are committed to the defence of this country and that any Tory Member who suggests otherwise is wrong. My right hon. and hon. Friends do not need lessons in patriotism from anyone on the Government Benches.

In three successive debates I have referred to the Government's mismanagement of the defence economy. This Government of big business have shown themselves to be just that. At the same time, however, they have also shown themselves to be incompetent or unwilling to manage defence procurement for the benefit of the nation. The Under-Secretary said that he would leave procurement issues to his hon. Friend who will wind up the debate. That is a great pity, because I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends would have liked to put some questions to the Under-Secretary. The sorry saga of defence procurement is one of delays and overruns of time, with an accompanying and staggering escalation of costs reaching into billions of dollars.

Two notable events took place last week. One was the throwing out from GCHQ of Mr. Gareth Morris, the last trade unionist there. The other was the charging by the Director of Public Prosecutions of Major-General Sturge, who until recently was head of military communications responsible for GCHQ. He was charged with fraud, theft, deception and false accounting. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will not allow me to comment on that case because it is sub judice, but it is interesting to note the manner in which people leave Government service and

GCHQ, what happens to them afterwards and the double standards that Tory Members are presumably happy to support.

Mr. Morris, a trade unionist, was deemed to be unworthy of his nation's trust because of his membership of a trade union. That is a shabby and baseless judgment by a shabby and baseless Government who are prepared to allow the country to be ripped off through gargantuan frauds at the same time as they persecute the civil liberties of individuals. The Government victimise people for combining in trade unions. At the same time they are happy to allow another combination to be rampant—a freemasonry of generals, civil servants, industrialists and Tory politicians. *[Interruption.]* I can see that Tory Members are getting agitated. I understand why; they are hearing some of the truth.

**Mr. Bill Walker** *rose——*

**Mr. Rogers:** The hon. Gentleman is wearing his RAF kilt for the debate. I will give way to him so that he can display his all to the House.

**Mr. Walker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman who, in his usual courteous fashion, has given way. Is he aware that nearly 30 years ago I represented GCHQ as a trade unionist? I was responsible for negotiations for the largest group of members. At that time we all knew that if ever the individuals working at GCHQ, or the Air Ministry where I worked at that time, became involved in industrial action, the Government of the day—the Government then were Labour—would change the rules. There was an unwritten agreement. That agreement was broken, and the fact was promoted and advertised.

**Mr. Rogers:** It is nice to know that the hon. Gentleman represented trade unionists 30 years ago. He has gone downhill since and is still going downhill.

The hon. Gentleman forgets that when the country has been involved in conflict we have had Labour Governments, but we never had the trouble that he suggested. He knows as well as I do that the reason the trade unions were kicked out of GCHQ was that the Americans said that they had to go. It was a shabby act, with the Prime Minister being pushed around by the former President of the United States. This hurts Tory Members, and I can understand them being agitated. As I was saying, they are happy to allow another combination to go rampant—a freemasonry of generals, civil servants, industrialists, Tory politicians and even failed lieutenants-colonel. In 1983, at about the same time as the retired General Sturge became managing director of Meccano, sorry, Marconi secure radio systems—it is a bit like Meccano these days—Sir Brian Tovey, former head of GCHQ, became a consultant to Plessey, the manufacturer of electronic equipment for GCHQ, and General Sir Henry Tuzo, an ex-deputy commander of NATO, became chairman of Marconi space and defence systems.

**Mr. Mates:** That has nothing to do with the RAF.

**Mr. Rogers:** The Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence says that that has nothing to do with the RAF. We all know that the companies are not buying in the generals for their ability to shoot straight, or the civil servants for their ability to write memos. These people are bought in because of their contacts in the Ministry of Defence and because they are in the know.

The revolving door syndrome is well known to the Government. It has been brought to their attention on many occasions, perhaps most forcibly in 1984 by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, which urged them to tighten the rules for civil servants leaving to take up jobs with companies that were in receipt of Government contracts. The Select Committee said:

> "The traditional independence . . . of the civil service is in danger of becoming eroded or compromised in the eyes of the public."

The Select Committee suggested that there should be a time lapse between Government employment and related industrial employment—a recommendation which the Government seemed strangely reluctant to implement and operate.

Perhaps the truth lies in what was said by Sir Frank Cooper, ex-Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence—we cannot go higher and he can hardly be called a raving lefty—who also travelled the golden road to Westland:

> "Why criticise the civil servants—look at James Prior and other politicians."

Indeed, let us look at the Tory politicians. What about Lord Prior, ex-Cabinet Minister, now managing director of GEC?

**Mr. Mates:** Chairman.

**Mr. Rogers:** Chairman or managing director, whatever he is. GEC has contracts from the Government worth almost £1,000 million. Lord Prior stepped out of the Government into that job.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Is it not significant that Lord Prior was appointed just some months before the Secretary of State for Defence had to take a decision on Nimrod? Many hon. Members believe that Weinstock appointed him only to ensure influence among his former Cabinet colleagues. [HON. MEMBERS: "It did not work."] I said "former" Cabinet colleagues.

**Mr. Rogers:** My hon. Friend is right. As Tory Members, who are far more in the know, say, it did not do the company much good. Those of us who were here when Lord Prior was in the Cabinet know that he did not have much influence with the Government then either.

Some other Tory Members are also involved. I had the courtesy to let them know that I would mention their names in the debate. The hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) is a parliamentary adviser to British Aerospace which received Government contracts in the past year worth £930 million.

**Mr. Barry Field:** He has done well.

**Mr. Rogers:** The hon. Gentleman says that he has done well. That is how Tory Members measure their value as Members of Parliament; they wonder how they can represent big business in the House. The Conservative party is the party of big business. If we look at the Register of Members' Interests, we see that it is riddled with the industrial connections of Tory Members with companies that receive Government contracts. The hon. Gentleman had better be careful because he is stepping into a rather dangerous minefield, even for him.

The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), another ex-Cabinet Minister, has a most peculiar entry in the Register of Members' Interests. He is the honorary adviser to the chairman of British Aerospace—not to the

*[Mr. Rogers]*

company but to the chairman. As he is called an honorary adviser presumably he does not receive payment. If he does not receive payment, why is he declaring the interest? He does not have to declare it unless there is financial benefit, so it would be interesting to find out what his connection is with British Aerospace. As I have already said, the contracts received by British Aerospace from the Government in the last year are worth £930 million.

The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) is a consultatant to GEC, which had contracts worth £850 million from the Government in the last year. There is no point in mentioning the many others who are in the pay of defence companies, but it makes interesting reading.

**Mr. Mates:** The hon. Gentleman came close to making some insulting remarks about one or two senior officers who have gone into industry. He seems to be implying, first, that there is something intrinsically wrong with that, and, secondly, that the monopoly of people leaving this place to take appointments outside are Conservative Members. I shall reel off the names of six Labour Members who also left the House: Mr. Roy Jenkins, Mr. Stanley Clinton Davis, Mr. Bruce Millan, Mr. Edmund Dell, the chairman of a bank, Mr. Brian Walden and Mr. Marquand. I know that my right hon. Friend could tell me some more.

The serious point I wish to make is that, before the hon. Gentleman produces names as distinguished as that of Sir Harry Tuzo, I would point out that he was hired not just because he had contacts with people—every general has those—but because in a 30-year career he has probably had more experience of high-class management than any of his civilian counterparts. That is one of the great assets of life in the services.

**Mr. Rogers:** I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman can reel off what appears to be the European Commission. I was not intending to be insulting but, if I was, I shall not apologise for it. All I was, in fact, doing was reading from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report of 1984. That Committee has a majority of Conservative Members. It says that there should be a time period between people leaving Government employment and taking up related industrial employment.

If the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence feels that that is not so—I am glad that he has put it on record—we shall look at what his Committee does in future years to see whether it is impartial in its approach. *[Interruption.]* Did the hon. Gentleman say that he was under inquiry or undertaking an inquiry? I would not know.

To show how impartial I am, my next quote will be again from a Conservative Member. I say to Sir Frank Cooper that those examples of right hon. and hon. Members should not be used to justify civil servants taking jobs. It should not be said that civil servants can take such jobs because politicians do. The examples should be used to highlight what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) described as "subliminal corruption". Indeed, the potential for corruption in this revolving door practice is immense. I am sure that the recent arrests of people intimately or recently associated with Marconi in connection with corruption, fraud and national pilfering on a huge scale are only the tip of the iceberg.

**Mr. Cryer:** The argument is that Sir Harry Tuzo went into Marconi because of his extraordinarily fine qualities of management, but will my hon. Friend accept that he was a signal failure? When he went to Marconi the costs of the production of Sting Ray torpedoes escalated from under £100 million to more than £1 billion during the reign of the allegedly wonderful Sir Harry even before production had started.

**Mr. Mates:** Absolutely wrong. He put it right.

**Mr. Rogers:** I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for bringing that to my attention. As the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) knows, the fraud, the pilfering and corruption went on in Marconi under Sir Harry Tuzo. If Sir Harry is such a good manager—such a good friend of the hon. Gentleman—why did he not lay that particular nest of vipers to rest when he was there as chairman?

**Mr. Brazier:** I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's allegation about fraud and Sir Harry Tuzo. The point must be, however, that the bulk of the expansion in the cost of the Sting Ray programme occurred under the last Labour Government. It was a Conservative Government who eventually put it on a fixed priced contract. The hon. Gentleman has now been on his feet for more than a quarter of an hour. It really is time that he touched on the Royal Air Force, as that is the subject of the debate.

**Mr. Rogers:** I have given way a number of times to Conservative Members. If they were to shut up and take their medicine, we could get through it a lot quicker. The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) should not display his ignorance in the Chamber. Before he goes any further, the best thing that he could do would be to go to the Vote Office and obtain a copy of the relatively recent Public Accounts Committee report on torpedoes. He could then speak with some authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South was right. I should have thought that Marconi was the last company that should be used as a symbol of efficiency.

The revolving door syndrome is not confined to this country. Recent events in America have also been quite dramatic. I am sure that the danger of subliminal corruption led to the rejection by the Senate of John Tower's appointment as Secretary of State for Defence. I can hardly imagine Senator Edward Kennedy passing a judgment on other grounds.

The procurement scandals of the Pentagon and Senator Tower's close connections with the defence industry, as a consultant and an adviser, must surely have been a great factor in that decision. Incidentally, those scandals have reached this country through the connection with Lord Chalfont, who the Prime Minister chose to be deputy chairman of IBA. Some of those practices are being investigated. For the sake of the nation, I hope that they will be pursued as assiduously as petty social security dodging.

Incidentally, it might be a gesture of good faith if the Conservative party refused to accept political donations from companies receiving Government contracts during

the period that those companies are under investigation for fraud and corruption—perhaps is should eschew their political donations for good.

If those symbiotic or perhaps parasitic relationships were of benefit to the host body—the nation—one could perhaps justify them, however flimsy, but they are not. No benefit to the nation is to be gained from the relationship between generals, civil servants, Tory politicians and the defence industry.

Procurement irregularities are increasing; procurement fraud is mounting; there are long delays and overruns of time; and staggering escalation of costs amounting to billions of pounds.

The Minister mentioned earlier the question of my having a double header. I can, therefore, save further points on those issues until later.

The European fighter aircraft is potentially the greatest procurement disaster. It is difficult not to make political capital out of the Government's incompetence. However, what the Opposition find difficult to swallow is the fact that our armed forces will not have the right equipment to do the job on time and where and when it is needed. The Government refuse to learn lessons. They believe that, if there is not a quick identifiable return or profit, the project is not worth while. Funds are restricted at the feasibility study and project definition stages, often leading to cost and time overruns at later stages. That is why we want to keep a close eye on the progress of the EFA programme. By choking funds at this stage, as they are doing at the early stages of so many other projects, the Government are in grave danger of prejudicing the entire scheme.

While we welcomed the signing of the development contracts for the EFA last November, we were very much aware of the crisis in the associated radar project. On 10 November 1987 the House was told that a decision would be made on the EFA radar in early 1988. By 17 March 1988 the decision was expected in the summer of that year. The latest position is anyone's guess. Obviously, there are difficulties when there are four Ministries of Defence involved—although I cannot believe that the four are as bad as ours. However, it appears that the Ministry of Defence has not given the project the priority that it deserves.

Many thousands of jobs are involved. If the radar does not work, the plane cannot operate. Unless the Government are to produce planes and put them in storage, in exactly the same way that Tornados are put into storage, the whole project—plane and radar—founders. The Tornado is foundering because Marconi cannot produce the radar in an agreed and proper form.

The choice for EFA radar is either the Ferranti-led, all-European radar—the ECR90—or the Marconi-led MSD-2000 which will be developed from the American APG-65. *[Interruption.]* If it is not to be the Marconi-led MSD-2000, will the Minister tell us who is leading the project? Will he tell the managing director and the chairman of Marconi not to bother hon. Members with circulars describing how Marconi is leading the project?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury):** It might be helpful if the hon. Gentleman got something right in his speech. The German company is leading the alternative radar bid for EFA.

**Mr. Rogers:** Let us be quite clear. The Germans are leading on the MSD-2000?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Yes.

**Mr. Rogers:** Will the Minister therefore write to Marconi—I will provide a letter later—and tell the company not to print lies and send them to Members of Parliament?

The MSD-2000 is being promoted by Marconi as a low-risk project. If hon. Members received a copy of the Marconi letter this morning, they will know that that is so. It is promoted as a low-risk project which uses old technologies. That seems to be a very sad, if not pathetic, position to be taken by what is supposed to be Britain's leading electronics company which is led by Sir Henry Tuzo, the friend of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence.

Marconi has clearly lost faith in its ability to research, design and develop products. That is not surprising in view of the long list of procurement fiascos in which it has been involved over the past few years. It is alarming to learn that Marconi intends to use components in the MSD-2000 which are used on the upgraded Foxhunter radar. What confidence can we place in the radar equipment to be used in the next generation of fighter aircraft when its components do not even fulfil the requirements for the current generation of fighter aircraft?

Of course the Opposition recognise the technical challenge posed by the development of the ECR90. However, we also recognise that much of the blame falls on the MOD for continually changing specifications throughout the development phase. We should remember that the EFA is intended to operate primarily as an air defence aircraft and that the system must be tailored to that role and not be emasculated to fulfil some vague, grand strategic concept of the MOD.

One lesson that the Government, with their Thatcherite short-term approach, seem incapable of learning is that money cannot be saved by cutting expenditure in the development stages of a project. The long-term result is a botched job costing much more than intended with long time overruns.

If the decision of the EFA radar is postponed much longer, at best we may find ourselves storing planes that might fly with concrete ballast instead of radar. That is the present fate of the Tornado. At worst, the whole project might be cancelled and the defence of this country imperilled.

I want briefly to consider the Foxhunter radar which is another long-running saga. That radar was originally to have been in service in 1983, but it did not enter service until 1985 and then only to an agreed interim standard and after a 63 per cent. increase in development costs. That standard has been so interim that it is not fully or properly in service today.

At the end of last year, 32 Tornado ADV F3 fighters were in store at RAF St. Athan in south Wales. Those sophisticated, new fighters, which cost more than £500 million, were tucked away in hangars at a storage cost of more than £60,000 a year. I wonder who will be surcharged for that. If a Labour council had been responsible, the council members would be slung into gaol. I presume that the Minister will not insult the intelligence of the House by claiming that the planes are in storage for reasons of economy.

*[Mr. Rogers]*

Opposition Members are most concerned that the Foxhunter radars now in service with the RAF are not performing to the standards which the RAF requires. I want to quote from a "World in Action" programme——

**Mr. Mates:** Well, it must be true.

**Mr. Rogers:** Again, Conservative Members may scoff. However, Sir Keith Williamson, a former Chief of the Air Staff, appeared on that programme. No doubt the public schoolboys on the Conservative Benches will praise Sir Keith Williamson as one of theirs. Let us quote one of "theirs". According to my transcript, the narrator in the "World in Action" programme said:

"One difficulty is this: 'Foxhunter' has to track up to 20 planes simultaneously. It can manage all right when the aircraft are travelling in predictable courses but if they twist and turn, as in dog-fighting air battle, the computer cannot keep tabs on them all. 'The fighter', one senior RAF man told us, 'had a peace-time capability only. It would have difficulties in the extreme conditions of war.'"

I am not sure why those planes are being built, but the ex-Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Keith Williamson, responded:

"And this is really a disastrous situation because, without the radar, the fighter version of the tornado is absolutely useless."

That is the story of Foxhunter and of procurement under this Government. That is why I have devoted so much time to procurement. Conservative Members have said that this is an RAF debate. We may have the bravest men in the world in the RAF—and I accept that, because I am not chauvinistic—but they are no good unless they have the right equipment to do the job. The Government stand indicted on one charge, if only one charge. Procurement fraud, overruns and fiascos are jeopardising the lives and futures of the service men who give so much commitment to this country.

5.57 pm

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): Having listened to the catalogue of despicable slurs against my right hon. and hon. Friends which were masquerading as Labour party policy on the Royal Air Force, I want to bring the House back down to earth and consider what is happening in the RAF at the moment, particularly as it affects personnel and training.

This debate marks the culmination of a year's association between myself and the RAF. At the beginning of last year my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) asked me if I would like to take part in a pilot experimental scheme—no pun intended—for the armed forces because I have three RAF stations in my constituency. This scheme was to be similar to the very successful industry and Parliament scheme which benefited many hon. Members. I readily agreed to take part and enjoyed a most fascinating and illuminating year. I was able to participate in many flying exercises, so much so that I have been suffering withdrawal symptoms for some weeks because I am missing my flying experience.

I want to place on record my gratitude for the positive and welcoming reception which I received throughout my tour at several RAF stations. I want to convey my thanks to the RAF and MOD personnel who allowed me to take part in the scheme.

All my many visits were extremely valuable and pointed to matters which we should really consider in this debate, to some of which my hon. Friend the Minister referred in his opening address, and which I hope to bring out by reflecting on the stations which I visited during my year.

The major theme of my year with the Air Force was the training of officers and aircrew, and we began by visiting the officer and aircrew selection centre at Biggin Hill. From that visit a number of conclusions are possible.

First, my hon. Friend is right to conclude that at the present time recruitment is not a major problem. There appear to be many very capable, eager young men and women who want to join the Royal Air Force. But the demographic change which we all know is coming in the future will cause problems if there continues to be a haemorrhage of trained officer aircrew into civil airlines. Indeed, there is civil airline competition in recruitment at the present time.

The selection procedures are extremely good. There is a very tough assessment lasting two and a half to three days, and to choose someone who will be capable of reacting to the pressure and demands of fast jet flying is not easy in such a short time.

The Royal Air Force has an enormous investment in a huge training machine, but the steady flow of a sausage machine of new recruits—that is the only way that one can describe it—is not easy to keep in balance. The Biggin Hill centre is to move to Cranwell. I cannot see from my visit that this will present a problem. There may, indeed, be some benefits of familiarisation of those seeking entry from going to Cranwell, as anyone who visits Cranwell will not escape an immediate impression of the atmosphere of discipline. It was very similar to that which I experienced when I was recruited to the Metropolitan police in 1965, and it was most impressive.

At Cranwell, new officers undertake what is only an 18-week course. It is very intensive, tough, physical and mentally demanding. It is to the credit of the recruits and of the instructors that, after that 18-week course, some three quarters of the recruits leave Cranwell as officers. One has to comment, however, that of late there has been a higher failure rate of some females following a purple patch. I will return to the question of the role of women in the RAF later.

The quality of training of fast jet pilots was first demonstrated at Linton-on-Ouse, which is an officer aircrew training station within my constituency. As is well known, the present Jet Provost is soon to be replaced by the Tucano, and both instructors and students are very much looking forward to flying the new aircraft. The Jet Provost has served the RAF very well for many years and it is something of a tragedy and a cause of great sadness that yesterday, unfortunately, a Jet Provost crashed in my constituency. Obviously, it is too early to say what the outcome of the board of inquiry's investigations will be but, having spoken to the station commander last evening on the telephone, my impression is that the advice given to young trainee officers has been carried out.

The question of how we should instruct young pilots was brought home very forcefully at the Linton visit. A very clear balance between new pilot officers—which hon. Members who have been in the Royal Air Force will know are nicknamed "creamies"—and ex-front line pilots and specialist aircrew seems to work extremely well.

Similarly, the station at Finningley, near Doncaster, like that at Linton-on-Ouse, is very well run, but there is more mixed training. Navigation training particularly appears to be moving forward briskly into the modern era,

and there is a mood of enthusiasm, but resources are needed if we are to train navigators to get used to low flying in the fast jet world of the future.

I particularly recall a training sortie in one of the Dominies which brought home how physically demanding flying, even in such an aged aircraft, can be. There is some sadness that the Dominie cannot be replaced, but with refurbishment and an avionics update, which I think will come in the months ahead, it should be capable of many more years of service.

A question arises between Linton and Finningley about contractorisation. Contractorisation has been very successfully implemented at Linton. There is a suggestion that it be brought in at Finningley, but it is my impression that there will be difficulties in this. This is, first, because of the wide diversity of tasks and types of aircraft used at Finningley, as opposed to the single aircraft use of Provost at Linton, but, secondly, because of the availability of engineers to carry out the contractorisation tasks.

There is contractorisation at Shawbury. My impression was that this was not quite so successful as at Linton. I feel sure that we have the right approach in attempting to contractorise training stations, but there is no formal programme for the training of civilian engineers. Generally the service is good but that is the problem—training civil engineers in the future who are used to these planes. The majority of the staff recruited are, of course, former Air Force personnel.

There is also an increasing problem of loss of flexibility on stations caused by reducing the number of airmen available for such duties as ensuring the security of the station. This is a particular problem at the present time because of the prospect of terrorist attack, and certainly at some RAF stations we have seen this. It is important for us to bear in mind the problems which the reduction in the number of airmen on some of these stations causes for the station commander.

At Shawbury, which is another mixed training station, the number of women being attracted into the officer grade came home very forcefully, particularly in the air traffic section. The training officers have developed a host of desk-top training aids to improve the training of air traffic controllers, but most of the male traffic control officers are not pursuing their first choice and because of this some of the trainees tend to struggle towards the end of their course. The girls seem to make extremely good traffic controllers, but there is a problem here too in that many of them take only a five-year contract and there are potential losses to civilian life and civilian air traffic control in the future.

Before leaving Shawbury, I must also mention the initial helicopter training carried out there. I found a very enthusiastic team. Many of the helicopter pilots are not following their first choice either, yet they seem to have responded very enthusiastically and favourably to helicopter flying. I must say that, of the several hours of flying with the RAF that I was able to enjoy last year, I particularly enjoyed those spent helicopter flying. I will leave for a moment the question of the aircraft we use, except to say that the Wessex is getting old and that the question of replacement will have to be addressed at some stage.

We then moved to Valley in Anglesey, which is a very active station embracing both training and the strike command role. It was at Valley that a number of features of life in the Royal Air Force came across very strongly. First, there are the social pressures on officers and airmen serving in such a remote part of the British Isles and on their wives and families. There are problems with housing and schooling. If parents choose to send their children to school off camp, they find that 50 per cent. of the teaching locally is in Welsh. Compared with some of the issues that we have been discussing in this debate, these are minor problems, but they are very important to the personnel, and solving them contributes to morale. At Valley I had an opportunity to fly in the Hawk, which, of course, is the aircraft used by the Red Arrows. This is a much better aeroplane, and by this stage students are beginning to look like real pilots.

That experience brought home to me the other side of the problem of low flying. In addition to the person sitting in the cockpit, there are those on the ground who have to put up with the noise and the experience generally. Low flying is a particular problem in my constituency, as my hon. Friends know. The accident yesterday to which I referred did not involve low flying, yet the immediate reaction locally related to the problem that low flying creates and to the feeling of danger of many local residents. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said. He handled the matter with great sensitivity. I hope that his comments about the way in which the Ministry is trying to keep the amount of low flying across these islands to the absolute minimum will be much publicised.

My hon. Friend referred to the low-flying exercises that take place in north America—the red flag and maple flag exercises. Also, there is now increased weapons training in Sardinia and Cyprus, as well as three to four weeks' operational low-flying training—down to 100 ft—at Goose Bay in Canada. I must ask my hon. Friend to do everything he can to ensure that these exercises overseas are exploited to the maximum extent so that we may keep to the absolute minimum the amount of low flying over rural areas in the north of England and over other parts of the United Kingdom.

On flight safety, the fact that for quite some years no civilian has been killed as a result of an RAF accident is significant. However, I hope that in his reply my hon. Friend will be able to refer to that matter. The opportunity of this debate should be taken to show that people's worry about flight safety is not just ignored but that proper attention is being paid to their genuine concern.

I want to move from the fast jet world, which I experienced at Valley, back to the helicopter world. At Valley we have rescue helicopters, and the rescue helicopter training takes place there. I will not go into detail about the excitement that I enjoyed in one of these helicopters. Certainly, any hon. Member visiting RAF Valley and experiencing helicopter flight for the first time would enjoy it. The helicopter rescue service of the RAF provides considerable aid to civilian life, not just in the event of tragedies such as happened at Lockerbie and on the M1, but also in mountain rescue and sometimes, sadly, in the event of industrial disputes. We ask a lot of the crew concerned, and a debate such as this gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to them for the work that they do.

The main helicopter base is at Odiham, where the Chinooks and Pumas are based. They have a major role in troop support with the British Army of the Rhine. Increasingly, troop movements have to take place at night, and the development of night vision goggles is helping to create a strong tactical capability in helicopter night flying.

*[Mr. John Greenway]*

It is also worth bearing in mind that the Chinook helicopter is 20 years old. Of course, not all the Chinooks that the Royal Air Force possesses are actually that age, but a number are showing signs of wear, and the cost of keeping them fully serviceable is substantial.

The engineering workshops at Odiham are most impressive. The quality of the work, the painstaking way in which these aircraft are serviced,—the most minor blemishes being put right—is most impressive. The helicopter pilots at Odiham are very much in love with the Chinook as a flexible work horse which is very enjoyable to fly.

The next visit I made was to several of our stations in West Germany. It was at this point that the whole purpose, the whole raison d'etre, of the year came home very strongly. It was important in two major respects: first, it gave a complete picture of what RAF life and training are about; secondly, it changed my perspective of the strategic role of the Royal Air Force in Europe.

Let me turn to the complete picture on training. We invest £3 million or so in every fast jet pilot. The fruits of that investment are clearly visible in the competence, enthusiastic, very dedicated and professional approach of the young officers. The transition from the raw recruits I had seen at Biggin Hill to the pilots in the front line—many of them on their first tour—was quite remarkable. I began to appreciate the RAF's role in providing about one fifth of one of the two Tactical Air Command resources in West Germany, and in providing air support for the Northern Army Group and its defence of the northern half of the Federal Republic.

It is important to remember the United Kingdom's joint role, with France and the United States, in policing West German air space in peacetime—to which, actually, the French no longer contribute actively. These first-tour young officer pilots were fully prepared to meet all the challenges thrown at them. Both mentally and physically, what we ask of them is very demanding, yet what I saw was a very tightly knit, disciplined unit.

What I really want to get across to the House, and place on record, is that, having spent many hours in the air trying to come to terms with the physical demands of fast jet flying, I realised in West Germany that that is only half of the story, that if ever these young officers are required to take part in active warfare they will face the problems of chemical attack. From what I saw there, I believe that we must have the best protective clothing and the best available protection arrangements against chemical warfare of any air force in the western world. It is difficult to describe because of its physically demanding nature, but the thought of having to fly in a cockpit in a rubber suit with one's helmet, "G" kit and all the rest on top is not attractive. However, the way in which the young men have been trained is most commendable, as is their willingness and enthusiasm to fulfil their task.

I detected some elements of public opinion in West Germany that do not completely welcome our presence there. Issues such as national sovereignty, the threat of foreign troops and noisy and dirty activity, particularly that associated with the Tornado, are becoming increasingly unpopular.

In the light of recent statements by President Gorbachev and a clear willingness to take part in serious discussions about reductions in defence expenditure and capability at all levels, it is far too early for us to think of major changes in our role in the defence of western Europe or, more particularly, scaling down our Air Force operations.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said recently that he did not want any reductions in aircraft at present. Our numbers are not that great and we must ask how far we can depend upon others. We must also bear in mind our other responsibilities throughout the world which can arise at any time, as we saw only a few years ago in the Falklands.

It is vital to maintain the best trained and equipped Air Force. I welcome my hon. Friend's statement today about the European fighter aircraft. Having seen the Phantoms and Jaguars in West Germany, I know how much pilots there will welcome the new aircraft in years to come. New weapons and aircraft have given the RAF a real cutting edge, and I am sure that my hon. Friend's announcement today will help to ensure that that continues to be the case.

One or two other problems were highlighted during my German visit, which may not be referred to in much detail today. First, there are problems for the Rapier squadrons of the air defence regiment. The four-month requirement means that many of those men are having to serve four months out of twelve in the Falklands and that is placing great strain on them and their families. No one has a solution to that, but today's debate provides an opportunity for their voice to be heard.

There is also concern throughout the Air Force at the general gradual erosion of the quality of service life. As the financial quest for efficiency and value for money is pursued, for which clear support exists within the Air Force, morale, motivation and an esprit de corps remain vital. The removal of perceived benefits and the imposition of what appear to be penny-pinching changes, such as a reduction in the number of leave warrants, charging for food on detachments, the abolition of home-to-duty travel allowances, are not popular. It would be regrettable if, in pursuit of efficiency, there was a reduction in effectiveness.

My hon. Friend referred to the future role of women in the RAF. The studies into whether we can have women pilots are extremely worthwhile. I have already mentioned the potential future problem of demographic change. I detected within the officer aircrew a willingness to see women piloting multi-engined aircraft, if not our fast jets.

There has been over 40 years of peace in Europe, the longest period of peace for six centuries. To maintain that peace in the future, we need a properly equipped Air Force as well as other armed forces. We also need young men and women who are committed to their task. My experience of the past year shows that the RAF hierarchy has confidence in its young men and women, many of whom were left to brief me in their own way, without relying on their superiors. That is a tribute to them, their training and their managers.

I place on record my thanks to those who helped me to take part in the year. Any hon. Member who has an opportunity to take part in the scheme should do so. I do not usually find defence matters easy to grasp, but I hope that in my few remarks I have demonstrated the worth of the scheme, and I commend it to other hon. Members.

6.25 pm

**Mr. Tony Benn** (Chesterfield): In a way, the main point that I wanted to make has already been made. Listening to the speeches so far I have heard no reference to the enemy. The debate has been about important questions such as uniforms, allowances and low flying. As an old RAF man I enjoyed the latter very much, but it was dangerous when I learned it. But we must not forget that what we are discussing today is part of a defence budget of nearly £20 billion, which comes out of taxpayers' money. That is £344 per person, and for a family of four more than £1,000 a year. That runs at the rate of £37,000 a minute. During my speech, however brief it is, a substantial sum of public money will be spent. That money must be justified in terms of its absolute necessity.

Strangely enough, my mind goes back 52 years ago this week when, as a boy of 12, I sat in the Gallery and heard the then Mr. Churchill speak on the Service Estimates. I looked it up, and found that he said:

"It is admitted and well known that we are in times of great danger—grievous danger. Our Air Force is far from giving us security; our small Army is more of an Imperial police than a military force; munitions factories are almost in their infancy of reconstruction".—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1937; Vol. 321, c. 1398.]

When I heard that, Winston Churchill was sitting where the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) usually sits. There was a sense of urgency. In Churchill's view—not a view shared by the then Government—those estimates were needed because there was a danger of attack.

Thirty-two years ago this week I made my maiden speech from the Opposition Front Bench as the number two Opposition spokesman on the Air Force. I looked up that speech and at that time all the debate was about a Soviet attack—whether there would be one and whether we would use the deterrent. I shall not do as Harold Wilson used to do and quote my own speeches, but I asked the Minister what would happen if there was a Soviet attack with conventional weapons. I asked whether we would use nuclear weapons and whether the deterrent would be used. At that time Duncan Sandys was talking about massive retaliation. I have forgotten the exact phrase that reflected the current view.

Now we have to ask ourselves, how many hon. Members believe that there is a military threat? What is happening? Although the Minister said as an aside that we must keep the deterrent, he did not think it necessary to elaborate. I am not complaining, quite the opposite; I am almost congratulating him for not warning the nation of the military threat.

I speak today not because I claim any special knowledge of the modern Royal Air Force, or anything of the kind, but because what has happened to the public's perception of defence is hardly ever alluded to in the House. People do not believe that there is a Soviet military threat. I know that the Prime Minister says that the Russians have changed because they have decided to adopt her philosophy of market forces and because they are frightened by Polaris.

I never believed—although I must confess that I was struck by the anxiety at the time—the idea that, 40 years ago, the Red army was planning to move into western Europe. It lost 20 million people in the war, and at that time we were allies. If hon. Members want to read powerful speeches in support of the Soviet Union, they should read Churchill's speeches during the war. At that time we were pouring weapons into Russia, which lost a large number of people. Until the day I die, I shall never forget that the liberties we enjoy today were in part won by Russian blood shed in defence of their own territory.

The Soviet threat is a central question in all defence debates. Of course, if one believes that there is a Soviet threat, one must retain military hardware. During my election campaign in Chesterfield I met a woman who was possibly the only woman who has totally silenced me. She said "I shall vote for you, Mr. Benn, because of your policy on nuclear weapons." I asked her why she felt as she did. She said, "We had to fight the Russians in the last war and we may have to fight them in the next." My God, there has been some successful propaganda if a woman of my age —in her mid-60s—who has been through it all as I have does not know who were our allies and who our enemies in the last war.

I have never followed the details of disarmament negotiations—one would have to be an armchair military expert to do so, and I have never aspired to that—but I tell the House, and hon. Members may read this in the pages of *Hansard*, that the reason for Gorbachev's credibility is not that he has come up with a few disarmament proposals but that he has said to the world, "I want to disarm to improve the living standards of Russians." People everywhere in the world said, "He is right. That is what we want to do. We do not want to be bankrupted by this enormous defence burden in America or Britain; we want to improve standards of living for our people."

I do not usually go by polls, but it is undoubtedly true that over the years Gorbachev's policies have been much more popular than those of Reagan or Bush because, in a strange way, he speaks for an overwhelming majority of people in the world who want less spent on weapons. They want that first because weapons are dangerous and secondly because more people will die of AIDS, cancer and heart disease in the next few years than from the Red army landing and taking over the Speaker's job.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's eulogy about Mr. Gorbachev, but was it not Mr. Gromyko who said that, although Mr. Gobachev had a kindly face, he had iron teeth? Do not those words mean something?

**Mr. Benn:** If we are going to look back, we should look at the American eagle which has a bunch of arrows in one claw and an olive branch—the symbol of peace—in the other. Every super-power has armed forces and diplomatic policies, and so have we. However, does the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) believe that there is a Soviet military threat and that, had we not had nuclear weapons, the Red army would have taken over West Germany and Italy, come to Britain, dealt with the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), and taken on the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) in Northern Ireland? I do not think that people believe that any more.

I do not wish to take too long—although there does not seem to be such a strong sense of military danger that the Benches are crowded with people waiting to speak.

We cannot afford the level of defence expenditure that we are carrying—it is too heavy a burden. For example, Japan's expenditure on defence is 1 or 2 per cent. of its GDP, whereas ours is 5 or 6 per cent. No wonder the

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world's shops are full of Japanese videos, cameras and motor bikes. Japan spends its money on civil development, whereas we sell missiles to any sheikh who will buy them and to both sides of the Iran-Iraq war.

The majority of our research and development goes into military weapons, which is damaging to the British economy and explains why we have not been able to keep abreast of other countries. As a percentage of GDP, we spend about six times as much as West Germany on military R and D. That military budget diverts resources from civil to military production. It also diverts resources from the Third world.

We are all much moved by Band Aid and Comic Relief but we should remember that 15 million babies die from diarrhoea every year, which could be cured for the cost of just one day's expenditure of our defence budget. That is not justifiable and it is no wonder that the Churches have begun to come out in a political way. On such a simple moral issue they understand the choice involved.

If we want to deal with super-powers, nuclear weapons are unnecessary. The Vietnamese did not have nuclear weapons but they managed to get the Americans out. The Afghans did not have nuclear weapons but they got the Russians out. It is strange that those countries with nuclear weapons are rendered impotent by them. The Americans could not use them in Korea or Vietnam and the Russians could not use them in Afghanistan. Therefore, the old argument that we must have the bomb and then no one will attack, and that there is no other way to get rid of enemies, is no longer true.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) made a powerful speech which explored the military and industrial complex. If I read *The Observer* correctly, 1,400 civil servants moved from Government Ministries into defence industries during the course of five years. I am not suggesting that there was corruption, but I think it is unhealthy that someone can work in a Department with a contractual relationship with a company and then retire into it. He could be tempted to assist the company in the hope that it will later employ him. That is an unhealthy relationship.

The people who continue to persuade us that there is a Soviet military threat are those making a huge profit out of the arms budget. One of the earliest demands of the Labour movement was to nationalise the arms industry because it made a lot of money out of weapons and therefore had a vested interest in maintaining that the threat existed. Of all the contracts for aerospace, 45 per cent. are for the military and 20 per cent. of all electronics business is for defence. Many people would be absolutely lost if sufficient fear of the Soviet Union was not built up to justify the weapons programme.

The same is true of the media. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda referred to Lord Chalfont, who has been appointed to the Independent Broadcasting Authority. He has defence connections.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** It was the Abingdon Corporation.

**Mr. Benn:** My hon. Friend is more knowledgeable than me. People in the media—not just defence correspondents—should not have one foot in both camps. Some of the figures that we are given are totally fraudulent. I shall never forget that, when I was in the Cabinet, one year we were given the balance of forces in the draft defence White Paper by Fred Mulley. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) pointed out that the French were not included, as if we did not know which side, in the event of a war, the French would be on. The defence Department did not want us to include the French and said they were not part of the military wing of NATO. The balance-of-force argument was used to maintain the fear of attacks and thus justify the large defence budget.

The cold war presupposes the presence of permanent American forces in Britain. Mr. Attlee invited the Americans to this country saying that they were on a training mission. He did not inform the House that they were coming on a permanent basis. They live here, for example, at RAF Greenham common, which is not described as an American base but is covered by the RAF.

Has the House ever discussed or considered whether it wants a foreign nation—however friendly—to have permanent bases here? I do not. I am not hostile to the United States—I have many links with it and much admiration for it. However, I do not believe that America should have troops here which are commanded by a President whom we do not elect and cannot remove.

I watched the funny exchanges between Dukakis and Bush during the presidential elections because I knew that one of them would command the biggest assembly of United States nuclear weapons outside the United States—there may be a comparable arsenal maintained in Japan. Do we want that? Would we not rather look forward to the day when Russian troops will move out of eastern Europe, the American troops will move out of Britain, and the British troops will move out of West Germany?

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said that we must retain the deterrent, and the Prime Minister has made it clear that she wants to keep nuclear weapons and does not envisage a time when they will be given up. That is particularly relevant and important to the Labour party at present, because we are engaged in a policy review. What attitude should we adopt? I have no inside knowledge and cannot say what will be the outcome, although I read *The Guardian* to find out what is going on. All that I would say to those who yearn for nuclear weapons is this. It used to be said that they bought a place at the top table, but they do not. That has never been the case at Soviet-American disarmament negotiations. It has been said that nuclear weapons will buy a place on the hot line, but it is not necessary to have a bomb to make a telephone call to the White House or to Red square.

My old permanent secretary—now dead; a kindly man—once said that we might need them if the French had them, as if a nuclear threat might come from some new Napoleon in Paris. But Chernobyl changed everything. Everyone is very slow to take account of what has happened. Chernobyl showed that if we dropped a nuclear weapon on the Soviet Union the radioactive clouds would drift back and damage us. Likewise, if the Soviets dropped nuclear weapons here the cloud would drift back to them.

Nuclear weapons are unusable. If the Labour party said that it wanted to keep them, the next question would be "Are you going to use them?" Saying that we will keep nuclear weapons opens up far more questions than adopting the line of consistent policy on which all Labour Members were elected in the last general election. One of the reasons why there has been such a good response to Gorbachev is that he has said that the Soviets want to get

rid of nuclear weapons by the year 2000. Like it or not, people believe him. I believe him, because it cannot be in anyone's interest to have weapons that would destroy us.

A pro-nuclear defence policy also presupposes the permanent division of Europe. As I said in a recent debate on the Common Market, I have lived through many different types of Europe. I did not live through the period before the first world war, when all the heads of state were related to Queen Victoria, but I remember the inter-war Europe, the wartime Europe and the post-war Europe. Now Europe is changing again, and people want a peaceful Europe. The question that is then posed is what would be the role of the defence forces in such circumstances.

The time has come to open up for public examination a different defence and foreign policy for Britain, I hope without personal animosity or the normal vulgarity of exchange between political parties. I say that because I believe that many people are feeling their way towards such a move. They do not particularly like the argument based on whether, if we have the bomb, we will use it, because they know that we have not really got an independent bomb. No one honestly believes that if the Prime Minister pressed a button the bomb would go anywhere, because they know that it would go nowhere without being guided to its target by the American satellite intelligence system. We have had about nine general elections about whether we should retain what we have never had.

In any serious defence debate that does not consist simply of point-scoring, one of the options on the agenda —which I should like to be an option from our Front Bench when the policy review is over—is a non-nuclear defence policy: a policy wholly committed to the idea that nuclear weapons are unusable, that we cannot afford them, that we do not need them, that others are giving them up and that we should do the same.

Another option is that we should move away from a bloc system towards a more non-aligned policy. I remember raising that at the Labour party national executive some time ago, and I can tell the House that it was not very popular. Then I went to Moscow a year ago and discovered that the Vatican goes to the non-aligned conference. If the Pope can go, I see no reason why we should not at least send an observer. Papandreou, a member of NATO, goes to those conferences as well. I believe that non-alignment is the way forward—a move away from the military blocs in Europe and with all foreign troops removed, including the Russian troops in eastern Europe. I am sure that the eastern countries would like that, and that the Russians will have to do it because they cannot afford to keep their troops there.

We must move towards a European security pact, which would be a better guarantee of peace in Europe than our aircraft doing their low-flying exercises, losing pilots and preparing to fight a war that is inconceivable. We must divert the resources from military to civil use. The Prime Minister has said that she is a Green, and I am not one of those who have laughed at that, because what interests me is not what she says she is but why she feels that she has to say it. She feels that she has to say it because she knows that the majority of opinion in Britain is now taking environmental questions seriously. The pollsters, Bernard Ingham, and everyone who is in touch with real life tell her that she must be a Green, and I consider it central to the Green argument that we should not have nuclear weapons and should not build on the idea that one day we might use them.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to contribute to the debate. I hope that, without a vote or the normal exchanges between the Front Benches and others, we may at least be able to explore the option that I have described. It is no more absurd than any other argument that has been put forward. They laughed at Churchill for saying that Hitler would attack. People have always laughed at those who are that little bit ahead of the argument. The world has changed completely since the days of the formation of NATO and the Warsaw pact, the Berlin airlift, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet troops going into Hungary. This is a new world, and if we are seriously to justify taxing our constituents such an enormous sum we must explain our assessment of the threat.

I do not believe that a military threat exists. I think that the real threat is different, and is posed by the neglect of our environment, the pressing dangers to the planet and people dying of starvation in the Third world for the lack of simple things that we could easily provide with five minutes' worth of our military budget. That is what we should be discussing in defence debates. The RAF, which flies so many aircraft and carries so many people, is just as capable of conducting relief missions as of carrying nuclear weapons that would lead to the destruction of humanity.

6.46 pm

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. It will not surprise the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to hear that I do not agree with much of what he said. Perhaps my experience as a young airman in the years immediately after the war, when squadrons were instructed by the then Labour Government to fly in combat zones unarmed, taught me lessons that I shall never forget. I did not think that I would live to hear people suggest again that our military should be put into a position in which it could not defend itself.

Having listened to what the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, I should declare an interest. I have been a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve for many years, and I am also secretary of the Royal Air Force parliamentary group. I am pleased to see the right hon. Member for Chesterfield wearing his RAF parliamentary group tie.

Let me say for the benefit of the hon. Member for Rhondda that after the squeeze of the Labour Budgets in 1974 and early 1975 I have never taken a penny in pay from the RAF Volunteer Reserve budget. The only remittance that I receive—because I have been unable to stop it—is the cheque sent to me annually for the upkeep of my uniform. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not think that that compromises me. It is less than £10.

**Mr. Rogers:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his military experience. I am sorry that he does not have a pension that extends to buying him a pair of trousers. As another ex-service man, I am extremely concerned about defence, and the hon. Gentleman and I have many interests in common.

**Mr. Walker:** Let me make it clear at the outset that I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's integrity. I may disagree with him on matters of policy and detail, but I have never doubted the integrity and loyalty of the British working class. Contrary to what is often said by Opposition Members, the working classes are well represented on the Government Benches. We are not all part of the public school, old boy network. One of the great advantages of being in the Royal Air Force is that it recruits from all socio-economic groups. The only requirement is the ability to do the job. That has always been the RAF's great strength.

The kilt I am wearing is not my normal one, but it has a history. RAF Edzell asked a kilt manufacturer in my constituency to design and manufacture a tartan for the Royal Air Force. I am wearing the result. Anyone who has studied the history of the RAF, and particularly of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, knows that just before the 1939 war the then monarch gave the Royal Auxiliary Air Force in Scotland the right to wear the Douglas tartan kilt with their mess kits and as part of the uniform of their pipe bands.

As you, Mr. Speaker, witness the way in which the Scots behave in this House, you will have realised that we are rather sectional, with our clans. Because of the history of the Douglas and other clans, few Scots who are not members of the Douglas clan are willing to wear its tartan. It is to do not with the Douglas clan being one thing or another but with our being tribal in our allegiances. It goes back a long way. If we did not have common hates—and I shall not say what those are—our clans would probably go on hating each other even today. The people of my constituency, for example, think that they have little in common with those living in the west central industrial belt of Scotland.

The idea of a tartan that would not contravene Scotland's historical tartans is a good one. It is interesting to note that the Scotsman who designed the tartan and had it manufactured is himself an ex-wartime RAF pilot—so the tartan has all the right connections. That is why I wear it. I hope that the Royal Air Force will at some future date encourage, if not authorise, those who wish to wear the Air Force tartan to do so.

Much has been said in the debate about low-flying aircraft, and I recall what was said during defence questions on one occasion by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), when he reminded the House that if Reichmarschall Goering, who was in charge of the Luftwaffe, had known about radar and of the advantages of flying low and fast, his Lufftwaffe would never have operated in the way that it did in the Battle of Britain. Its planes assembled in great numbers at high altitudes, where our radar was able to identify them and to position our fighter aircraft at critical points, at critical times. If Goering had known about radar and about the advantages of flying low and fast, the probability is that the Battle of Britain would have ended very differently.

It is also worth remembering the experience of 1940, when the Royal Air Force's bomber squadrons were required to go into battle, having been brought up on the kind of doctrine about which we heard earlier—that the world is peaceful, nobody wants to attack, and that it does not matter if one is not prepared for war. We were most unprepared for war, and our bomber crews went into battle flying Fairey-Battle and Bristol Blenheim aircraft. I remind the House that those gallant young men attacked heavily defended targets. I emphasise also that the posthumous award of a Victoria Cross is no substitute for the ability to attack and destroy heavily defended targets, survive, and return to one's base. That is why today's air crews, whose responsibility is to strike and attack, are required to fly low and fast.

My constituents are well aware of my views. As long as there is a perceived threat—and I believe that there is—it is essential that our pilots are capable of flying low and fast, so that they will survive in the hostile environment of heavily defended targets. They must reach those targets, take them out, and then return to base.

As I have mentioned during Question Time, on seven occasions the West German Government have asked the Royal Air Force to reduce the number of its low-flying sorties—so much so, I believe, that any further reduction would jeopardise our crews' ability to undertake their allotted tasks. The West Germans may be prepared to accept the reduction in morale and the problems that West Germany's air force currently faces, but I hope that our Government will never accept a similar situation. If the West Germans cannot be reminded of the reasons why the RAF operates in their country, serious consideration should be given to moving those forces elsewhere.

It is also important to emphasise that modern attack aircraft must be capable of attacking targets that are a long distance ahead of them—a stand-off capability. It is important to uprate that capability so that Tornado aircraft, which will be at the forefront of our attack aircraft well into the next century, have the ability to destroy targets yet not have to overfly them. Again, that is important for their survival.

I turn to another area of activity that is linked in an odd way to low flying in my constituency. It is also directly linked to activities in the constituency of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). It will not surprise Ministers if I talk about search and rescue helicopters. When my constituents complain about noisy or fast jets interrupting their lives, I remind them that the yellow helicopters we welcome to my constituency in most weekends come from the same Air Force, and that they are there to support fast jet operations and other RAF activities. More than 80 per cent. of rescues are of civilians.

We have every reason to be thankful for the presence of those yellow helicopters. I was very pleased to help the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East in battling to retain the Leuchars search and rescue helicopter flight. The courage, professionalism and splendid example shown by the crews of those helicopters does more for RAF public relations than any other activity, and substantially offsets the constituency problems I encounter because of low-flying aircraft. I look forward to the day, in the not-too-distant future, when Wessex helicopters stationed throughout the United Kingdom, which have done a splendid job and are marvellous aircraft, are replaced by Sea Kings, with their greater capability.

Can Ministers tell us about the current position of the Tucano and when we can expect to see it in service at the flying training units? Although the Jet Provost is doing a splendid job, it is getting rather long in the tooth and we need the Tucano as soon as possible. I have no doubt that when it comes into service the Tucano will be welcomed by the pilots and the instructors who have to fly it as well as by the students. It is a fine aeroplane and I have always believed that it was good to train pilots ab initio on propellor-driven aircraft. Hon. Members who are pilots

will understand why I said that. The co-ordination required and the torque one has with propellors means that, at a very early stage, one can sort out those who will become pilots from those who will not make it.

There have been comments about the radar on the Tornado F3, but I do not associate myself with the view that our Tornados, even with their present radar, cannot do their job. Anyone who has had anything to do with service aircraft knows that it is remarkable if one can ever get everything working 100 per cent. I hope that Ministers will be able to tell me that the F3 radar is capable of carrying out the bulk of its duties and activities.

What progress has been made in getting another airborne warning and communications system aircraft? Although we have ordered the minimum number, there is a need for an additional one, if not two, and I should like to think that there has been some budgeting to achieve that. I am pleased that the Harrier GR5 Royal Air Force close ground support aircraft in western Europe is now moving into operational effectiveness, because there is no doubt that that aircraft will improve substantially the capabilities of the squadrons operating Harriers.

I do not take the gloomy view that we have heard from the Opposition about the European fighter aircraft. I am often astonished that we can get agreement among nation states on joint projects because there is no doubt that there is much arm twisting among those with various interests. As we are leading on two of the major components for EFA, I would have been surprised if others had not made an issue of the fact that we also want to lead on radar. That does not mean that I support radar that is not made in the United Kingdom. With Ferranti being in Scotland, it would be astonishing if I were not supporting it. However, I believe that what is more important is that EFA must have the equipment that does the job. That aircraft was designed to fly in a hostile environment where it must be an air superiority aircraft and the last RAF air superiority aircraft was the Hunter. That was a long time ago. We need an air superiority aircraft that can survive in a hostile environment on the western front, if hostilities ever take place there.

I promised my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who is an honorary air commodore of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and a former Spitfire pilot in that force, that I would mention his absence and give his apologies. He does not like to miss Royal Air Force debates and, because of his interest, he would like to have been here to defend his Royal Auxiliary Air Force. The air defence units of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force are a credit to the individuals who serve in them and have shown clearly and positively what Conservative Members have always believed, which is that given, the opportunities, there are young men and women who are delighted to offer their services to the nation especially in activities involving the Royal Air Force. I suggest that the comments made about having Volunteer Reserve pilots and aircrew in a much wider range of activities will be welcomed. The Royal Air Force has other activities in the Volunteer Reserve including a public relations flight. I congratulate that flight on the way in which it operates and on the professionalism of the individuals who form the flight. Many are involved in careers in the media, often at a high level, and they do a good job.

It will not surprise Ministers that I want to make some comments about the air cadets. I have been asked by those involved in the air cadets to thank Ministers for their support. They want me to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) for his interest and support when he was Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, and I have also been asked to thank my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement for his support over many years. Defence Ministers know that the air cadets are an important investment for the nation. Being a member of the air cadets helps young people to take an active interest in demanding and rewarding activities and, more important, it turns them into good citizens and prevents them from becoming involved in activities that we would normally read about in the lurid Sunday papers. The air cadets not only supply the Royal Air Force with recruits, but assist the nation in developing good citizens.

I thank Ministers for the splendid conventional glider fleet that we have. It is the pride of the air cadets and the envy of the world. We look forward to the delivery of the new winches that will make it possible for the conventional glider fleet to operate more effectively and efficiently. We also welcome the introduction of control caravans because it means that we shall have vehicles that can be used effectively on gliding sites.

I cannot, of course, mention gliders without dwelling on the problems of airfields. As the Royal Air Force has shrunk, there have been fewer and fewer airfields from which glider units can operate the volunteer glider schools. This has meant that conventional gliders have fewer airfields out of which they can operate effectively. However, as Ministers know, we also have motor gliders that can operate off hard runways and alongside pilot aircraft, and that has given a flexibility that was missing in the past. The present fleet of motor gliders is over 20 years old and we look forward to the replacements that I have been assured are coming this year. As I have air-tested the preferred option, I can say that we can look forward to many happy years of flying those machines.

The Royal Air Force presentation team does a good job, going round the country telling the general public about the Royal Air Force. We had the good fortune to have it in the House on 15 February and those of us who attended the talk found it instructive and worthwhile. I am planning to bring the team back at a later date so that hon. Members who did not attend the first time will have another opportunity.

One hears much in the media about crowded skies. That is interesting because I have calculated—and this has been confirmed from other sources—that the number of aircraft available to move around United Kingdom skies today is roughly one eighth of the number 30 years ago, so if our skies are crowded today, what were they like 30 years ago? What has happened is that civil aviation has grown because the size of aircraft has grown and they can carry many more passengers. It requires only one accident for many people to be badly hurt or killed. That is why the media talk about crowded skies. Their answer is to control more and more of the airspace. Controlled airspace may be part of the answer, but it is not the whole answer. The more one controls airspace, the more likely one is to increase the hazards for the aircraft in that controlled airspace.

Part of the problem lies in the way in which we run our National Air Traffic Services—as a joint civil and RAF operation. Nothing that I have to say is a criticism of those who operate the service, but effectively it is controlled by

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the Civil Aviation Authority which is a regulatory body. That is an odd arrangement, because the regulatory body in effect controls itself.

I should like responsibility for the National Air Traffic Services to be removed from the Civil Aviation Authority. That would leave the CAA free to do its job as a regulatory body well and properly. What I have to say may not be popular with some of my friends in the Royal Air Force, but I think that National Air Traffic Services should be managed and run by the RAF, which is well equipped to do the job. The civil employees could easily be transferred to the Ministery of Defence, and would lose nothing of their present position. We should then have a better managed and better run National Air Traffic Services, which would be to the benefit of all the users.

One of the greatest innovations in the RAF recently has been the way in which financial controls and budgets have been dealt with at station level. We hear much from the Opposition about the misuse of funds, but in recent years massive savings have been achieved because so many of the stations have been given responsibility for their budgets.

The RAF is very dear to my heart. I have worn a light blue uniform for about 43 years. I am proud of the privilege that I have enjoyed. I shall remain as long as the Royal Air Force is prepared to have me, and, as long as I am a Member of the House, I shall certainly defend the interests of the RAF against wholly unfounded attacks.

7.13 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): I hope that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) will forgive me for saying that my feelings are always ambivalent when I see him wearing his kilt in the House. I admire his enthusaism for the tartan of the Royal Air Force, but I was brought up in the belief that no gentleman should ever wear a kilt south of Perth. I am also a little concerned to know how far he would seek to promote the wearing of the garment. If it were universally worn, it would give rise to operational difficulties—not least for flying crew called upon to make a rapid response in an emergency.

This is an occasion on which it is customary to acknowledge the dedication of those who serve in the Royal Air Force, to recognise their professionalism and to pay proper and generous tribute to their courage. But general expressions of goodwill are not enough for the dependants of those who die while serving in the Royal Air Force. I have given the Minister advance notice of the case that I mention, which I raise with the permission of my constituent Mrs. Jan Nelson. I do not expect a detailed response this evening, because I propose to write to the Minister in due course, but Mrs. Nelson's case raises a number of issues of general significance and it is proper that the House should consider them on an occasion such as this.

Mrs. Nelson's husband, Squadron Leader David Nelson, died on 9 January this year over the North sea, while piloting a Phantom aircraft from RAF Leuchars. So integrated into the community of north-east Fife are the families of airmen such as Squadron Leader Nelson that such tragedies are felt throughout the whole community. Squadron Leader Nelson was performing a difficult and demanding task involving split-second judgments and the highest degree of skill. The cause of the accident has not yet been established, but what is certain is that Squadron Leader Nelson worked for long hours, that he was frequently away from home, that he and his family were required to move frequently in response to his postings within the RAF and that he gave 20 years of dedicated, loyal and expert service to the RAF.

I shall not cite specific figures because as far as possible I wish to preserve Mrs. Nelson's privacy. The amount of the gratuity and pension that she and her family will receive depends on a decision as to whether Squadron Leader Nelson's death was attributable to—that is to say arising out of—his service. If his death is deemed attributable, the amounts will be greater. I understand that the question whether a death is attributable can raise difficult issues, and that it is sometimes difficult to reach a firm and valid conclusion. I think that the House will accept that it makes no difference to the requirements of the dependants whether a death is attributable or non-attributable.

I hope that the House and the Minister will respond sympathetically to the proposition that whether a death is attributable or non-attributable the consequences, in terms of the benefits paid to the dependants of the deceased, should be precisely the same.

The pension received by the dependants of Squadron Leader Nelson is based not upon his flying pay—that is to say his total remuneration—but upon his basic pay. Why should that be? If his income included flying pay in recognition of the difficult and demanding tasks that he had to perform, why should not his pension similarly reflect that?

Mrs. Nelson's concern is not for herself but for others. She drew my attention in particular to the position of non-commissioned airmen flying search and rescue operations. If the benefits for Mrs. Nelson and her family are modest, how much less advantageous will be the benefits for the dependants of non-commissioned airmen who may perish?

I hope that the Minister will undertake to reconsider the question of payments in the case of fatalities—the basis on which such payments are made, the amounts that are paid, and particularly the circumstances in which a death may be regarded as attributable or non-attributable.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North mentioned search and rescue operations. As he said, he and I were both engaged, over a fairly lengthy period, in seeking to persuade the Ministry of Defence that the existing search and rescue facilities available at RAF Leuchars should be retained. It should be put on record once again that the success of that campaign owed much to the fact that the community in and around RAF Leuchars—I do not simply mean within the immediate local government boundaries—was completely behind the campaign to retain search and rescue at RAF Leuchars. All the local authorities whose boundaries are adjacent to RAF Leuchars were extremely supportive. The extent of the support within the community had much to do with the decision that was ultimately made.

As we now know the review of search and rescue resulted in the retention at RAF Leuchars—but, from the autumn of this year, only during daylight hours. We know, because the Minister has told us, however, that operations begun in daylight will continue into darkness. It follows therefore that operational training will be required in the

hours of darkness. I ask the Government yet again—I have already asked this in correspondence—if it is necessary to train for operations in darkness when the operations commence in daylight, should not the facility that is available at RAF Leuchars be a 24-hour facility and not be restricted to the daylight hours as is currently proposed?

The unfortunate and unhappy tragedy at Lockerbie has already been referred to. It is a fact that a search and rescue helicopter from RAF Leuchars was summoned in the hours of darkness to fly to Edinburgh to pick up and transport a medical team to Lockerbie to give such assistance as might be appropriate. It is also a fact that the accident involving Squadron Leader Nelson occurred at or about ten past four in the afternoon of 9 January and that the helicopter was scrambled at or about that time. It may or may not have been in darkness, but darkness must have been close at that time on 9 January. When that operation commenced, it must have been clear that it could not be completed in daylight. It was a fortunate operation in that, while Squadron Leader Nelson could not be recovered alive, the navigator of the aircraft was.

Some of us are left with the distinct impression that the redeployment of the search and rescue facilities has more to do with financial considerations than with effective and continuing cover. The Minister still has an opportunity to recant. Confessed sinners are always welcome to return to the bosom of the family. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North pointed out, the contribution made in public relations terms by the operations conducted at RAF Leuchars is absolutely enormous—indeed, it is incalculable. I am referring not only to Fife, North-East but to the whole area in which the aircraft operate. I hope that not only will there be a commitment to maintain the search and rescue facility and that after this autumn it will not be restricted to daylight hours only, but that the nature of the equipment with which the facility is provided will be kept constantly under review so that the brave pilots, navigators and winchmen who operate it will have the best possible and most up-to-date equipment available.

I should like to thank the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, who is not in his place at present—doubtless for entirely understandable reasons—for his decision to allow a further noise survey in my constituency this spring to meet the concerns of a number of residents of the St. Michaels area. He has done so without prejudice to a further survey that will be carried out after the arrival of the Phantom squadrons next year. I hope that he will ensure that the testing sites will be selected not only in consultation with the environmental health department of the North-East Fife district council, but with some of the residents.

The issues on which I have concentrated thus far are more than parochial—they have a degree of general application, as well as constituency interest. However, I turn now to a matter of possibly broader interest—nuclear modernisation. We know that within the NATO Alliance there is a considerable debate about the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons, and especially about the replacement of Lance. Such modernisation has significance for the Royal Air Force because the replacement of the free-fall nuclear bomb, which is currently carried by the Tornado and Buccaneer aircraft, is under consideration.

There has been some suggestion that the Government have already reached a decision to purchase the SRAM 2 air launch missile to be armed with a new British-designed warhead and to be carried by Tornado and ultimately by the European fighter aircraft. It is incumbent on all of us —of whatever party—to ask ourselves whether it is justifiable at the moment to proceed with the course upon which the Government appear to have decided to embark.

I ask that question because the seventh report of the Select Committee on Defence, which was ordered to be printed on 28 June 1988, concluded in paragraph 3.28:

"We think it likely, however, that decisions on a stand-off missile will be taken in conjunction with decisions on the other elements of the NATO modernisation package".

Although that conclusion is somewhat Delphic, I associate myself with it because, as I interpret it, if decisions are being taken in relation to other elements of the NATO modernisation package to the effect that it is not necessary to proceed apace with modernisation, decisions of a like nature should be taken on the stand-off missile.

We know that the West German position is increasingly being recognised in NATO and understood both on this side of the Atlantic and the other. We also know—because the Minister of State for the Armed Forces told the House on 10 January 1989 at column 677 of *Hansard*—that our present free-fall bomb will be effective until the end of the century.

We also know that events are moving with great speed in relation to disarmament. The opening discussions in Vienna this week have been interpreted by *The Daily Telegraph* today in a leader as demonstrating that:

"Although much hard bargaining clearly lies ahead, it is hard not to agree that a quantum leap has taken place in Soviet Strategic thinking."

In the light of those favourably changing circumstances, we must ask ourselves why we should embark on the modernisation of a particular element of our nuclear capability in that atmosphere. We must also ask ourselves whether the United Kingdom needs to possess a full range of all nuclear options itself. Is it not the case that the range of the stand-off missile, plus the range of the aircraft that will carry it, is similar to the range of weapons eliminated by the INF treaty? Are we not circumventing the terms of that treaty?

Mention of the European fighter aircraft brings me to the issue of the radar contract for that aircraft, which has already been referred to. Page 24 of the fifth report of the Select Committee on Defence noted that the radar was one of the most important elements of the European fighter aircraft project and one upon which the whole success of the project could depend.

It is clear from some of the speeches that have been made this evening that the delay in placing the contract is causing apprehension to hon. Members of all parties, not least because the development of a radar system necessarily requires a long lead-in time. It appears—I use that phrase because those who are not directly involved can never know the full story—that the United Kingdom's share of the development work will be the same whether the ECR90 or the MSD 2000 is chosen. I confess to a national if not a nationalist bias in favour of the ECR90 because of its location in Edinburgh and because Ferranti is apparently taking the leading part in the project.

The Secretary of State had recently been reported as being in favour of the ECR90. If he is satisfied that it meets the necessary technical criteria, I urge him to press hard for it. It is easy to argue that to have it is the only way of ensuring a continuing European radar technology.

Finally, I turn to the issue of low flying. As a Member of Parliament for a constituency that contains an RAF

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base, I accept that low flying is necessary. I do not believe that in the prevailing climate of concern about low flying the Royal Air Force is likely to institute a deliberate or provocative programme of low flying, not least because of the keen interest that the public is taking in the topic and because of the political repercussions.

At the presentation by the Royal Air Force team to which the hon. Member for Tayside, North referred, those of us who attended were given some literature. In a booklet, which curiously does not have an obvious title, there is an article entitled "Low Flying—Case for the Defence." There is no doubt that it makes a persuasive case, but notwithstanding that case great public concern remains. Hon. Members still receive many complaints from members of the public. They cannot all be unfounded and regarded as unreasonable.

The civilian air accident at Lockerbie showed in a stark and possibly alarming way the consequences that may occur in an accident involving an aircraft. I hope that Ministers will accept that there is a duty to ensure that public confidence is maintained.

I hope that the Minister will answer my questions this evening, or at a later stage. I do not expect detailed answers, but these questions will give us a useful point of focus for our consideration of this topic in the debate.

Can the Minister tell us how often in recent years Royal Air Force police have discovered breaches of low-flying regulations? How many Royal Air Force police are engaged in surveillance and what is the allocation of resources for this purpose? What are the consequences for those found to have breached the regulations?

I welcome the deployment of the Skyguard radar system to monitor low flying. I hope that the Minister will tell us precisely when it will be fully operational.

As almost all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have acknowledged, the Royal Air Force plays a difficult and frequently dangerous role in the defence of the United Kingdom and in the fulfilment of our obligations under NATO. There is little doubt that it deserves the support of us all. The debate may highlight differing views of how that role should be fulfilled, but it should also underline that for the most part the House is grateful to the brave men and women who serve in the Royal Air Force. The House salutes them and wishes them well.

7.39 pm

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) mentioned search and rescue operations carried out by the RAF. Although I wish to endorse all that he said about them, I shall direct the attention of the Minister to the problem of the aging Wessex helicopters. Before I do so, I put on record the admiration of my constituency for the excellent search and rescue work of the privatised service operated by Bristow. There were many critics of the decision of the Fleet Air Arm to move out of Lee-on-Solent and to redeploy at Portland. Many had misgivings about the efficiency of such a service being operated by free enterprise.

In one rescue last summer, the winch man had broken a limb and was in agony but nevertheless carried on to rescue a stricken yachtsman before telling the pilot of the helicopter that he was badly injured. I am sure, from that case, that the House will realise that the service is being conducted in the highest traditions of search and rescue. Indeed, my local inshore rescue services all tell me that because of the improved technical capability of that service they have a more efficient search and rescue service than was possible with the aging Wessex helicopters.

There have been two examples recently of rescues where the Wessex could not have reached ships and where the Sea King has been deployed. On 22 February, the Secil Angola was in distress 350 milies west of Isla. That was well outside the range of the Wessex helicopter. The Sea King was deployed. On 27 February, in heavy seas, 200 miles off Land's End, a Russian factory ship, the Salantay, had an injured crewman. A helicopter was deployed from RAF Brawdy, as on the previous occasion, to take the injured seaman to hospital in Truro. Those sorties could not have been achieved by a Wessex helicopter. Although more than half the search and rescue helicopters are Sikorsky S 61s or Sea Kings, more than 40 per cent. continue to be Wessex helicopters.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** While I understand the hon. Gentleman's preference for an aircraft other than the Wessex in the circumstances that he has outlined, is he aware that Mr. Hamish McInnes of Glencoe, who is probably responsible for more mountain rescues than anyone else in the United Kingdom, is of the view that the Wessex is to be preferred for certain operations in the mountains, because of its greater manoeuvrability?

**Mr. Field:** I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman, as I was not aware of that fact. But I am aware of some technical capabilities of the Sea King, to which I shall be alluding.

Although I do not tend to be technically proficient with regard to helicopters, I know that some of those arguments were considered when the Bristow contract was in the offing for the replacement of the Lee-on-Solent service, in my constituency. The Solent is the busiest stretch of water, and has more problems with pleasure craft in distress than anywhere in the European Community. There have been no operational difficulties. I know that a much larger helicopter has taken over from the Wessex in mountain rescue. That was probably more manoeuvrable for getting near cliffs and working under them. But that problem has not arisen with the Bristow service in the Solent area.

Since the end of the war the responsibility for meeting the United Kingdom's commitment for civil search and rescue has rested variously with the Ministries of Transport, Civil Aviation, Trade, and Trade and Industry, and is now with the Department of Transport. The RAF is responsible for the provision of fixed-wing aircraft, while rotary-winged aircraft are provided by the RAF, the Royal Navy and Her Majesty's Coastguard. These helicopters operate from 12 bases around the United Kingdom. Search and rescue authorities can also rely on support from three helicopters maintained by oil companies on the North sea oilfields, and Norwegian and Belgian Sea Kings, as well as the French navy's Super-Freloms, the Irish army air corps search and rescue helicopters and the United States Air Force's long range HH-55C helicopters, operated from Woodbridge in Suffolk. These helicopters provide support for incidents in the North sea, the strait of Dover and to a lesser extent the south-western approaches to the English channel and the

Irish sea. There is no equivalent support in the north-western approaches and waters of north-west Scotland or in the central English channel.

The report of the civil rescue helicopter coverage working group, which was presented to the United Kingdom search and rescue committee on 1 December 1986, highlighted those areas of helicopter shortfall. Those have been largely overcome by redeployment of helicopters. However, other weaknesses include the reduced capability of the Wessex at night or in low visibility. In addition to this shortcoming, the aging Wessex has other deficiencies when compared with the Sea King, in a lack of automatic flying control systems that are capable of providing an automatic let-down, to bring the aircraft to hover at a safe height. This practice could be dangerous because of variable weather. The Sea King has a fully automatic let-down capability that can put the aircraft to hover safely over a known point without any visual reference by the pilot.

The Wessex has no radar and must rely on another aircraft to detect targets, whereas the Sea King can act autonomously. The endurance of the Wessex is less than half that of the Sea King. The Wessex hull is not designed for water landings, whereas the Sea King has a hull-type lower fuselage. The Sea King could take on board twice as many survivors as the Wessex, and the Wessex is more vulnerable than the Sea King to effects of icing. About 12 Wessex helicopters are currently associated with the search and rescue wing. In view of their age and shortcomings, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to look at their replacement as soon as possible.

In my opening remarks, I mentioned the private search and rescue service operating in my constituency. I hope that nothing that I have said will detract from the bravery and courage of the men who operate our search and rescue service in the RAF. They fly in some of the most arduous and difficult conditions. Both rescues that I mentioned were at the limits of the helicopters' endurance. They took considerable determination and skill, particularly when the men knew that they had just minutes to return before running out of fuel. Having flown to the northernmost part of the Brent Delta oilfield in a helicopter in a full gale, I know just how unpleasant the experience can be.

I conclude my first contribution to an RAF debate by mentioning an organisation which, although perhaps not specifically under ministerial control or in the jurisdiction of my hon. Friend, does sterling work on behalf of those who have served our country well. I refer to the Royal Air Force Association. As a councillor, I had the pleasure and the privilege of representing Sussex down. I was delighted that, every year, the Dutch air force bombed it with Gouda cheese, in commemoration of the Battle of Britain and getting RAF pilots back to this country.

I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that we have a most active association branch in the Isle of Wight. We have many historical connections with the RAF, and that is a great pleasure to me. I wrote to the Minister's predecessor, asking whether we could have one of the defunct aircraft, which stand outside RAF establishments in this country and are gradually being withdrawn, for display on the Isle of Wight. I hope that, in due course, he will be able to accede to our request.

7.42 pm

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) about nuclear weapons deployment. He made the important point that the justification that is traditionally used, certainly by the Prime Minister and other Ministers, that by retaining nuclear weapons we would remain at the international arms negotiation table is hollow. I wholeheartedly accept what he said.

If I am not mistaken, it is now about 26 or 27 years since Britain sat in on international arms negotiations on the deployment of, at that time, atomic weapons. Those negotiations led to the test ban treaty of 1961. Since that time, we have never been involved in negotiations on nuclear weapons. We were not even present at Reykjavik. It was only when former President Reagan decided to take on himself responsibility, in effect, to negotiate away the commitment of western Europe and America to the Trident programme that the Prime Minister hurried to Washington to rectify the position and make her representations. That can never be a justification.

I also share my right hon. Friend's view that the Chernobyl incident has transformed western public opinion on the deployment of nuclear weapons. I would go further and I believe that there is much evidence to prove my case. Within the Labour electorate there may be those who feel strongly about the need to retain nuclear weapons and yet still retain their commitment to the Labour party at election times, but there is a strong unilateralist streak within Conservative Britain. Many people—I am sure that it is millions—who vote not Labour but Conservative have severe reservations about Britain being a nuclear weapons power. They may not express that view publicly, but they certainly express it privately. Many people whom I know socially and who are not of my political persuasion often say that to me. My view is that it would be a grave mistake for my party to change its position on nuclear weapons, if only because of my belief that, in Conservative Britain, there is strong support for the position that the Labour party has historically taken.

I now refer more specifically to matters relating to the RAF procurement and the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) about Marconi. Through my membership of the Public Accounts Committee over the past two and a half or three years, I have been most persistent in pressing for investigations to be made by Ministry of Defence police, and certainly by the National Audit Office, into aspects of Marconi's activities relating to RAF, naval and Army procurement. I have tabled innumerable motions drawing attention to leaks that I have received from former and, surprisingly, present employees of Marconi about irregularities in the way that that company handles defence contracts. Over that time, I have tabled innumerable questions, both written and oral, to the Under-Secretary of State about fraud in that company. I know that I cannot breach our Standing Orders by discussing sub judice matters, but the four persons who were arrested last week were but the tip of the iceberg in that company. There will inevitably be more arrests. Other contracts are under investigation by Ministry of Defence police, and other authorities will inevitably become involved. On several occasions, I have drawn the attention of the National Audit Office to irregularities in other contracts, over and above those

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which were referred to in the details of prosecution, as set out in the statement made by the authorities last week. Other prosecutions are utterly inevitable.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** On reflection, the hon. Gentleman will realise that he should be talking about alleged irregularities and alleged fraud.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The hon. Gentleman may make that statement about those persons who have been charged. It would be only for the courts to decide whether irregularities have taken place in those cases. I am saying what the hon. Gentleman knows to be true, which is that there are irregularities and there have been irregularities in aspects of Marconi's activities. We are not able to say whether those matters have yet resulted in persons being arrested or brought before the courts.

**Mr. Rogers:** The Minister is absolutely right to say that they are alleged frauds and irregularities. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend will remember that, when we both were members of the Public Accounts Committee, it found that frauds and irregularities were going on, and they were specifically referred to. They were not alleged; they were picked up by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I cannot quite go down the road that my hon. Friend takes, though he is absolutely right. In the appendices to our most recent report on procurement, we drew the attention of the House of Commons and those who read our reports to 21 cases detailing allegations of fraud and, indeed, of company prosecutions that have taken place, only four of which were identified in our report and which have been the subject of Ministry of Defence police or National Audit Office investigations.

One of those items listed in our Public Accounts Committee report was the Dowty Rotol case. Dowty Rotol committed a fraud. Everyone who knows the detail of that case knows that it happened. Mr. Burgess Cooper, the whistleblower, has never been recompensed. The company paid back £400,000 to the Ministry of Defence. That fact is published in the appendices of our last report on defence procurement. Yet the authorities have chosen not to bring an action against that company.

When Ministers finally decided to release that information to me—the Attorney-General informed me in a written reply—I felt so angry about it that I contemplated going outside the House and libelling the company so that it would bring a legal action against me and therefore enable me to test my case in the courts. But I was not given the opportunity to do so as it might have endangered the financial position of whatever medium I chose to publish my remarks. I repeat that Dowty Rotol committed a fraud and should be prosecuted. Everybody who works in the factory in Cheltenham knows it. It is talked about on the shop floor. I will not rest until that company is brought before the courts.

I want to deal in greater depth with Britain's low-flying programme. I have never been against low flying despite my persistent attacks on the Royal Air Force, accusing it of all sorts of irresponsible activities in this regard. I accept the need for a low-flying programme. I have always accepted the need for a greater part of the programme to take place in the United Kingdom. I have always accepted that there would be low-flying training over my constituency, over Keswick and my own home, where it currently takes place. If ever there was a witness to irregularities in low flying, it is I, when I stand in my garden and watch these people breaking the regulations. When I had a witness to it some 12 or 18 months ago—my secretary—and I reported it to the MOD, I had the usual officer who attends. He gives one the bumf and the glossies that one has grown to expect and nothing happens because these matters are all covered over.

The Minister may suggest that these people are disciplined, but when I tabled a question about that some 18 months ago I found that of thousands of cases of alleged irregularity—pilots who had breached RAF flying regulations—only a handful of people had been disciplined. There may have been one prosecution. I cannot quite remember the figure, but I recall that the very few who were disciplined received a slap on the back of the hand, were told not to do it again and that was the end of the matter.

Most RAF pilots act responsibly in the air. They are doing their job and I accept that they have responsibilities placed on them which they invariably carry out properly. What I do not like is when they tell lies, as they did about the incident outside Keswick last year. Three separate persons, approximately a quarter of a mile apart, witnessed the same incident when two RAF Tornados were flying at right angles to each other and took evasive action. Two of those persons rang me within hours at my office in Keswick and I located and interviewed the third. They all submitted statements. They were in no way connected: they did not even know each other. Yet when I put the matter to a Minister in an attempt to secure an inquiry to find out what happened—if those planes had met, there would have been a major disaster over the town of Keswick with the loss of hundreds of lives—and when it was then put to the authorities I was informed that it had not been reported. We cannot go on like that. They told lies—and those pilots know exactly what I am talking about. They know what happened on that day. The problem is that Ministers believe pilots, not witnesses. In those circumstances, we will never get to the truth.

Many incidents have been reported to me. My office has become a clearing house for people who write to me by the hundred from all over the country, objecting to what is happening in their area. I invariably tell them to write to their own Members of Parliament and ask them to make representations to the Ministry and to Ministers. I hope that most of them do, but I know that before I even advise them to do so that they will get the same old glossies back, justifying the programme and paying no attention to the complaints.

The effect of all this shows up in the statistics. When we ask about the number of people who have made complaints, we find that in certain conditions the number will decrease because if people realise that it is futile to complain they will not report incidents. In my constituency, people have concluded that nothing will happen if they report an incident. Visitors come in the tourist season to the Lake District. They ring my home and speak in anger to my wife about incidents that they have witnessed. My wife has to advise them to report the incidents to their own Member of Parliament or to the MOD. Very often they write later and say that it is a waste of time to report incidents because it means only that some

man will come out from an airbase to interview them and nothing more will happen. People are beginning to lose faith. They feel that complaints are not properly addressed by those who are in a position to deal with them.

For fear that there are those who may think that the Labour party equivocates on these matters and may want to undermine the low-flying programme, I make it clear that I have assurances, and I know, that the next Labour Government will maintain a proper programme, but it will address the real needs of the nation, not the exaggerated requirements of pilots who demand to go in the air with the threat that if they are not given the opportunity to do so they will go to the civil airline companies who are always seeking pilots.

Last year, the whole matter of low-flying took a turn of which many people—certainly those who write to their Member of Parliament—are unaware. One of the things that has struck me, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and as I have taken a greater interest in low flying, is that while Ministers have been quick after a crash to go on television and refer to the loss of pilot lives, they have never been willing to address the cost to the Exchequer of the loss of a military aircraft. We are not talking about tens of thousands of pounds or even a few millions. When a Tornado goes down we are talking about anything between £16 million and £21 million, depending on how well equipped the aircraft is.

I made representations to the National Audit Office for an inquiry into the cost-effectiveness of the low-flying programme on the basis of information given to me by researchers outside the House which showed that over a period of years we have lost not a few dozen aircraft but hundreds. Much of that information had not come into the public domain. The research evidence that I provided to the National Audit Office subsequently formed the basis on which the NAO decided to carry out an inquiry. The inquiry, announced last year, is still going on. I look forward to the report from that office setting out its views on the programme.

We want to know whether economies can be made, whether the programme is too large and whether it can be done more cheaply with simulators. The public want answers to many questions and they need to know, because it is their money that is being spent. Every time an aircraft goes down it costs the Exchequer money.

In addition to the loss of pilot lives, every time a Tornado drops out of the sky it costs every man, woman and child in Britain 40p. Very high and increasing losses over the last 10 years resulting from low flying have at last become the subject of a full-scale inquiry and investigation by the National Audit Office.

The cost of the losses is staggering. In 10 years in excess of £1,000 million worth of equipment has been lost. Perhaps the Minister will question my figures; I would welcome an intervention. That £1,000 million is the equivalent of £20 per man, woman and child in Britain over the last 10 years.

Within just a 25-mile radius of my home in the Lake District, over £60 million worth of equipment has been lost in the last 19 months. That is a staggering figure. Judging from the response of Ministers, it seems that they are most embarrassed.

**Mr. Rogers:** I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting the matter. I am not sure whether he knows it, but at the end of December *Jane's Defence Weekly* carried a small article which said:

"The cost of air crashes to NATO is illustrated by recent UK Ministry of Defence orders, for 41 additional Tornados to cover Royal Air Force attrition losses. The cost of the purchase totalled £740 million, the equivalent of five new type 23 frigates."

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** That intervention will indicate to those who follow our proceedings the amount of taxpayers' money that is being squandered on the present programme.

There was an interesting article in the RAF air safety journal *Air Clues* last September. I want to read it because in many ways it addresses the point that was made by the Minister. It said:

"On too many occasions recently, aircraft have been lost due to some sort of distraction or loss of concentration near the ground. More importantly, these accidents cause tragic losses of life because it appears the crews were unaware of their predicament".

That suggests to me that pilot error near the ground has been much responsible for the losses that have been experienced by the RAF recently. I understand that that comment was made by a journalist who had interviewed a number of pilots, and that he was reflecting their views.

We hear a lot from the MOD about spreading the load of low flying by opening up new areas for training. The Minister alluded to that when he talked about how the programme was being dispersed throughout the United Kingdom to reduce concentration on areas such as mine. However, in December 1987, again in *Air Clues*, the head of RAF public relations, who, I presume, is within the precincts of the House tonight, wrote:

"We make great play of the fact that low flying is spread evenly throughout all the available air space in the country. But I really wonder if that is so in practice. I live in Area 12 and it does not take long for the onlooker to realise that there are well trodden paths in the skies above Northumberland."

There the RAF public relations head is telling us that he doubts what the Minister is saying at the Dispatch Box. His experience may be no different from mine. It seems that there are areas of heavy concentration. It might only derive from the fact that while the Minister was talking about a programme of dispersal, at the same time he was doubling the number of sorties. In answers to questions the former Minister, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), admitted that the programme had doubled since 1979. From memory, I think it went up from 75,000 to 160,000 sorties a year. In my language that means that the programme doubled. I understand that that is justified because of the need to prepare a greater number of pilots to use Tornados. One can never justify a dispersal policy if, at the same time, the number of sorties is doubled, especially when the chief RAF public relations officer is making statements such as I have read out.

Let us examine the figures. Despite the fact that I have computer runs a couple of metres long detailing every reported accident since 1980, I believe that many accidents are not reported. With the help of researchers outside the House I have submitted to the National Audit Office information about unreported accidents. All major accidents to aircraft of the three services are supposed to be listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" each year. The official definition of a major accident to a military aircraft is that

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"the damage is not repairable on site. The aircraft must be removed to an established depot or civilian repair organisation"

or

"the aircraft is damaged beyond repair or is missing, or, in accordance with current Ministry of Defence policy, is not worth repairing."—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 39.]

I have details of 31 accidents since 1980 that were not listed in the relevant edition of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", despite evidence that they were not repairable on site and-or were scrapped, or were removed to repair depots or returned to the manufacturers.

What is the current policy of the Ministry of Defence on defining what level of damage is not worth repairing? I give two examples. An RAF Lightning, which crashed on 27 March 1981, took three years to rebuild; a Tornado which crashed on 8 November 1983 was under repair at RAF Honington for four years before it was sent back to the manufacturers. How much did those repairs cost? What level of damage does the MOD regard as uneconomic to repair? An aircraft might cost £5 million, £10 million or £12 million to repair. Who knows what the costs are?

What about accidents to MOD Procurement Executive aircraft? They are not listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". The MOD always says that the RAF accident rate is falling but it refuses to give an accident rate for low flying, saying that it cannot be calculated. In reply to a written question the Minister said:

"Time spent at low level is not recorded precisely: it is not, therefore, possible to state the major accident rate for fast jets operating at low level."—[*Official Report*, 22 December 1988; Vol. 144, c. 372.]

On 26 January 1989 the Minister said that the average duration of a low-flying sortie in the United Kingdom—which the MOD has said is 42 minutes—was calculated from statistics on the use of the low flying system. In other words, the Ministry knows how long aircraft fly in the low flying system. If it can calculate an average, it stands to reason that it must know the total number of hours spent at low level; how else are averages calculated? Why, then, can the Ministry not publish an accident rate?

I want to go through the list of aircraft accidents that have not been reported in the annual defence estimates. On 17 April 1980 an RAF Bulldog was involved in a landing accident in Northern Ireland and it went back to the manufacturers for repair. On 18 August 1980 an RAF Hunter was damaged at Laarbruch in the Federal Republic of Germany. It was later written off. On 13 October 1980 a Navy Sea King helicopter was ditched off Falmouth. It was rebuilt at Culdrose. In October 1981 an RAF Buccaneer was damaged and was repaired at St. Athan. In November 1981 an RAF Buccaneer was damaged at Nevada in the United States of America. It was taken back to the United Kingdom and repairs took six months. On 13 November 1981 an RAF Vulcan was damaged at Goose Bay in Canada and was not repaired. On 30 November an RAF Canberra was damaged on landing at Bedford and it was not repaired. On 8 March 1982 an RAF Buccaneer made an emergency landing at Hopsten in the Federal Republic of Germany after an in flight fire. It was never flown again. In 1982 another RAF Bulldog was taken to RAF St. Athan for repair after a heavy landing in the east midlands. On 19 August 1982 a Navy Hunter was taken to Abingdon for repair after a landing accident at Yeovilton. On 24 October 1982 an RAF Phantom was damaged on landing at Port Stanley, but was shipped back to the RAF St. Athan for repair.

Why were those accidents not published in the annual defence estimates? The Minister has not come to the Dispatch Box with an explanation, so I shall continue my list.

Those accidents cost the taxpayers million of pounds. All we are trying to discover is why the public are not told about what has happened. On 18 January 1983 an Army Scout crashed in Hong Kong. It was repaired by a civilian repair depot. On 20 June 1983 a Navy Sea King was rebuilt at Culdrose after ditching near Portland. On 8 November 1983 an RAF Tornado was damaged on landing at Honington. It was under repair there for nearly four years and then returned to the manufacturers. On 29 February 1984 a Navy Sea King hit wires near Bardufoss in Norway. It was taken back to the United Kingdom for a two-year rebuild. On 5 July 1984 an RAF Jet Provost was damaged on landing at Leeming, but it was not repaired. On 14 September 1984 an RAF Jaguar—an expensive plane costing, I believe, between £12 million and £15 million—hit a tower while low flying. It made an emergency landing at Bedford and was taken from there by road to Shawbury for storage. It has not flown since. Why is that not in the annual defence estimates?

On 26 September 1984 a Navy Sea King was ditched off Falmouth and rebuilt at Fleetlands. In November 1984 an RAF Puma was in an accident at Gutersloh in the Federal Republic of Germany. It was rebuilt by the manufacturers. In July 1985 an RAF Phantom was withdrawn from use after a landing accident at Leuchars. On 14 October 1985 a Navy Sea King ditched off Portugal. It was rebuilt at Fleetlands. On 6 December 1985 an RAF Jet Provost was damaged on landing at Dishforth, but was not repaired. On 2 April 1986 an RAF Harrier was damaged on landing at Wittering and it was not repaired. I presume that it was written off. Those aircraft were paid for with taxpayers' money, so surely we are entitled to know what has happened to them. In order to evaluate the value of the low-flying programme in the United Kingdom the public should be aware of the number of air losses.

On 10 May 1986 a Navy Sea Harrier was damaged on landing in Florida. It was under repair at Yeovilton for a year and was then sent to St. Athan. On 15 July 1986 an RAF Harrier was damaged at Bergenhohne in the Federal Republic of Germany and went to Laarbruch for repair. In the autumn of 1986 a Navy Sea King helicopter was damaged on HMS Illustrious and it went to Fleetlands for repair. On 30 November 1986 a Navy Sea King had a fatal low-level crash in Oman. On 14 April 1987 an RAF Tornado—we are getting into big money now, it costs £16 million to £20 million—was damaged on landing at Wildenrath. After five months it was removed by road for repair. On 8 September 1987 an RAF Phantom was withdrawn from use after a landing accident. In late 1987 another RAF Bulldog went to St. Athan by road for repair after being overstressed during aerobatics. On 11 November 1987 an RAF Harrier was involved in a landing accident at Wittering and was not repaired.

Those are but some of the aircraft that we have been able to identify as being involved in accidents. They have cost the British taxpayer a lot of money but they have not appeared in the annual defence estimates. The public are entitled to know annually, first, how much money has been spent on repairing aircraft, secondly, what aircraft have

been written off, and, thirdly, the total number of aircraft losses. We do not want to know of just the losses of aircraft in the United Kingdom but also those that have occurred abroad. I have received some interesting answers over the years that show that the Department always wants to narrow the information that it makes available on the number of admitted aircraft losses.

Is the programme really worth it? I intervened during the Minister's speech to refer to a particular Soviet missile system. There is now a whole new dimension to the low-flying debate that so far has not been considered. The rationale behind the low-flying programme is that it will teach pilots to fly fast and low, below enemy radar, deep into hostile territory to reach designated targets or stand-off launch sites. I understand that radical new developments in Soviet air defences seriously call into question whether they will be able to carry out that function effectively or at all.

I was recently tipped off by a leading defence analyst about the most recent deployment of a radically improved and highly sophisticated Soviet surface-to-air missile—the SA-10B that the Minister was unaware of when I intervened. I accept that the Minister is new to the job. I am sure that he is tackling his responsibility with great vigour and learning very fast, so perhaps it was unfair of me to draw attention to that fact.

That missile has been codenamed by NATO "Grumble". Perhaps now the Minister has heard of it. I was told that it is a mobile truck-launched system with its own co-located radar that operates as part of its highly sophisticated guidance system. I was informed that it was capable of destroying fast aircraft flying as low as 100 ft at a range of up to 60 miles. Further, being a mobile system, it is extremely difficult to detect and counter.

Recently I asked for confirmation of that system from the Ministry of Defence—admittedly before the Minister's time—because of the obvious and serious implications for the viability of the present low-flying programme. The Minister must have understood the implications because his reply was uncharacteristically detailed. In confirming the missile's deployment, he said:

"the SA-10B is not capable of tracking aircraft flying at a height of 100 feet for up to 60 miles."

When we discuss these matters we are at the heart of the debate on the low-flying programme.

**Mr. Mans:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that missile only has a limited head-on capability and has the sort of range that he has mentioned only when there is no terrain in between? That missile's radar actually has a poor response over rough terrain. In other words, a very large ground return is associated with it. On that basis, will the hon. Gentleman accept that low flying still has value despite the deployment of this system?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The hon. Gentleman's intervention was based on what he believes to be the capabilities of the Soviet system. His views are at variance with those of others who have studied these matters very closely—as, indeed, has the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Mans:** It has not a head-on capability. The hon. Gentleman should read what he has there.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of those who have discussed those matters with me and we shall deal with them directly. It is not for me to measure the head-on capability or necessarily to accept the comments made by the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). I will find out for him. However, everything that I have been told leads me to believe that that missile is quite capable of knocking out low-flying aircraft. It is significant that the hon. Member for Wyre intervened. The missile system has obviously been drawn to his attention and I am surprised that he has not wanted to draw it to the attention of the House.

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): Is my hon. Friend surprised to note that this is one of the few occasions when we have heard the inadequacies of a Soviet missile system described by Conservative Members?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** My hon. Friend's intervention is quite interesting. I am sure that it will have registered in the minds of those who read our proceedings.

**Mr. Michael Colvin** (Romsey and Waterside): Can the hon. Gentleman clarify this for us? Is this a heat-seeking missile or is it laser-aimed?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I understand that it is a heat-seeking missile—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may want to defend the low-flying programme and destroy the essence of my case in debate. However, the facts are obvious and those who assess these matters have made a different evaluation of the worth of this system from that of Conservative Members. I understand why Conservative Members want to defend the low-flying programme by trying to devalue this missile system.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I apologise for not being in the Chamber throughout the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I was having a bite to eat. Does he understand that the objective of flying low and fast is to avoid being hit by less sophisticated missiles than the one he is talking about? If one ceases to fly low and fast, one becomes susceptible to other equipment and the chances of survival become very slim.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I did not quite follow the hon. Gentleman's logic. I have been told that this missile will track and destroy aircraft flying at low levels to penetrate Soviet territory. Until it is proven otherwise, I accept that that is the case.

Confirming the missile's deployment, the Minister told me that the SA-10B is not capable of tracking aircraft flying at a height of 100 ft for up to 60 miles. In other words, he accepted that it was capable of tracking low-flying aircraft.

The radius of the curvature of the earth limits the range at which a target can be seen. The Minister explained that the system had a maximum, and then only a theoretical, range of between only 20 and 27 miles. That is an admission which answers many of the interventions today.

I took up this crucial point with an expert in air defence systems from "Jane's Soviet Intelligence Review" who told me that the Minister's reply was entirely misleading. He told me that it was well known to all with any knowledge of air defence systems that surface-to-air missile batteries are designed to operate in an air defence corridor or loop together with other mutually dependent radar systems and missile batteries. We cannot judge a missile battery's effectiveness by trying to assess its stand-alone fighting capability. That would be rather like trying to judge NATO's defensive capability by looking at the effectiveness of each individual soldier fighting alone against a

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massed Warsaw pact invasion force. The missile battery's own co-located radar is used together with other independent, but often more sophisticated, radar systems to direct the missile to the projected area of the incoming low-flying aircraft. The missile then flies higher than the target's estimated altitude and uses its formidable on-board look-down capability to pinpoint the target. It then attacks using its heat-seeking devices to lock on to and destroy the target.

It is thought that Grumble would be effective even against cruise missiles and would, therefore, have much less difficulty against larger and slower manned aircraft. I was informed, entirely contrary to what has been suggested by the Minister, that the missile is considered by air defence experts—and I assume hon. Members who have intervened during my speech consider themselves to be experts—to be highly sophisticated. It is thought to be very effective against low-flying aircraft approaching at a height of 100 ft and at a range of up to 60 miles.

I cannot understand the reasons for the Minister's elusive responses. His responses were either naive or symptomatic of the Government's ludicrous policy towards matters of national security. While I appreciate that it is the Minister's duty to safeguard military intelligence, it may be sensible to remind him that Soviet intelligence is already aware of the capability of its own missiles. It also knows that the West is aware of that capability, presumably because information is available in any good bookshop.

The Government should be far more forthcoming about information with regard to the SA-10B missile system. I hope that the Minister will take some soundings on this matter. If he feels as convinced as some defence experts about this matter, he may want to consider the validity of the low-flying programme. In those circumstances he might consider that the programme should be cut quite drastically and the precious defence resources should be allocated to other areas of the defence budget.

The Government are also misleading us about accident rates. Despite the claims that the RAF accident record is second to none, international comparisons do not bear that out. The United States air force, which counts any accident as major if it involves loss of the aircraft, damage costing more than $500,000 to repair or a fatality—a definition at least as wide as that used by the RAF—had rates consistently less than 0·2 per 10,000 flying hours between 1983 and 1987. By comparison, the RAF had accident rates up to twice as high. Its rates only declined to less than 0·3 per 10,000 flying hours in 1987.

Comparisons of similar aircraft types in different air forces do not reflect well on the RAF. In the United States air force the F16 had a major accident rate of 0·44 per 10,000 flying hours in 1986. The Tornado in West German service had a major accident rate of about 0·5 per 10,000 flying hours. Those figures are taken from the aviation newsletter "Milavnews" of which I am sure the Minister is aware. In comparison, RAF Tornados had a major accident rate of 0·7 per 10,000 flying hours and that figure was revealed in a written answer to me on 22 December 1988. Why is our major accident rate so much higher?

With regard to airmisses, now that the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of Transport have a policy of publishing airmiss reports involving commercial aircraft, the public can gain some idea of the nature of the problem and how it is dealt with. Why will the MOD not publish military airmiss reports?

In a written reply to me on 16 February 1989, the Minister said that he would not publish any other airmiss reports, to preserve the confidentiality of the airmiss investigation system. Hon. Members who have listened to my modest contribution will know why these matters must remain confidential. It seems that the more information is published, the more embarrassing the whole matter becomes. That policy does not apply to airmisses involving commercial aircraft, so why does it apply to other types of aircraft? Why does it apply to military aircraft? Why cannot those figures be published? Perhaps the Minister can tell me in his winding-up speech.

The figures given in the written answer on 16 February show that the number of military air missiles involving a definite risk of collision was higher in 1987 than in any previous recorded year since 1979. It also showed that military airmisses accounted for nearly two out of every three airmisses over the United Kingdom and that nearly half of the airmisses involving military aircraft were found to have involved a risk of collision. By contrast, only about 25 per cent. of airmisses involving commercial aircraft were risk-bearing. The total number of military airmisses in 1988—that is, 133—was 20 per cent. higher than in the previous year and higher than in any year since 1982.

The question is how many of those were at low level, such as the incident that took place on the Keswick boundary only last year, which was the subject of my previous comment. How many of the risk-bearing incidents involved civil aircraft, such as the incident that took place at Carlisle airport some year and a half ago when a near miss was reported with a civil aircraft coming in from Heathrow?

I think that Ministers are not being too open about the German experience. An hon. Member endeavoured to prove to the House that the Germans were sympathetic to the whole low-flying programme. That is not my information. The legal position, as I understand it, is determined by article 46 of the 1963 supplementary agreement to the status of forces agreement between West Germany and other NATO members. It establishes a structure for consultation between the allied air forces and the German authorities but leaves the ultimate authority for such matters with SACEUR and NATO bodies. However, it also stipulates that the exercise of the right to conduct training exercises in the air shall be governed by German regulations on the use of airspace. This enables Federal Defence Minister Scholz to claim that the West German Government have the power to authorise exercises under the Air Navigation Act. In practice, the West German Government accept that this is a matter for negotiation with NATO and the individual allies. That sets out the legal framework.

Pending such negotiations, the West German Government took steps last July to reduce low-flying by the Luftwaffe. This was to be done by transferring the particularly noisy F4 Phantom to air defence duties and reducing the total quota of flight training hours allocated to the Luftwaffe. It also called for a NATO decision on transferring some air exercises to Canada or Turkey.

Shortly afterwards there occurred the disaster at Ramstein, where 69 people died as the result of a crash during an aerobatic display. In December, at Remscheid, a United States jet crashed, killing the pilot and five

civilians on the ground. On 13 January a British Tornado crashed and narrowly missed a village school. These successive accidents have brought the issue to a head in Germany and triggered off a public and political outcry. After the Remscheid incident, the Government suspended all low-level flying for three weeks and the NATO allies complied. However, since low-level flying resumed on 3 January this year the matter has acquired a very high political profile.

On 17 January Defence Minister Scholz announced that he would seek a substantial reduction in low-level flying hours in negotiation with NATO. However, he also said that the Government would resist the total ban for which some opposition politicians have called—not I; I have simply called for a reduction down to the level of 1979 in relation to the United Kingdom programme—but would make further efforts to get some training transferred to other countries. The Commander of the United States Air Force in Europe has already said that some United States training might be switched to Morocco, as reported by Associated Press on 5 January 1989. Doctor Scholz also announced that the NATO tactical leadership programme, which involves low-level flying, might be shifted away from Germany, possibly to Belgium, but there has been some confusion about when this decision could be taken.

Judging by reports of the public mood in West Germany, the reaction against low-level flights seems to be based partly on accumulated anger about the noise and nuisance, partly on fear of more serious accidents and partly on the perception that the Soviet threat has significantly diminished, as well as on the long-standing resentment about singularity—the feeling that West Germany is bearing a disproportionate share of the risks involved in defending the West.

West German politicians have adopted a wide range of attitudes regarding the problem. While Ministers have spoken only of the need for a substantial cut in low-level flights, and have asked for such a cut, the defence spokesman for the CDU/CSU parliamentary group—not of my political persuasion, but the German Tories—Mr. Volker Ruhe, has suggested that flights could be cut by half in the next two years. So it seems that I agree with the German Conservative defence spokesman that the programme should be cut in half in the next two years. That was reported in the *Financial Times* of 4 January this year.

Theo Waigel, the chairman of the CSU, has advocated a ban on all flights below 500 ft. That was reported in *Jane's Defence Weekly* on 28 January this year. The chairman of the FDP parliamentary group, Walter Doring, whose party is the junior partner in the governing coalition, has called for an indefinite suspension pending the elaboration of new defence concepts, so here we have the spokesman of a coalition partner in Government demanding an indefinite suspension of the whole low-flying programme in West Germany.

The opposition SPD has produced varied responses. Hans Apel, the former Defence Minister, has called for low-level flights to be reduced to the absolute minimum, while others want a complete ban. Several have implied that the present situation infringes German sovereignty and I have statements from many others in Germany objecting to the low-flying progamme.

I have gone on at length about low flying and I have done so for a reason. My office is now a postbox for nearly every low-flying complaint in the United Kingdom. People write to me from all over the country and I want them to know that we are pressing these matters at Westminster. We are not asking for an end to the programme. In a year we must get hundreds of, if not over 1,000, complaints. Certainly we did last year. I want those people to know that we are listening, that we are pressing the Government and that there are people in other countries who are also subjected to low flying, such as the West Germans; that they are equally concerned, but that it is this Government who refuse to be responsible and flexible and to publish all the information about low-flying losses and other aircraft losses because they are scared that the public will find out about the many hundreds of millions of pounds that are being lost and have been lost over these past years, all at the expense of the taxpayer.

8.38 pm

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): I am very pleased to be called in this debate, even at this late hour. I have a few brief remarks to make. I shall certainly not be going on for quite the length of time that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was on his feet.

This is a very appropriate day for a debate on the Royal Air Force. It is the 40th anniversary of the first flight of the Shackleton, the oldest aircraft in service with the RAF today. I do not know which Government procured that aircraft, but it was in the late 1940s or early 1950s. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Royal Air Force has had, and is still having, value for money from that procurement. I sincerely hope that we shall gain equal value for money from the Shackleton's replacement, the AWACS that we are purchasing from the United States. I want to ask a couple of questions in relation to that purchase and, in the first instance, to the offset agreements.

The offset agreements allow for 130 per cent. of the cost of that aircraft to be offset against contracts in this country. I hope that in his winding-up speech, or perhaps in the future, my hon. Friend will be able to indicate whether the rate at which these offset agreements are coming through is about what it should be in relation to the timetable that was worked out with Boeing.

Another matter about which I should like to have some clarification is the amount of technology transfer that is taking place in relation to this project. I have become aware that the Americans, Boeing and those who produced the radar for the aircraft may have not been as forthcoming as they might have been in giving the Royal Air Force exact information as to its capabilities. It would be a great pity if, in purchasing an aircraft, we were to pay for something that we could not use fully.

I want to turn briefly to what is probably this year's most significant event concerning the Air Force. I refer to the European fighter aircraft and the collaborative deal with other European countries, which I fully support. It will undoubtedly maintain Euro-technology in this area well into the next century. Indeed, I think that it goes beyond defence needs. Skills of the sort that are needed to build such an aircraft have significant spin-off benefits in other areas of industry, particularly those concerned with electronics and advanced metals. Clearly, as regards airframe and engine, the decisions have been taken, but, as has been said by other hon. Members, we have still to make a decision about the radar system. I am not going to suggest what that decision should be, but I hope sincerely that some points will be taken into account. First, the

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aircraft's export potential is important. It will be one of the few major aircraft projects we have running into the next century, so a decision on the radar must take into account future sales to other countries. It would be an awful pity if export potential were sacrificed by restrictions imposed by the manufacture of the radar chosen. The development potential of that radar should also be looked at closely. We should not buy a system that is reaching the end of its development life; we should buy the system that we feel has the greatest development potential.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning briefly the experience of Foxhunter. One of the reasons Foxhunter radar has not been as successful as we hoped it would be is that there was a gap of over 20 years in the technology after the production of the previous airborne radar system —the one for the Lightning. It was difficult for people in this country to get to grips with technology with which, for a number of years, they had been unfamiliar.

In the context of Foxhunter, I should like to mention one or two other points. I am thinking in particular of the situation in GEC, which, I believe, has not spent enough money on maintaining the technology lead in that area of avionics. It compares pretty unfavourably with other companies, such as Plessey, Rafale and, indeed, Ferranti, that have taken the lead in this sector. I sincerely hope that those deciding which radar should be selected will take full account of the export and development potential.

There is another point that we should consider very closely. Because the Foxhunter radar for the Tornado has been less than successful, despite the phase 1 update, there may well come a time, during the mid-life update of the Tornado F3, when another radar system has to be considered. The only one that can be considered is the one that we have selected for the European fighter aircraft—EFA. Therefore, the decision is doubly important. When we make the decision on the EFA radar we shall effectively be making the decision for the mid-life update of the Tornado F3.

Having spoken of the Tornado, I should like to mention also the mid-life update of the GR1, which is much closer than that of the F3. As has been mentioned by other hon. Members, the stand-off capability of that aircraft is very important indeed. Probably the only shortfall in the performance of the GR1 is in terms of range, and that is simply because of the compromise reached between the criteria set by the Royal Air Force and those set by the German air force when the aircraft was procured. It was certainly the right decision to compromise in that area in order to get the collaborative project off the ground. However, we have to recognise that, for operations from the United Kingdom, the range of the aircraft is limited, and therefore a stand-off capability will become more and more necessary as we go into the last decade of this century.

The fact is that if one spends £17 million on an aircraft, and perhaps £4 million on the training of the crew, survivability of the system is very important indeed. Because of Soviet defences of the sort mentioned by the hon. Member for Workington, it is going to be less and less easy to fly over a target and therefore more and more necessary to have a stand-off capability to increase the survivability of the weapons system.

Much of what I have said tonight about aircraft procurement will probably have the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Indeed many of the questions that have been asked in this Chamber over the last few weeks about progress towards deciding the radar contracts for EFA and the like have come from Labour Members. I therefore find it just a little surprising that those Members are very keen that we should procure a number of aircraft of this sort—indeed current Labour defence policy is one of unilateralism, and on that basis the party has made it clear that the money saved by scrapping nuclear weapons would be spent on conventional arms. The chances are that at least some of those conventional arms would be aircraft. The fact is that those hon. Members are suggesting that we procure more aircraft but at the same time seem to be denying the opportunity for the crews to train properly at low level so that they might make the best use of the systems that they want us to buy. There is a basic conflict in the Labour party's case for increasing our conventional defensive capability while being unwilling to give aircrews the opportunity to train properly. Indeed, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said that, even with the bravest men in the world, they will be no good if they are not given the right equipment to do the job. I wish he had added that it is no good if they are not given the right training, because that is precisely what Members of his party are suggesting in their remarks about low-level training.

I should like to deal briefly with the question of low-level training. It is an indication of the ignorance of many Opposition Members that they do not really understand what it is all about. The hon. Member for Rhondda in this debate last year said:

"but I cannot accept that there is any skill acquisition from flying at 500 miles an hour at 100 ft. All that happens are knee-jerk reactions."—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 588.]

That remark has bounced around the crew rooms of the Royal Air Force for the past 12 months, much to the hilarity of many people. I suggest that in a very short time he speaks to my hon. Friend and is given the opportunity to fly in the back seat of a Tornado over his own constituency at 250 ft. Perhaps then he would like to come back to this House and tell us whether he still feels the same way.

**Mr. Rogers:** Will the hon. Member give way?

**Mr. Mans:** No, I will not. I tried three times——

**Mr. Rogers:** The hon. Gentleman must accept that I was referring last year, as I shall do again a little later, to the fact that pilots of planes flying at 100 ft—not 250 ft —at 500 mph are only capable of knee-jerk reactions. I am pleased that my words are noticed and that they do bounce around the mess halls of the RAF. I had a nephew, a squadron leader, who, tragically, was killed in a Shackleton, having crashed into the side of a mountain. I have a brother who served in the Dam Busters during the war who was awarded the DFC. I have a nephew who is a wing commander in the RAF and another nephew who recently retired as director of air safety for the RAF at the rank of air commodore. Therefore, I am perfectly aware of the feelings of officers in the RAF. But the whole thrust of my argument is that when flying at 500 mph at 100 ft it is impossible to acquire a skill; there can only be a reaction.

Control is possible only at a higher level. That is why so many accidents are taking place. There was an accident last year——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** Order. This is an intervention, not a speech. Mr. Mans.

**Mr. Mans:** I am afraid that I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. There is still a great deal of skill acquisition when flying as low as 100 ft and as fast as 500 knots. If there were not, there would be no point in flying at that speed. If it were purely a matter of knee-jerk reactions, the accident rate would be many times higher than it is. The hon. Gentleman should take expert advice, not that of the hon. Member for Workington which is highly suspect.

The subject of low flying has been looked at in great detail tonight, but I just want to mention briefly the Federal Republic of Germany. There are more complaints about low flying there because of that country's failure to adopt the British system of spreading the load over the whole country rather than confining it to a few small areas. If a great amount of low-level activity is confined to a small area, it is not surprising that there should be a considerable number of extra complaints. My hon. Friend should continue to make representations to the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany to see whether it is possible to spread out low flying there. If that is done, the sort of concern suggested by the hon. Member for Workington will be reduced in the Federal Republic of Germany, as happened in Britain when that system was adopted 10 years ago.

I fully support the remarks made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) in relation to pensions, and, in particular, in relation to the tragic death of Squadron Leader David Nelson. I hope that my hon. Friend will look at that to see whether it is possible to rationalise and revise the type of awards, gratuities and pensions that are available.

Finally, I want to say a few words about RAF personnel and, more specifically, about our ability to retain and recruit sufficient numbers into the 1990s. A number of hon. Members have spoken about the demographic changes that are acting against RAF recruitment. There is now a problem in retaining sufficient numbers of staff in key grades and occupations. In that respect, I am pleased that a study is being carried out into the recruitment of women pilots. I made that point in the RAF debate last year. There did not seem to be much movement then, and I am pleased to see some now. There is a chance that women pilots will be recruited. I hope that that study will be speeded up as much as possible so that women can be recruited as pilots as soon as possible, because that is one area where there is clearly a shortfall.

One reason for the shortfall in pilots is the increase in the commercial activity of airlines in relation to the size of airports. As recently as 10 years ago a considerable number of the total number of pilots trained in Britain were trained by the RAF and they still had the ability when they left the service to supply most of the needs of the civilian airlines. Things are changing fast as a result of the increase in air travel. To mention just one statistic, the Royal Air Force now trains just under 200 pilots a year, but British Airways alone is taking on 100 pilots a year for the next eight years at the British Aerospace training facility at Prestwick. That excludes other airlines' requirements and British Airways' recruitment from inside the airline industry and from the RAF. That alone shows that the Air Force has a problem in recruiting and retaining sufficient pilots.

The other area for anxiety is the cost of pilots, or, more specifically, their remuneration. When someone finishes at Prestwick and goes into the right-hand seat of a 737, at the age of 22 or 23 they can earn as much as £28,000 a year, slightly more than many RAF pilots are earning at the age of 38, at one of the option dates for leaving the service. That focuses on one of the major problems. There is a growing discrepancy between the reward for flying for airlines and the financial benefits of staying in the Air Force. We should look at that closely. We should look at the conditions of service and at the comments and representations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) in relation to service men being able to buy their own homes, at least technically, so that they are better able to afford their own home when they leave the service.

That applies not only to pilots but to many senior NCOs in the Air Force. Many of the skills that they gain during their training in the Air Force have, over the decades, been of great use to British industry. Indeed, many of Britain's electronic industries were founded on the basis of people coming out of the RAF with electronic skills and using them productively. The RAF now trains rather fewer technicians than it did 10 years ago and, as a result, they are in even shorter supply to civilian industry. That, too, poses a threat to the technical expertise of the engineers who keep the aircraft flying in the first place.

Another area that needs to be looked at closely is the experience of the pilots who stay in the Air Force. Many take their options before they reach 38 and others leave prematurely. As a result, the experience level on many of the second-line aircraft—perhaps not the Tornado, but certainly the Phantom and to a lesser extent the Buccaneer—is getting low. There is a higher percentage of "first tourists" in those aircraft than there has been previously. That is where the problem begins to manifest itself. Unless something is done about it, it is liable to become considerably worse in the next few years.

Today the RAF has to make decisions that will affect the force well into the next century. Therefore, it is absolutely vital to maintain our technological ability on this side of the Atlantic to meet the equipment needs of the Air Force into the next century. At the same time, we must provide the training for aircrew to enable them to fly these highly complicated weapons systems. The professionalism of the Air Force has never been in doubt in the past and, provided that we provide proper equipment and training, it will not be in the future.

8.59 pm

**Dr. Kim Howells** (Pontypridd): I am glad to hear the tributes to the trained readiness of the men and women serving in the Royal Air Force. I was especially glad to hear the details of the year-long tour of our leading airfields taken by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). The beatific smile that lit up his face every time he recalled a trip he had made in a jet or helicopter was particularly warming. It proves that some Conservative Members are still able to indulge in simple pleasures rather than cheering as elements of our top military and Civil Service personnel try to pile through every revolving armaments door in sight.

*[Dr. Kim Howells]*

I was less gladdened, however, by the unwillingness of certain Conservative Members to address themselves to the fact that the very same highly trained RAF personnel face the prospect of flying aircraft which are equipped with radar and missiles that do not work. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has already referred to the scandal of the Foxhunter project. I wish that a scrutiny of the management of the Ministry of Defence of the procurement of RAF equipment would turn up nothing similar. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Numerous other scandals threaten the proper air defences of this country.

The air-launched anti-radiation missile—known, appropriately, as ALARM—has been identified by the Select Committee on Defence as a cause for great concern, owing to the enormous over-runs which are directly connected to the incompetence of the Ministry of Defence's procurement policy. At the last posting, the ALARM programme was £260 million over budget and several years behind schedule.

The reason for the delay and increased cost is that the original sub-contract for the rocket motor ran into trouble. It was awarded to an MOD research and development establishment, the propellants, explosives and rocket motor establishment, by another MOD section —the rocket motor executive. How separate were these two parts of the MOD? What has happened to the civil servants involved in the affair? Will the Minister assure me that none of the civil servants involved in this drastic and worrying incident will work for British Aerospace in the future? Other hon. Members asked similar questions, during the defence estimates debate, about the sale of Royal Ordnance plc. I understand that they have yet to receive adequate replies from the Minister.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has already drawn our attention to the vital question of the proper allocation of public funds. The Foxhunter and ALARM debacles are evidence either of plain misallocation or of Government managerial incompetence. Whichever option the House favours, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the failures and delays associated with both projects are selling short our Air Force.

The Government are failing to provide the nation with a wholly reliable air defence system. There may be Conservative Members who recall with some pleasure flying by the seat of their pants—or kilts, as the case may be. However, as the most junior Member of the House, may I suggest—with respect—that that is no way to run key elements of a £20 million defence budget.

The hon. Member for Ryedale compared discipline within the airfields that he visited on his grand tour with that which he remembered from his days in the Metropolitan police force. He would have made an even more significant contribution to this debate had he suggested that a little of that discipline might have been transferrred from the police beat into the offices of the Government's RAF procurement agencies.

9.4 pm

**Mr. Michael Colvin** (Romsey and Waterside): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), whom I have not heard speak in the House. He stood looking fit and well, as do new Members after they have fought an election. However, the House will soon put paid to that. I congratulate him on arriving here with the streets of Pontypridd still ingrained on his feet.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It is the role of Back Benchers to hold Ministers accountable for the money which they obtain from the House, and in doing so the hon. Gentleman is worth a Benchful of Labour Members.

Defence debates such as this are full of acronyms, and I had to go and look up "MLRS". I found that it stood for multiple-launch rocket system. I think that in future I shall apply that aeronym to the hon. Member for Workington, who launched plenty of rockets at Government spokesmen this evening.

An aspect of the Royal Air Force that has not been mentioned today is the role of helicopters in battlefield and support work. We have heard a good deal today about search and rescue, and I feel that the battlefield and support role also needs our attention. I am glad that both Ministers and senior officers are now beginning to realise the importance of helicopter-borne operations. They are also realising that not only is the number of both RAF and Army Air Corps helicopters inadequate for the job in hand, but there is a lack of balance in resources vis-a-vis the other teeth arms of armour, infantry and artillery.

At present, in what is largely peacetime, the RAF support helicopters are mainly programmed to meet Northern Ireland commitments and to perform a host of other operational and training tasks. I would argue that that leaves a shortage in the event of general hostilities. It is unrealistic to claim that the United Kingdom has an adequate helicopter force to cope with all the necessary tasks at one time, and I fear that support helicopters would be swamped with requests and would be unable to meet them all.

It has been suggested that the RAF, for its own logistic requirements alone, could probably mop up all the support Wessex and Puma helicopters. Why are those battlefield and support helicopters so important? In battle there is an increasing need for mobility and for better speed of reaction within NATO. Lateral movement of ground forces is difficult when enemy penetration is accepted in the design for battle. Only battleworthy helicopters can provide an adequate solution to the need for increased mobility, which is as important for out-of-area operations as in the central front. Flexibility is an important principle of war, and the helicopter in battle gives troops that flexibility.

In spite of what the Soviet Union has been saying about reducing its conventional forces, I think that that is highly unlikely to apply to its helicopters. All the evidence suggests that the Soviets are continuing to build up their rotary-winged force at least to reach a par with the United States. The USSR is believed to have at least 4,600 helicopters available to its armies—some reports have suggested as many as 7,000. Whatever the number, there is no doubt that it will continue to grow rapidly.

What can we put into battle in the NATO theatre in Europe against such a threat? I know that, with perestroika and glasnost prevailing, peace seems to be breaking out all over the world, but we must still keep our guard up and be able to respond to this most obvious threat, bearing in mind where it is most likely to come from. The United States has some 8,600 battlefield

helicopters available to its armies. West Germany has 800, France 700 and Italy 330. In addition, Italy has a good many small light-fixed-winged aircraft.

In terms of battlefield helicopters, the United Kingdom has 320 allocated to the Army Air Corps, largely used for reconnaissance and anti-tank work. There are a further 63 in the Royal Air Force—32 Wessex and 31 Pumas—and 38 Chinooks are available for battlefield and support work. Of that total of 421 helicopters, 101 are under RAF command. I argue that, because of the multiplicity of roles that those helicopters have to undertake, that is not enough.

For example, in addition to their battlefield role, helicopters have to support our Northern Ireland operations and move men and materials all around central Europe and the United Kingdom. They also have to support the Harrier force in central Europe and perform all the RAF's logistic tasks. Those helicopters support our air mobile brigade, which is currently stationed in the United Kingdom but is allocated to the northern army group. Those helicopters also have many overseas commitments, particularly in the Falklands and in Belize. If hostilities broke out, there is no doubt that much of that work could not be done. Alternatively, the helicopters could not meet their battlefront commitments.

If there is to be a helicopter battlefield support force capable of fulfilling all those roles—and, in particular, of supporting the Air Mobile Brigade, which requires at least 50 support helicopters to move it around—the field army needs a further 150 helicopters as a bare necessity. I know that it is a case of priorities. When it comes to defence expenditure, it is always a question of deciding what one wants most. If I were Secretary of State for Defence, I would put my faith in more helicopters rather than in more tanks, because the helicopter offers more flexibility. If the Ministry of Defence does not get its house fully in order in respect of helicopters, in the event of war, the Army could become totally immobile.

We were pleased by the statement of my right hon. Frind the Secretary of State for Defence on 9 April 1987 about orders for support helicopters. On that occasion, my right hon. Friend announced that he was placing orders for 25 of the Anglo-Italian EH101. That good news was welcomed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. However, I am sorry to report that that aircraft is still flight testing at Yeovil for its future development. I would like to know how soon the preliminary development contract for that aircraft will be placed. I understand that there are delays because the armed forces persist in increasing their specifications. That is typical of so many orders for the British armed forces.

The point about a support helicopter is that it is a truck that flies. We want airborne facilities that will move large quantities of troops and materials from one place to another. I cannot believe that it is necessary to go to such lengths at the development stage, which merely delays the aircraft's introduction into service.

**Mr. Roland Boyes** (Houghton and Washington): The hon. Gentleman should sit down now, or we shall take time off the Minister's speech.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** Order. That is very discourteous to the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

**Mr. Colvin:** I had not appreciated that another hon. Member is to speak before my hon. Friend winds up. Now that I know that, I am happy to conclude my remarks.

We are extremely fortunate in the United Kingdom to have the Westland Group to manufacture our helicopters. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) has been present during the debate because, although as a Whip he is muted in debate, I know how much he supports that company and lobbies for it. The manufactures at Yeovil are normally carried out in co-operation with the aerospace companies of our NATO allies. Under this Government, Westland can look forward to a good future, but it would be much better if the Ministry of Defence took my advice—not only my advice, because it comes from outside the House as well—and added more helicopters to battlefield and support inventories so that, if hostilities were to commence, they would be able to give our Army in the field the backup it required, without which our troops would be at a great tactical disadvantage.

9.15 pm

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Having sat through all but about 15 minutes of the debate, I am pleased to have a few minutes at the end of it. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) took so long, because that has curtailed the time for other hon. Members. I am sure that he had much to say, but he might have said it more briefly.

Labour Members support the policy of an adequate defence force, of which the Royal Air Force is but one branch. We support a publicly owned and controlled defence system because we believe that that is the most effective. The Government believe that as well, because they have not yet brought forward proposals for privatising the Royal Air Force into British Airways, British Midland or any other private body, and they have not proposed selling off the armed forces to Securicor. If that is true for our armed forces—and defence is all important according to the Government—it is also true for major services such as water, gas and electricity. If things are important—and water is important and essential to life—public ownership and control is an important concept for Labour Members.

Labour Members support unilateral nuclear disarmament and it is Labour party policy. It is currently under review, which is not tactically clever because it prevents us, for a couple of years, from arguing the overwhelming case for getting rid of nuclear weapons. The Government make little jokes about it, but as I keep saying—and the Government have no answer to this—nuclear weapons are potential mass murderers. As the Government know well, 133 non-nuclear nations have said that they will not manufacture or deploy nuclear weapons. By our "modernisation" of the Royal Air Force and our deployment of Trident, which I dealt with in the Navy debate, we are metaphorically kicking in the teeth those 133 nations which look to the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, the nuclear signatories of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, to carry out article 6 and effectively negotiate the removal of nuclear weapons.

The United States and the Soviet Union have at least embarked on that programme. Only the United Kingdom retains nuclear weapons without any suggestion that it is prepared to negotiate with anybody to remove them. That

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

is a scandal and a disgrace. The modernisation proposal is a betrayal and a calculated deceit towards the INF treaty, into which the United States and the USSR have entered. I have a letter from the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* which encapsulates the plea to the Government not to cheat on the INF treaty. Headed: "Don't turn treaty into a mockery", it says:

"We were delighted to learn recently of the withdrawal of American forces from Molesworth RAF base and to hear that the public can now view the empty insides of the silos which had been built to house Cruise nuclear missiles. Let us hope that the INF Treaty is just the beginning of total world nuclear disarmament. It is disturbing to read, however, that ideas are being floated in the United States and within NATO on how best to 'compensate' for the loss of Cruise and Pershing by introducing either a new range of nuclear weapons or placing Cruise-type missiles on cruisers and destroyers operating out of British ports. We feel that the British public needs to be reassured that the INF treaty is not a mockery."

That letter is signed by Jane Nuttall of Wyke women's peace group in my constituency. She and millions of others like her seek that assurance. They want to be sure that Tornado—the most expensive procurement programme in our history—will not be modernised to include nuclear missiles, and that nuclear bombs will be removed from those planes as part of our programme of honouring the INF treaty. We may not be signatories, but we should honour the treaty in spirit.

Labour's policy also involves the removal of the United States nuclear bases, which were allowed in this country under an agreement reached in October 1951. Why was the agreement reached then? A general election was taking place, so the Prime Minister of the day was not subject to the scrutiny of the House. The Conservative Government accepted the agreement when they were elected to replace the Labour Government.

That slip of paper says that there shall be joint decision-making on the use or RAF bases by the United States

"in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time."

That means that a unilateral decision can be made to engage in nuclear war—despite the removal of cruise missiles—by using F111s at Lakenheath with nuclear weapons on board. It is the sane policy, and in the interests of our future safety, to get rid of American nuclear bases and to close down the American facility at Lakenheath, just as Molesworth and Greenham Common were closed as a result of negotiations to which our Government were not a party.

There is to be massive investment in the Tornado programme—£13 billion—while the European fighter aircraft project is to cost £7 billion. That £20 billion-worth of investment has warped our civilian aircraft programme. This country once led in the production of jet aircraft but now the nearest thing to a large-bodied jet that we produce is the modest BA 146, which is powered not by a Rolls-Royce engine but by an Avco Lycoming engine imported from the United States.

We are prepared to spend £20 billion on fighter aircraft that we cannot use in a conflict. People talk about flying aircraft low towards a target. The poor wretches who fly them to their targets in a nuclear war will find when they return that their base is no longer there. The whole notion of a conflict is out of date; it is antique.

We should invest in our civilian aircraft programme. British Airways now relies completely on Boeing; indeed, the replacement for Shackleton is to be provided not by the British aircraft industry but by Boeing, whose quality, as we know, is somewhat variable. We could be supplying British Airways ourselves if we had directed investment towards the civilian programme. Japan, which spends less than 1 per cent. of its gross national product in military expenditure, has managed to flood the world with services and goods because it has concentrated on things that people need and want rather than pouring money into military research and expenditure.

An enormous sum—£19,636 million—is being spent on defence in 1988-89. In the same year—on April 11—we are to cut pensions and a whole range of benefits on which the neediest and poorest people in our country depend. In that same year, we embarked on expenditure of £20 billion for military purposes. The Minister stated proudly that that was a real terms increase of 3 per cent.

I do not want to reiterate the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington—indeed, I could not, because my voice is not that strong—but I want to point out that in the current defence estimates, for the year 1 January 1987 to 31 December 1987, the cost of replacing aircraft that have crashed on low-flying exercises, which, in my view, are entirely unnecessary, was a total of £200 million. That expenditure was due to the mistaken policies on low flying. If the Government disagree with the policies of a local authority and regard them as mistaken, they surcharge and dismiss from office the Labour councillors involved. Because of the Government's policy of support for nuclear weapons, because of their careless use of aircraft and because of their low-flying policies, the Government should be dismissed from office also.

9.25 pm

**Mr. Rogers:** The Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces referred to AWACS and said that when his colleague replies he will mention it further. I should like to know how many such systems are available to the Royal Air Force. The Minister also referred to the flying displays and the changes that will be brought in to enhance safety, especially for spectators. We welcome that. The RAF's thrilling displays at various events are looked forward to with a great deal of pleasure by many people. Obviously, the more restrictions that can be introduced to increase safety the better so that people can enjoy the displays without the fearful accidents that sometimes occur.

The Minister also mentioned low flying—an issue to which some of my hon. Friends have also referred. I was pleased by the Minister's answer because it was much more positive and not as arrogant as some of the answers that we have received from his colleagues. The Minister seems to be applying himself to the issue instead of adopting—if I may use the expression—the knee-jerk reaction of saying, "The RAF says that it is good and necessary so we must carry on."

Although it is obvious that the Minister is looking at the problems, the restrictions on low flying are still gravely deficient. The problems are not fully appreciated. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces seems to find the matter humorous, but perhaps he will pay attention because if low flying were carried out over his constituency or even over constituencies in Kent, we should see a greater response from the Government. It seems that

environmental problems must affect Kent before the Government will do anything. I should like to say to those on the Government Benches, "Come on, lads. Realise that there are other places outside the Tory-held south-east of England and realise that this is a serious problem."

The Minister recognised the problem, referring to the "sudden noise alarming people". That is putting it mildly. Anyone who has experienced a Tornado flying overhead at only 100 ft and at 500 mph knows that it is not just alarming; it is shudderingly frightful. People have no warning that exercises are going to take place. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that point. The Government's answer to a request that people be allowed to be told that the exercises are to take place was, "It is a matter of national security." I cannot see how it can be a matter of national security. Why cannot people be told that low flying will take place within certain hours?

**Mr. Bill Walker** *rose*——

**Mr. Rogers:** No, I do not have enough time to give way and, in any case, I was asking the Minister for the answer, not someone who flew in the last century.

I detected in the Minister's opening speech a slight thawing in the Government's neanderthal attitude towards low flying. I ask him please to bend a little more and think of the people, especially in central Wales and the two areas of Scotland, who are subjected to this 500 mph bombardment from 100 ft. It is a very important issue for them. The quality of their life is important.

**Mr. Ray Powell** (Ogmore): On that very point, which is of great interest to the House, can my hon. Friend recall my question to the Minister on Tuesday regarding the £1 billion of Government funds that is wasted every year on the maintenance of fast jets? A report has come out saying that fast jets spend half their time being maintained. Will my hon. Friend bear that fact in mind? Are the fast jets going about the airways of Wales fully maintained? Can we have a reliable statement from the Minister that there will not be any air crashes like those in the public sector?

**Mr. Rogers:** My hon. Friend is right to draw the House's attention to the enormous sums of money being spent on repairing aircraft involved in accidents. As he is well aware, very close to his constituency at RAF St. Athan, there are 32 Tornado F2 and F3 aircraft in store, worth more than £500 million. In a Defence Committee report they were picturesquely described by witnesses from the Ministry of Defence as

"a small buffer stock of aircraft".

The nation can do without a small buffer stock of aircraft worth well over £500 million.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made a very thoughtful speech. Perhaps we might not agree with his conclusions, but it is important to look constantly at the arguments. We are in a dynamic situation. I am sorry to use the word "neanderthal" again —perhaps it is a problem of a geologist—but because of the neanderthal attitude of Conservative Members, they do not recognise that we are in a dynamic situation. The way forward is to consider new situations that will arise from time to time.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) declared his well-known interest in the RAF. I am pleased that he still gets enormous pleasure from it, as I am sure he will to the end of his days. He remarked that the RAF needs the very best radar. I wish that he would take a little step further and have the courage to turn to his Front Bench and say to Minister that they are not doing a good job. The RAF should have the very best radar, but it is not up to the job. It has been in service for four years. It was introduced on an interim standard. It is still not up to the required standards and specifications of the RAF. The management of defence procurement by the Government is appalling.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) told us of his experiences in the RAF under a new scheme that has been introduced by the Secretary of State during the past year. Some service experience is indeed useful in understanding the problems. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on taking up that opportunity. I hope that other hon. Members will follow his example.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) paid tribute to Bristow. I began to wonder whether he, too, would take that little extra step and highlight some of the deficiencies in the air search and rescue service. The Opposition have drawn attention to those deficiencies in previous debates. There is a sore lack of equipment in that service. It ought to have more money and more resources.

In answer to a question by me on Tuesday, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said that more than enough money is available to meet all the commitments of the services. Perhaps he should devote some of that money to the search and air rescue service so that it can update its equipment for the tremendous job that it does.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) referred to the loss of skilled personnel. He is absolutely right to draw our attention to that issue. As the effects of the fall in the birth rate become ever more apparent, it will become increasingly important to retain the right personnel. Each time the topic has been raised the Government have sought to assure us that there is nothing to worry about. The Minister at last acknowledged that there were severe shortfalls in the number of aircrew and engineers, but he said that such shortages are containable and exist only in the short term. At long last what we have been saying over the past few years has now been acknowledged by the Government. The Government's attitude to any criticism is, "No, no, there is nothing wrong." If Opposition Members dare to put forward constructive criticism, Conservative Back Benchers say that we are attacking our armed forces. That is not true. We are attacking the Government and the management of the Ministry of Defence, not the members of the armed forces, who are doing a good job for us in the difficult conditions that obtain under this Government.

RAF personnel are voting with their feet. The statistics are alarming. The number of fast jet pilots who have taken premature voluntary release has increased from 20 in 1979 to 31 in 1988. The number of trained engineers leaving the service is also a cause for concern. In 1980, the number of electronic engineers joining and leaving the RAF brought about an overall gain of 554. In the same year, there was a net increase of over 1,000 in the number of mechanical engineers. In 1988, the situation worsened. The RAF had an overall loss of 427 electronic engineers and 433 mechanical engineers. That loss of hundreds of highly skilled engineers is of great concern to the Opposition.

Opposition Members recognise the great importance of those people. Although the Minister mentioned some measures that the Government are taking to stop that flow

*[Mr. Rogers]*

of personnel, I wish that such steps had been taken before, when we referred to the loss of maintenance staff. We hope that the Minister's proposals will stem the flow.

I re-emphasise the Opposition's commitment to the defence of this country. If hon. Members would accept that there is a strong commitment to the defence of this country, and if our criticisms were accepted in the constructive way in which we attempt to put them, we would get a lot further in defence debates. The country is not served by yah-boo political debates. People do not have the peculiar views that the Government sometimes put forward. I hope that the Opposition's constructive suggestions will be taken on board by the Government.

9.38 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury):** We have had a very varied debate, varied in a number of ways, in general attitudes to defence and foreign policy, a nice variation among those on the Opposition Benches, and a variation between them and the Government Benches. There was a variation in the relevance of the speeches to the subject of the debate, which I thought on some occasions the House needed to be reminded was the Royal Air Force. There was quite a variation in the length of contributions. I am only sorry that the contribution of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) resulted in such a disturbance afterwards on his side of the House that we nearly had to call time-out while it was sorted out.

There was even a variety in the frequency of contributions. I realise now why on this occasion the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) needed to be dual-capable, as my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Armed Forces so nicely put it. He wanted to make one speech on a variety of what, if one stretched a point, could be called defence-related issues, and another to cover the RAF. Some of us were not so lucky to have the opportunity to make two speeches. I thank him and congratulate him on his second speech, however, and I recognise his personal and family commitment to the RAF and to the defence of the country.

On one issue, at least, I hope we were united—in recognising the dedication and commitment of the men and women of the RAF. That is something that we all know we can rely on. Reliability has been much in the news and it is relevant to the comments of several hon. Members in the debate. The interest in reliability has been brought to the fore by the report of the National Audit Office on the reliability and maintainability—R and M for short—of defence equipment.

I want to stress that I am in general sympathy with the report and grateful for the succinct way in which it sets out ideas, proposals and objectives. I particularly welcome its recognition of the marked interest and concern on the part of my Department and British contractors to make further progress. Nevertheless, good reliability is only one facet of the services' needs. Performance and availability on time are obviously important, and so are cost considerations, since there is obviously a trade-off between increased costs and improved reliability. These criteria frequently conflict and a judgment must be made on the correct compromises. The exercise is to ensure that reliability receives sufficient emphasis and is taken into account early enough.

I should not like it to be thought that we have been inactive in the area of reliability and maintainability. As the recent NAO report said,

"The need for good R and M has long been recognised by the Department."

We have identified what is needed, in itself a task of some complexity. As a result, we have not only set in hand further work by consultants, such as the contracting for reliability study, but have also looked at our organisation and procedures.

For example, nearly five years ago we gave further momentum to the collection of quality assurance experts with the project management teams, and more recently we have been incorporating them into the project teams. We have also been putting more and more R and M and life-cycle information into the equipment policy committee. The project management teams, too, have been active in exploring new approaches so that, as we gain experience, we shall be well placed to identify those ideas which generally contribute to improved reliability. The most recent decision has been to appoint a director of reliability, charged with the central co-ordination of current and future R and M initiatives.

I should like the House to be aware of the influence of the long, in some cases incredibly long, time scales of procurement on the effectiveness of our policies. Everyone is agreed that the proper time to start to get R and M right is when a project is in its earliest design and specification stage; improvements can be made to R and M thereafter, but it becomes progressively more difficult and expensive. It follows, therefore, that much of the equipment now criticised for poor reliability or high maintenance costs started to be designed and developed at least 10 years ago, long before we began to give greater attention to R and M. Equally, a considerable time will pass before we get the full fruits of our better applied effort. Meanwhile, I can assure the House that as new projects are initiated the policy is that the full R and M doctrine should be applied.

I was glad to hear how much my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) had gained from his time with the armed forces parliamentary scheme. I was also pleased to hear his tribute to the service men he was with: they enjoyed his company as he enjoyed theirs. We look forward to the scheme not only continuing but expanding. I am glad to be able to confirm to him and to the House that no civilian has been killed on the ground during the 1980s as a result of an RAF flying accident.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces covered low flying fully in his opening remarks. It was referred to by many hon. Members, some with perhaps more understanding of the need for low flying training than others. The hon. Member for Workington worried about the cost to the Exchequer of aircraft lost in accidents. If we had no training, we would not have accidents during training, but we would not have the capable Air Force that the country needs and deserves.

In his extraordinary efforts to show that low flying was not worthwhile because of the highly capable missiles which the Russians have, the hon. Member for Workington ignored the far greater risks of trying to reach targets at high levels and the defensive capabilities of our aircraft. Most of all, he ignored the well known and well set-out advantages of terrain-following, low-level attack. I assure him that we are aware of the threat posed by Soviet missiles and by other Soviet equipment. That is why we equip the RAF to meet that threat.

It was no surprise to the House to hear again that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), supported by the hon. Members for Workington and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), still believes in a non-aligned foreign and defence policy. The right hon. Gentleman is not only a supporter of one-sided nuclear disarmament but, as I understood his speech, he also advocated unilateral conventional disarmament. I think that we should leave him to carry on his argument within his own party. I am sure that he will do it with the same eloquence within the party as he has used in the House.

**Mr. Benn:** Can the Minister give any indication to the House how, 10 years after the Government have been in force, with a Soviet Government who are more friendly, most people would think, than Mr. Brezhnev's Government, we should find it necessary to spend 20 per cent. more in real terms on weapons than at the time when we were dealing not with Mr. Gorbachev but with Mr. Brezhnev?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** It was an interesting slip for the right hon. Gentleman to say that the present Government had been in force rather than in power. I take it that he was referring to our majority.

When the right hon. Gentleman makes his suggestions about unilateral conventional as well as nuclear disarmament, he appears to ignore that until now the Soviet Union has continued to produce new modernised military equipment for nuclear forces, conventional forces and every type of force. The one thing that so much of the equipment has in common is its attacking capability. We hope that we can look to a time when the Russians will no longer produce a submarine every six weeks, for example. That has not happened yet. Indeed, the hon. Member for Workington drew to our attention what seemed to him the almost magical attributes of a new Russian missile. If the Soviets are producing new weapons, I would have thought that it was only right that we continued to do so ourselves.

I shall try to cover the other points that were raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), with his great experience of and his great commitment to the RAF, mentioned the very important Tucano. I am glad to tell him that 11 aircraft have been delivered to the RAF and that reports from those who have flown the aircraft are most encouraging. The power, agility and safe handling of the Tucano endow it with the ideal characteristics for basic training. I think that it will serve the RAF extremely well,

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) raised the question of gratuities and pensions payable to the wives and families of serving personnel. I assure him that the Royal Air Force takes great pride in the care and support which it offers to its bereaved. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will write to the hon. Gentleman about the tragic loss of Squadron Leader Nelson and about the wider question of benefit levels.

AWACS—now to be called the Sentry—has been mentioned. The hon. Member for Rhondda appears to be wondering how many we already have. I hoped that he might have been aware that seven are on order and that the first one is expected to be rolled out of the production line during this summer.

**Mr. Rogers:** But how many?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have just said that seven are on order and that the first one is due to be rolled out this summer —*[Interruption.]* It would help me to answer the points raised in the debate if the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen could restrain themselves a little.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) asked about the AWACS off-set agreement. I assure him that we are closely monitoring Boeing's performance in fulfilling the off-set commitment. We have every confidence that the company will meet its obligations in full. I can further assure my hon. Friend that we are also confident that the RAF will receive from its American counterpart all the information that it needs to operate the Sentry E3 successfully.

Perhaps not surprisingly, radar has featured in a number of contributions—both the radars that we have and, indeed, the ones that we have not yet chosen. Questions were raised about the capability of the radar systems that we have, especially about Foxhunter. Indeed, that gets inextricably mixed up with the Tornadoes. Of course, the hon. Member for Rhondda wheeled out the ones in storage, if I may mix mataphors, at St. Athan.

As the Defence Committee recognised in its report on the Statement on the Defence Estimates for 1988, storage represented the most cost-effective and operationally acceptable course open to the Ministry of Defence when faced with the need to rephase Tornado ADV deployment plans after 1984. All the aircraft involved will be upgraded to a standard comparable to that of the latest production F3s. As the hon. Member for Rhondda said in his second speech, a number of them are, of course, only F2s. I cannot persuade the hon. Gentleman to believe it, but that is what will happen.

My hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North and for Wyre, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), and, as one might always expect, the hon. Member for Rhondda, mentioned the Foxhunter radar, which, even in its present form, is performing much better than on its first introduction to service. We are confident that its capability will continue to improve as the development progresses. We have agreed with the contractor a programme of work to bring the radar up to the required standard.

**Mr. Rogers:** The Minister has, in fact, acknowledged that the Foxhunter is not up to the standard required. It has been in service now for four years. Can the Minister tell the House when the radar will perform, as it should have performed in 1985?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** As I have already said to the House, it is already performing much better than the first deliveries. There have been progressive improvements. We have agreed with the contractor a tight contract, which covers the further programme of improvements, with milestones for payment against performance, which is extremely important.

The European fighter aircraft radar seems to feature in practically every Defence Question Time and probably in every defence debate these days.

**Mr. O'Neill:** It will until the Government make up their mind.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I know that the hon. Gentleman is impatient, but he should know—because he is supposed to be in charge of these matters for the Opposition—that there is a procedure to be followed before a choice is made.

*[Mr. Sainsbury]*

We must have a recommendation from the European NATO Fighter Management Agency as to what radar should be chosen. I am sure that all the hon. Members who raised the issue will appreciate that both competing radars involve British companies. It would be wrong for me to prejudge the outcome of the competition. We have been waiting for the recommendation to NEFMA by Eurofighter, the prime contractor, and we still hope that a recommendation will be made. However, in the meantime the four participating nations are carrying out their own evaluation of the bids from the two competing consortia.

**Mr. O'Neill:** We have heard repeated undertakings that the decision would be made soon. We were told tht it would be forthcoming last year, in September, in December, at the end of January and we are now into March. How much longer will the delay take? Why is this taking so long? Why will the Minister not be frank with the House?

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The decision, as I have explained to the hon. Gentleman, is awaiting a recommendation from Eurofighter. I am not Eurofighter. We are representatives of the collaborating nations. In a way, the hon. Gentleman is addressing his questions to the wrong people.

I hope that the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) will appreciate, in view of all the interest expressed in the subject so far, that the radar is a very important part of the aircraft. The most modern, highly capable radars are not the easiest things to get right and we would all probably agree about that. It would be sensible to ensure that we reach the right conclusions on this important subject.

**Mr. O'Neill:** That sounds like a Bobby Robson answer.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I remind the hon. Gentleman that Bobby Robson has just had a success, winning two-nil away from home.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) made some interesting comments about the importance of helicopters. I assure him that we recognise that and I will study what he has said carefully because, regrettably, I was not able to be in the Chamber for all the time that he was speaking.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside asked about the development of the EH101 utility helicopter. As I told the House last November, the programme has started on the formal project definition stage which will examine in detail the RAF's requirements and establish more clearly the costs and risks involved. I assure my hon. Friend that the RAF's basic requirement has not changed.

My hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and for Tayside, North were among those who asked about stand-off weapons for the Tornado. They referred to the need to provide an updated stand-off capability for the Tornado and the importance of stand-off weapons for survivability in today's highly challenging environment. They will be pleased to know that we are proceeding steadily with the development of a weapon to meet that requirement.

We sought proposals from industry early in 1987 for a range of possible solutions. A total of eight bids were received in October 1987. Although some have been eliminated as being clearly unacceptable on operational or performance grounds, we are continuing with our assessment of the remainder and expect to make further decisions later in the year.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East referred to the search and rescue provision from RAF Leuchars. The greatly improved service provided by the Royal Navy Sea King helicopters at Prestwick and Culdrose together with other helicopter and coastguard services in the area have made it possible to reduce the search and rescue service from Leuchars. The resources dedicated to search and rescue will not substantially change as a result of the redeployment.

The aim of making better use of our existing assets to meet military and civilian needs has been achieved. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for transport in Scotland are satisfied that fully adequate provision is being made for civilian search and rescue needs.

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the staff of the Royal Aerospace Establishment, who were not mentioned during the course of the debate. However, those with a knowledge of the RAF would recognise that their research into aircraft and missile systems has helped to keep the United Kingdom at the forefront in those areas. Equally important, the establishment enables the MOD to maintain the intelligent customer capability which is so crucial in our dealings with industry and our procurement effectiveness.

The House will be aware that earlier today I announced that we have concluded that a move to Preston farm in Teesside is the most cost-effective solution for the headquarters and laboratories of the Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance now at Woolwich and Bromley. The move would concentrate the headquarters functions and main laboratories of the directorate on a single site with fully modern facilities, while at the same time releasing the Woolwich and Bromley sites for disposal and redevelopment. We shall be consulting with the trade unions, as is normal practice. There are 1,500 jobs involved, of which about 650 would be good quality scientific and engineering posts and about 250 would be apprentices.

We have, of course, recently heard of the death of that intrepid pioneer aviator and aircraft designer Tommy Sopwith. It would be inappropriate if this evening went by without his career being mentioned and a tribute being paid to the contribution he made over many years to a wide variety of aircraft names—the Hurricane, the Typhoon, the Hunter and, of course, more recently, the Harrier.

Today is also, as a number of hon. Members have mentioned, the 40th anniversary of the inaugural flight of the Shackleton aircraft.

Every year in this debate we recognise, as many hon. Members have commented, another year of effective and loyal service by the service men and women of the Royal Air Force. They are an enormous credit to the nation through the selfless way in which they continue to carry out their tasks.

*It being Ten o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed without Question put.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)*

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Limits of Basic and Special Awards) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 17th January, be approved.

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Compensation Limit) Order 1989 which was laid before this House on 27th January, be approved.

That the draft Employment Protection (Variation of Limits) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 27th January, be approved.

### SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 21st February, be approved.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Minibuses

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

10.2 pm

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham): I should like to raise the matter of a proposal coming from the European Commission which has an extremely adverse effect on the future of voluntary drivers of minibuses. Such proposals are buried in Euro-documents over which the House tries to keep some form of control. This proposal is buried in the so-called second directive on driver licensing, which would remove the ability to derogate—which is Euro-jargon for opt out—from the categories of driving entitlement prescribed in the first directive.

The effect of all this jargon would be to oblige the United Kingdom to introduce categories of driving entitlement that would in future threaten the activities of voluntary organisations, community transport operations and many small businesses. It would also deny other member states the option of developing their own voluntary and community sectors by using voluntary drivers and minibuses.

At present, voluntary drivers of minibuses who hold a full ordinary passenger-car licence may drive passenger vehicles not used commercially and goods vehicles up to 7½ tonnes in weight. These new proposals from the European Commission would oblige such voluntary drivers to take a second test and to fulfil higher medical standards if they wished to drive. This would apply to drivers of passenger vehicles with more than eight passenger seats and goods vehicles of more than 3½ tonnes.

This would have a direct effect on our voluntary drivers. At the moment many voluntary drivers, particularly people recently retired, are prepared to drive minibuses for voluntary organisations. However, if they had to go through another driving test and to take continuous medical inspections they would say that, although they would like to help, with all the inconvenience it was just not on.

I do not think that the European Commission has taken fully into account the scale of this sector in the United Kingdom. There are 85,000 minibuses in Great Britain and this is way above the number in other member countries. Community transport alone in this country does some 10 million passenger journeys each year; 48 per cent. of all minibuses are used by voluntary organisations and private individuals.

It is worth bearing in mind the fact that, without these voluntary services, thousands of our elderly and disabled people could literally become housebound and many more would be denied the only chance they have to take part in recreation or sporting activities, to travel outside their own homes and to have a holiday. There are many thousands of organisations which are totally dependent on the use of minibuses with voluntary drivers to transport their members to and from club activities and on outings and holidays.

Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to cite some cases from my own constituency. Take, for example, the Gravesend and Northfleet day centres, which are local branches of Age Concern. Both have minibuses that collect old people from their homes every day and take them to the centres for hot lunches and various forms of

*[Mr. Jacques Arnold]*

attention and social recreation. The drivers, many of whom are retired people, are all volunteers who would be adversely affected by these regulations.

On the other hand, take the Meopham community bus, again driven by volunteers, half of whom are retired. They provide many people in rural parishes with their only means of going shopping, and the bus links villages that are not served by scheduled buses. That community bus is used by old people's clubs in the area. It also takes Meopham cricket club's junior team to many away matches.

Other examples abound. The Helen Allison school, which caters for autistic children, relies heavily on voluntary drivers for its minibuses. The same applies to other organisations up and down this land—parent-teacher associations, scout groups, Mencap, Cheshire homes, and Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied. One could give an immense list of organisations that would be adversely affected.

Where does the Commission's proposal come from? Tracing its origin into the obscurity of Brussels, one finds that it comes from the then Transport Commissioner. It is perhaps to the shame of this House that the then Commissioner is a former Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. Stanley Clinton Davis, who appears to have forgotten the part that voluntary organisations play in Britain and, indeed, play in his former constituency to this very day. In a quite extraordinary letter of December last year, which is in the Library, Mr. Clinton Davis condemns the Minister for lobbying in Europe against the proposals—an extraordinary process, he seemed to think.

The letters that were exchanged, which, as I have said, are to be found in the Library, contain platitudinous statements such as this:

"I think that the safest conclusion one can drew from your two sets of figures"—

the Minister's figures—

"is that road safety for these vehicles needs to be improved. Especially vulnerable groups—like the elderly and the disabled—need extra reassurance that they are being driven in safety. They are special people who, in the event of a serious accident, are obviously less able to fend for themselves."

That is all quite straightforward, but if these measures were to be introduced the elderly people would not be in the vehicles but in their homes, and not taking part in a very wide range of activities.

What of the figures that he referred to? The recent Transport and Road Research Laboratory study found that the accident rate for minibuses is no higher than for cars and, indeed, far lower than for buses. A more recent examination of the latest available statistics reveals that the passenger injury rate for cars is twice as high as for minibuses. The danger to passengers is halved if they are carried by minibuses rather than by cars. Indeed, Britain has a good record on road safety and road accidents. It is a fact that if the rest of the community had our standards of road safety, 40 per cent. fewer people in the European Community would have died last year.

Where does the decision on this directive lie? Mr. Clinton Davis, of unlamented memory, has been trundled into the history books and is no longer the Commissioner for Transport. There is a new Commissioner, and let us hope that he will approach this matter with an open mind. The decision, in fact, will be taken by majority vote in the Council of Ministers. Obviously, it is the objective to argue our case with the other 11 members of the European Community. Certainly I commend the Minister for his activities with regard to the Mobility Alliance and his venture to Strasbourg to put our case energetically.

I resent Commissioner Clinton Davis's dismissive reference to lobbying and his extraordinary condemnation of the mobility allowance for having the support of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Government. The Government should be commended for giving their support to such a good cause.

**The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley):** In case anyone misinterprets my hon. Friend's words, I should say that the Mobility Alliance and the Government are both working for people who have the advantage of community transport in minibuses. He and I want to make sure that the Mobility Alliance is not necessarily associated with the Conservative party, although we hope that it is. On minibuses, there is complete agreement between the Government and community transport organisations.

**Mr. Arnold:** The important point is that this is a non-party political issue. If the Government support such an organisation, all concerned will benefit. Over the coming months before the decision is made, my hon. Friend has the support of a great range of voluntary organisations and a great number, if not the majority, of our right hon. and hon. Friends.

10.10 pm

**The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley):** The House and millions in the United Kingdom will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) for drawing the attention of the House to this important issue. My hon. Friend is concerned with other transport issues. Those who were present earlier will have heard the point of view that he has been putting forward on the Channel link on behalf of his constituents. This issue should unite the House. I assume that we have the Labour party's support, but none of its Members is present this evening. I was going to say that I notice that the alliance parties are here but, sadly, they are leaving the matter to the Government.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Gravesham, for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) and for Basildon (Mr. Amess) for their support. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) is also present and he has raised this point at transport questions, when I made the point that the correspondence between Stanley Clinton Davis and me should not be regarded as a vendetta. However, it is probably true to say that the curious letter that he sent me in December from Strasbourg was ill-judged. I assume that he was let down by poor staff work. I suspect that he was getting ready to leave his job, which he had carried forward in a fairly distinguished way except in this issue. He must have signed the letter without reading it.

In Woodspring and in Eltham—in every constituency represented by one of my hon. Friends who are present—many thousands of people have the advantage of community transport in minibuses. There are, as my hon. Friend says, 85,000 minibuses or more in the United Kingdom. No one in another European country can

comprehend that. Virtually every other European country forbids people to drive minibuses unless they have a special licence.

It is right that Members of the EC should be concerned about transport safety. Over the months, we have had tragic news of ferry disasters, plane disasters and train crashes. The community rises up to mourn with the families of those who lost their lives. But, as we have been reminded today with the M6 tragedy, many more lose their lives on the road—50,000 or more a year in the European Community. Britain is by far the safest country. As my hon. Friend said, if Britain's death rate was common to the EEC, 40 per cent. fewer people would have lost their lives last year.

We want to work together with the Commission. We want the freedom to exchange licences. We are even prepared, although we did not sign the Vienna convention, to have a delay before people can drive minibuses. It could be argued that someone who passed their driving test at the age of 17 or 18 should wait another two years before they drive a large number of people. But it would be wrong for us to accept, and it would be wrong for other countries or for the Commission to try to make us accept, that 10 million journeys a year for the elderly, the young and the frail should be waved away because others cannot understand the system that we have developed for the handicapped and for community groups.

**Mr. Ian Taylor** (Esher): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, subsequent to the departure of the demob-happy Clinton Davis, he has had discussions with the new Commissioner? Do other countries have the sympathy that I feel they should have for our case and for the safety record of minibus drivers in this country?

**Mr. Bottomley:** In the remaining minutes I may refer to something that the Commissioner emeritus Clinton Davis said in his letter. I shall try not to knock him, because there is not much point in doing so, although I note in passing that he referred to himself as a former Commissioner for the environment rather than as the Commissioner for transport. I suspect that he was trying to distance himself from the minibus issue. In his unfortunate letter to me he said that he was proud of what he had taken through the Commission. If that is so, heaven knows what he was ashamed of.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher rightly referred to the Commisssioner for Transport, Mr. Karl van Miert, who is approaching the matter with an open mind. I have had the advantage of meeting him twice. The first time was with a group of academics and politicians in Brussels. Commissioner van Miert kindly gave up some of his time to meet us and I said to him that I would be most grateful if he would ask his officials to reconsider and try to reach agreement on the safety facts with the British researchers. This issue should be determined first on safety and secondly on mobility for the handicapped and those with special needs—although mobility is important.

One friend in the European Community asked me, "Is it true that British accident figures are built up by the British police?" I replied, "Yes. They come in a form called 'Stats 19'." He replied, "In that case, no one should dispute the figures." I agree, but if anyone does have different figures, we should all—researchers, road safety experts and statisticians—put our heads together. I made the offer to Commissioner van Miert that I should come to Brussels and work with his officials to agree on the facts and figures. Once that was done the figures could then be offered to the Commission, to Parliament—which has to give an opinion on the draft directive—and, of course, to the Council of Ministers.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham rightly said, it is the Government who are supporting the members of the Mobility Alliance rather than the Mobility Alliance trying to support the Government. I think that that was the point that Commissioner emeritus Clinton Davis may have missed in December. If the campaign is successful, I suspect that within 10 years other European Community countries will have developed voluntary minibus schemes for people such as students, young children and the elderly.

I suspect that by then cricket will have crossed the Channel and the Lords Taverners will be raising money every week to buy minibuses in other European countries. I suspect that the International Variety Club of Great Britain will have spread beyond the few countries in which it is involved to the rest of Europe and that minibuses will appear with the International Variety Club emblem on them. There will be a degree of solidarity between the elderly, the young, and, most of all, between the volunteers who wish to give their time to drive others about.

May I remind the House that about 6 per cent. of our 85,000 minibuses have fare-paying passengers. I shall give this commitment: we shall not do anything to stop those professional drivers on fare-paying minibuses from taking public service vehicle tests. We are concerned only with the non-professional drivers—perhaps the person with a large family, the scoutmaster or the Akela or someone who is semi-retired and wants to spend two days a week driving for the PHAB club.

There are many reasons why people might want to drive together. A person may volunteer to stay off booze and drive a minibus so that the other 10 or eleven people in his group can drink. That example may be more appropriate after Easter but I give it—for what it is worth—during Lent.

The thresholds proposed by the European Community will have serious consequences for community and voluntary transport operations.

There is no evidence that minibuses are more difficult to drive than vans, and the draft directive will allow vans the same size as minibuses to be driven on an ordinary driving licence. There is no safety case requiring drivers of minibuses to take a second test or to meet higher medical standards. The terms of the second draft directive should be modified—preferably as a recommendation by the European Parliament, because this is a popular issue with which, ideally, the European Parliament should deal—so that minibuses can continue to be driven with passenger car entitlement.

I repeat that, as an added assurance of competence, the United Kingdom would be willing to accept a requirement for two years' driving experience in passenger cars to be imposed on individuals wanting to drive minibuses. That would allow similar opportunities for safe, cost-effective transport operations in other member states.

I want to give the figures, although I am not sure whether giving them in a speech on the Floor of the House will make it easier to put them in tabulated form. I leave that to those who have to massage the words afterwards. Let us take the accident ratios to vehicle types. If we represent a minibus by the figure 1, the casualty rate for

*[Mr. Bottomley]*

each passenger kilometre in a car is 2·5—in other words, two and a half times as great. The casualty rate for the motor cyclist is 65.

The accident rate figure for the minibus itself—the vehicle, not the passengers—is 1. It is 1·2 for the car and 15·2 for the motor cycle. That evidence shows that if we take any action that discourages people from being driven in minibuses and makes them switch to driving a car the safety rate is worsened: they are more likely to be injured. All Members of the European Parliament should begin to understand that. Most British MEPs do, although a few seem to be in the same group as the Commissioner emeritus, and have said, "There is no problem. If people abandon minibus driving in future, the Government can provide the money for extra training."

For each volunteer minibus there are between six and 10 volunteer drivers. I believe that Dr. Barnardo's estimated that it would lose five out of six of its volunteer drivers. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham said, it is aggravating for someone to have to show that he is qualified, and then perhaps to have regular medical checks.

In December the Commissioner said that minibuses were longer than cars. A 13-seat Ford Transit is 15 ft long, while a Ford Granada is 15 ft 3 ins long. An Aston Martin Lagonda measures 17 ft 5 ins, while a Volkswagen Transporter is 14 ft 10 ins. I think that that makes the point.

Another claim in the unfortunate letter is that in a minibus people sit higher up. I am not sure that whoever drafted the letter could ever have driven a minibus or van. If someone is sitting higher up he has a better view and a better understanding of what is happening on the road in front of him, and is more likely to have a lower accident involvement rate for every kilometre driven.

Obviously if a minibus drives a shorter distance there may be inequality in the figures per year. The worst possible comparison is that in a year the minibus may have as many crashes as a car, but the figures per passenger kilometre are better for the minibus passenger.

I hesitate to say too much—because I think that it would bring moisture to people's eyes—about what would happen to the handicapped and under-privileged who did not transfer to a car but were left at home.

The House will forgive me for stuttering, but we have just seen an hon. Member who takes a keen interest in all European affairs, except this one apparently, leave the Chamber. I wonder what it is about the 10 million people whose journeys we are trying to protect that does not claim the interest of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

We have much to learn about working in the European Community. Some countries will share the view that behavioural contributions to road casualties are not necessarily within the competence of the European Community. I shall not dispute that for the moment. I will say that we must pick up on the best and share it.

In the case of mobility for those in wheelchairs, for example, Britain is the only country in Europe that has laid down a regulation that every new taxi in its capital should be able to accommodate a wheelchair. That has been done in London. That development was announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, and it came into effect in February. Britain is the only country where every public bus running from the airport to the main terminals takes two wheelchairs. That is integrated transport. We are also developing dial-a-rides and the taxi-car. We are not perfect, but we are adding to the provisions for those having special mobility needs. I hope that we shall find ways of working with the European Parliament so that there will be more understanding. What is good spreads, and at the same time the casualty rate falls.

To those in Europe who read this debate, I may say that we are proud that the number of people killed or seriously injured on British roads has reduced by 6 per cent. in the past 12 months, even though there has been an increase in the volume of traffic. We are proud that the same kind of reduction was seen the year before. We weep for the families of those who died on the M6 today. Fourteen people die on our roads every day and 300,000 are injured every year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has set a target for cutting road casualties—especially those killed or seriously injured—by one third by the year 2000.

Who thinks that the House and the Government would tolerate extra risks for those being driven in minibuses? Who could point to Britain and say that we are dragging our feet in cutting road casualties? Twenty fewer people a week die on our roads than two years ago, given the same volume of traffic. We are the people who ask to combine the maintenance and enhancement of safety with the maintenance and enhancement of mobility for those with special needs or those of a common interest group—whether it is the village cricket team or those using one of the 12,000 minibuses fitted with tail lifts. I pay tribute to John Ratcliffe, who has done so much in the Variety Club as well as being in the commercial business of installing tail lifts. I pay tribute also to people like Richard Stilgoe and Stirling Moss, who came to wave off the Mobility Alliance motorcade that went to Brussels. I was accused of lobbying for those groups. Rather, I was representing their interests. It is a shared concern with the European Parliament and with the Council of Ministers.

We shall make further progress. As my hon. Friends the Members for Esher and for Gravesham intimated, it is time that we left the Commissioner emeritus behind and moved forward with the Transport Committee of the European Parliament. We look forward to receiving its opinion. We hope that it will be possible to share the arguments with it, so that we may build on the provisions we have and allow their extension to others. We hope also to build alliances with the Council of Ministers to improve road safety, rather than take actions that will severely harm our people.

I wrote to Commissioner Clinton Davis two days before he wrote to me. I said that the aim of the United Kingdom Government is to maintain and improve road safety standards. I made the point that a minibus passenger is less likely to be involved in an accident than a car passenger. I made the point also that we want to work towards common standards in driving competence, which will facilitate the exchange of licences between countries. We mean that. We also want to recognise and provide for the needs of vulnerable groups—especially the elderly and the disabled.

My father's generation fought each other. Many of his generation—the war wounded—are now travelling around as passengers in minibuses. They may have been volunteer

drivers in their time, but they are passengers now. Let them be driven around throughout Europe by volunteer drivers of our generation. Let us maintain solidarity through the generations. Let us maintain the unity of safety and mobility. The whole of Europe will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham for raising the debate, and I hope that the message will go out throughout the Community that we must move forward together in safety and with solidarity, and remembering the vulnerable groups.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 10 March 1989*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Lawlessness

9.35 am

**Mr. Graham Riddick** (Colne Valley): I beg to move,

That this House notes that lawlessness in Great Britain has increased steadily over the last 30 years and that its causes are many and varied, not least among which is that there has been a lack of moral leadership from important opinion formers for young people, such as parents, teachers, broadcasters, church leaders and political leaders; believes that the general public needs to be more involved in the fight against crime; and urges the Government to continue to seek all effective means of combating lawlessness.

I am delighted to be here so early on a Friday morning. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Department, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) and the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) will be delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the debate, and we look forward to hearing from them. Clearly, I have chosen a very popular subject for debate, judging from the low turnout this morning, at least among the Opposition.

As politicians, we spend a great deal of time fending off complaints and grumbles from our constituents, and talking to them about current issues. One issue that is a constant source of concern throughout the country, and certainly among my constituents, is law and order. That is a bad start. The only Opposition Back-Bench Member, the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) has left. She is obviously impressed by the eloquence of my argument.

Elderly people in particular worry about the rise in crime. The number of offences recorded by the police in England and Wales rose from 500,000 in the 1950s to 1 million by the mid-1960s, 2 million by the mid-1970s and more than 3·5 million in 1985.

Having won first place in the ballot, I felt it would be particularly apt and useful to have a debate on the problems of lawlessness, examining some of its causes and considering some of the ways of tackling the problem. I do not pretend to have all the answers to those complex issues, but it is useful to examine them.

One thing that is common to much of the material I have read and the conversations I have held in preparing for the debate, which back up my feelings on the subject, is the decline of family stability over the past 20 or 30 years. The divorce rate has increased dramatically, as have the numbers of illegitimate children, and the intitutions of marriage and the family have been questioned more seriously than before. Yet during childhood, and in particular the difficult years of adolescence, young people need a loving discipline and a stable environment. If one does not experience discipline when one is young, how can one possibly be expected to exercise self-discipline when one grows up? Many would say that we are now reaping the whirlwind of the permissive sixties, when responsibility and discipline were thoroughly undermined. The number of teenagers aged 15 to 19 who have been found guilty of, or cautioned for, offences trebled between 1961 and 1987.

However, it is not only parents who show a lack of leadership. All too often one hears parents complaining about the lack of discipline in schools, which is not surprising when self-expression seems to be the fashion of the day, rather than learning the three Rs. There is no doubt that young people will follow the example of their seniors—in this case their teachers—which is why it is important that teachers demonstrate high standards of morality, discipline, general behaviour and—for heaven's sake—dress. Pupils in schools that pursue anti-racist policies would be better off if they were taught to treat everybody with respect and kindness, regardless of skin colour. It will be interesting to know the views of the Elton commission on that.

I am confident that the Education Reform Bill, which represents a far greater opportunity for parents to participate in the running of their children's schools, will help to instil further into children the values of tolerance, self-discipline and respect for others.

I cannot believe that the increasing violence shown on television has not played its part in increasing crime. Not only does British television show many programmes that mock authority and knock the establishment, but there is more violence and bad language on television today then ever before. The BBC itself accepts that violence can affect children psychologically and has issued guidelines stating that, because of their violent nature, certain programmes cannot be shown before 9 o'clock in the evening—the hour at which our children are supposedly tucked up in bed. However, I recently visited a primary school in my constituency and talked to a class of 9 and 10-year-olds. I asked them what time they got to bed, and the consensus was between 10 and 11 o'clock at night, which surprised me. Things have obviously changed since my day.

Back in 1986, *The Star* newspaper conducted a survey of television programmes shown before 9 o'clock in the evening in just one week. The findings were startling and horrifying and showed a catalogue of violence of 131 killings, 22 shootings, 10 bombings, 13 riots, four cases of arson, two knifings, 15 threats of violence, 18 fights, two kidnappings, and one hanging. I stress that that catalogue of violence was shown in just one week on television—before 9 o'clock.

The fact that advertisers spend millions of pounds advertising their products on television gives the lie to those who say that there is no connection between what people see on their television screens and how they behave. Even I have been shocked by some of the scenes of violence that I have seen on television, for example on "Miami Vice"—and I have never regarded myself as a shrinking or timid violet.

It is to the shame of the broadcasters and a clear demonstration of their lack of leadership that it has been necessary for the Government to set up the Broadcasting Standards Council. However, it is only fair to the BBC to point out that a new leadership might be emerging. Only last week the BBC announced a new code of practice and new guidelines on sex and violence on television. However, there is no way in which the broadcasters can ignore the influence of scenes of sex and violence or even that of bad language when portrayed on television—a mass medium of enormous influence and importance.

*[Mr. Graham Riddick]*

When are we going to get some real leadership from the Church? If Church leaders want to pronounce on all aspects of Government policy, we shall have to put up with that, but I should like to hear Church leaders speak about the need for individuals to exercise responsibility over the way in which they run their lives. When are we going to hear Archbishops of Canterbury and of York calling for a moral regeneration of the country and telling us what is right and what is wrong, and urging parents to exercise more responsibility and discipline over their children?

I was horrified to hear the Archbishop of York being interviewed on the BBC programme "On the Record" last December. The presenter, Jonathan Dimbleby, started the interview by pointing out that the charge of a failure of leadership had been made against the Church and asked Dr. Hapgood how he pleaded to that charge. I shall quote Dr. Hapgood's full reply to the question:

"it depends on in what direction people are expecting a moral lead to come. Now I personally believe that one of the great evils of our age is stereotyping, over-simplification, the rushing into decisions which have been ill thought out and therefore for me to give a clear moral lead may well be to say to people, pause, think, reflect that you may be wrong, realise that we are sinful human beings, that we are all fallible, so let us consider together, let us try to explore the truth together and try to reach consensus. Now that seems to be clear moral leading".

Well, to me it seems muddy and feeble, prevaricating and a clear demonstration of poor leadership. If the Archbishop of York cannot give a clear moral lead, and cannot tell us what is right and what is wrong, who can?

What about the leadership of politicians? Surely we in this place have a responsibility to show respect for the law, but even now some politicians—members of the Opposition—advocate breaking the law on the community charge by a policy of non-payment in Scotland. However much those hon. Members disagree with the policy, they have a duty to urge their supporters and people generally to support the law. The way to change the law is through the ballot box and that is what they should be seeking—they should not urge people to break the law.

Some Opposition Members were ambivalent about the law-breaking tactics of some of the miners during the miners' strike. Back in 1977 there was the appalling scene of a Labour Minister, now a senior member of the Social, Liberal and Democratic party, being arrested on the picket lines at Grunwick amid scenes of the most violent disorder imaginable.

The worst case of sabotage by supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was probably when some Greenham women cut hydraulic pipes on construction equipment, thus endangering the lives of site workers. After consulting the CND executive committee, the then chairman, now the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) refused to condemn such activity and was instructed merely to express

"surprise that anyone connected with the campaign could be involved in anything that could reasonably be so interpreted".

However, perhaps the most appalling example of a politician supporting law-breaking when it suits was when the former leader of Hackney council, now the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) was moved to say that the police had been given "a bloody good hiding" in the appalling Broadwater farm riot, which led to the unspeakable murder of PC Blakelock.

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be totally fair and deal with his hon. Friends' encouragement for breaking the law—but in different ways. I remind him of the comments made by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in relation to insider trading and also of the comments of several of his hon. Friends—perhaps even of himself—about urging people to trade on Sundays when everyone knows that it is against the law of the land.

**Mr. Riddick:** That intervention shows just how feeble is the Labour party response to these matters. This Government, through the Financial Services Act 1986 and other legislation, has done more to crack down on law breaking in the City than the Labour party has ever done. The Labour party has done nothing in that respect. The hon. Member for Huddersfield is on very thin ice with his argument.

**The Minister of State, Home Office** (Mr. John Patten): He has gone through the ice.

**Mr. Riddick:** As my hon. Friend the Minister has said, the hon. Member for Huddersfield has gone through the ice.

There are also examples of Labour-controlled local councils attempting to undermine the police in their fight against crime. For example, Lambeth council effectively banned the police from council offices. Many of my hon. Friends will remember the GLC video which was produced when that appalling organisation was still in being. I think that that video was entitled "Policing London." It undermined the police in every possible way. It portrayed them as anti-working class and racist, and it was distributed to many schools and youth clubs throughout London. I am sure it has played a significant part in undermining the respect of young people for the police.

**Mr. Matthew Carrington** (Fulham): Before my hon. Friend leaves that point, does he accept that it is very important for him to remind the House that the Inner London education authority seemed to condone some of its schools banning police coming in to talk to pupils on road safety? That must engender in the pupils an antagonistic attitude towards the police.

**Mr. Riddick:** My hon. Friend's intervention simply supports my points. It is disgraceful that some schools are adopting that approach, which is being encouraged by ILEA. Who is to say that we are not right to abolish that organisation?

**Mrs. Audrey Wise** (Preston): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the appalling insult which he has offered to the people of London when he called the Greater London council "an appalling organisation"? Has he forgotten that it was an elected local authority and the expression of the political will of London's people? The only way in which the Conservative party could deal with it was to misuse governmental power to abolish it.

**Mr. Riddick:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me the opportunity to correct myself. She is absolutely right. The GLC was not an appalling organisation: it became one when it was taken over by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). The way in which he completely undermined the authority and the good work

which the GLC had done in the past was appalling. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me the opportunity to clarify my earlier comments.

**Mrs. Wise:** The hon. Gentleman used a rather odd term which comes easily to his lips and to the lips of his hon. Friends, because they often engage in it. He talked about a takeover. The word that he was really looking for was "elected". My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was an elected member of the Greater London council, as were all his colleagues. The hon. Gentleman is still insulting the will of the people of London.

**Mr. Riddick:** It must be said that, had the people of London known that the far-Left policies of the hon. Member for Brent, East, as he is now, were to be implemented, I have no doubt that they would not have elected a Labour administration to power in the GLC. The hon. Member for Brent, East effected a takeover. There was a coup the very day after the elections were announced.

**Mr. Carrington:** As my hon. Friend has rightly said, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) effected a coup against Lord McIntosh, who fronted the whole election campaign for the GLC on a very moderate platform. Mr. McIntosh, as he was then, was the GLC member for Haringey, an area with which I was associated. During his election campaign, I remember that he flatly denied that there was any chance that the policies of the present hon. Member for Brent, East would be implemented by the GLC under his control. He was horrified and mortified by the takeover that occurred in the GLC and the putsch—there is no other word for it—by the hard Left against the moderates in the London Labour party.

**Mr. Riddick:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to expand on that whole unfortunate episode. I was simply looking down on what was happening from Yorkshire with some interest——

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): And astonishment.

**Mr. Riddick:** Yes, and with astonishment, as my hon. Friend says. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) had to suffer the results of that appalling putsch, as he described it.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that democracy is not simply about a specific election putting various people into office, that it involves a continuing process, part of which is the principle that there should be elections in future to hold politicians in check? The only restraint on the obsessive nature of the work of this Government is the worry about an election in future. That restraint was taken from the GLC and democracy was removed.

The points which Conservative Members have made were not put to the test. If my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and the leadership of the GLC were doing things which the people of London did not want, why were Londoners not given the opportunity to determine that in elections?

**Mr. Riddick:** I do not want to take lessons from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), one of the strongest advocates of that extreme loony Left council in Derbyshire, whose main purpose seems to be to ensure that the majorities of Conservative Members in Derbyshire increase dramatically at election times.

**Mr. David Amess** (Basildon): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is suspicious that the Labour Whips did not allocate a room to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)? Were they afraid that if he had a room, he might launch a coup similar to that which he achieved on the GLC?

**Mr. Riddick:** Yes, I suppose that there might well be some truth in that. If such a putsch had taken place, the leadership of the Labour party would certainly have been improved.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Riddick:** No, we have covered this matter pretty well. Perhaps we should move on.

Is it any wonder that young people should be so contemptuous of the law when they see national and local politicians, people who are supposed to be community leaders, openly flouting or advocating the flouting of the laws of the land? Leadership and the setting of good examples are crucial factors in any debate on lawlessness.

How can we try to arrest the rise in crime and bring about an improvement? First, we clearly need to reverse the trend of poor leadership to which I have referred. The opinion formers have a duty to show respect for the law, demonstrate self-restraint and self-discipline and get across to young people the message that they are responsible for their own actions and behaviour.

The time has come for the law to be changed to establish a direct link between parents and the crimes committed by juveniles. If youngsters will not behave themselves, we must make it clear that parents must see that they do.

The Criminal Justice Act 1982 allowed courts to order parents to pay fines imposed on their children. I believe that the time has now come to make parents directly and legally responsible for the behaviour of their children. I am encouraged by the fact that recent newspaper leaks have suggested that the Government are thinking along those lines. I would certainly urge Ministers to be brave in this respect and make a change in the law that could have a dramatic effect on juvenile crime.

I believe that the time has come for the Government to examine why 85 per cent. of men who have left their wives fail to keep up the maintenance payments for their children. That is a scandal, and a clear example of fathers being allowed to abdicate entirely their responsibilities towards the children who, after all, they helped to bring into the world. I believe that there is some evidence, although it is somewhat scant, that the parents—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene I shall be happy to give way, but I do not think he should make noises from a sedentary position.

**Mr. Sheerman:** What I said from a sedentary position, I shall say standing up. Values in public life do not only pertain to those politicians who are members of the Opposition. All politicians should set examples of good standards in public and in private life.

**Mr. Riddick:** I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. If, however, the hon. Gentleman is making some sort of

*[Mr. Riddick]*

accusation against an individual, he should tell the House which politician—on whatever side of the House—is failing to keep up his maintenance payments.

There is some evidence, although perhaps it is scant, that suggests that the Asian population actually commit fewer crimes than other sections of the population. That is interesting, because one of the factors which impresses me enormously about Asians—I have a number in my constituency—is their strong family ties, and the fact that church leaders are still very much respected by Asian families, including the children.

The fight against crime will never be successful unless the people of Britain are involved in that fight against crime and support the efforts made by the Government and by the police in that fight. I believe that the neighbourhood watch schemes play a marvellous part in helping to reduce crime not only because they are a significant deterrent to the burglar and the vandal, but because they get ordinary members of the public involved in the battle for law and order.

I cannot understand why the Government have been so negative towards the appearance of the Guardian Angels on the London Underground. I accept that such groups must be properly controlled and run, but again they represent an example of the ordinary citizen getting involved in policing his own community, which is surely to be welcomed. *The Sunday Times* last weekend carried an article showing the success of vigilante patrols in various parts of the country. In Gosforth and in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, citizens' patrols have cut the number of burglaries dramatically. The same has happened in Grimethorpe in South Yorkshire. Such groups should be encouraged and properly advised by the people, not regarded as a threat by them.

Why have we allowed the number of special constables to dwindle from 62,000 in 1952 to approximately 16,000 today? Just as the territorials do a splendid job in supplementing the armed forces, so, too, the special constables have a contribution to make in increasing the police presence on the streets. I realise, of course, that there are those within the Police Federation of England and Wales who are far from keen on an increase in the number of special constables. Then, of course, what trade union does not like to defend its own little cartel? We must get the ordinary citizen as involved as possible in law and order. We cannot expect the police to do everything. We all have a role to play in the fight against crime.

It is not just a question of involving the community in the battle against crime; it is vital that the population as a whole are broadly in agreement with the national policies being followed by the Government and being implemented by the police and the criminal justice system.

It is important that violent criminals and rapists have been seen to be receiving much stiffer sentences in recent years, because that is what the people want. That is why it is so unfortunate that the House continues to defy the majority of the British people over capital punishment.

I make no apology for raising this issue, because I do not believe that the House can defy for ever the will of the British people on this vital issue. My view is that, if we were to reintroduce capital punishment, it would change entirely the climate of the debate on law and order. It would send the clear unequivocal message to the criminal and to the British public that the country is deadly serious —quite literally—in its attempt to defeat the criminal.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** In fact, the original abolition of capital punishment would never have gone through had the then Labour Government not given that Bill extra time, in the same way that it gave extra time to the then Abortion Bill.

**Mr. Riddick:** My hon. Friend is in a better position to tell me exactly what happened in those days, because I was a very young lad when capital punishment was abolished. —*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members only have to look at my hon. Friend and myself to see that, while we are fairly close in age, she has the advantage over me.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Experience.

**Mr. Riddick:** My hon. Friend certainly has slightly more experience.

**Mr. Carrington** *rose*——

**Mr. Riddick:** My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham, who I must say has more grey hairs on his head, would like to intervene, and I shall be happy to give way to him on this vexed point.

**Mr. Carrington:** I am sure that my hon. Friend, on reflection, would like to rephrase his comments and say that our hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has greater experience in the House, as he was, unfortunately, trying to observe those events from outside the House at that time.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** From the cradle.

**Mr. Carrington:** I am sure that my hon. Friend was not in the cradle. I am sure that my hon. Friend was watching those events closely and was dying to participate. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster obviously had a closer and a more direct involvement in those events, and therefore has greater knowledge.

**Mr. Riddick:** All I can say is that I imagine that that is right. I must say that I cannot remember exactly where I stood on that vital issue at that time. I must look through my diaries to see whether I made a note of it.

The death penalty should not be imposed, obviously, on those who have committed murder as a crime of passion. I believe, however, that it would act as a deterrent to the robber, for example, who was intent on robbing a bank, and would affect his decision whether or not to commit that crime armed. For what it is worth, I believe that, unless there is a radical reduction in the amount of violent crime—I sincerely hope that that does happen—that the House will vote in favour of the re-introduction of capital punishment in the next 20 years.

**Mr. David Wilshire** (Spelthorne): Up to now, I and my hon. Friends have been delighted to encourage and support my hon. Friend, but we are reaching a point in his speech where I believe the argument has been developed that capital punishment is a deterrent. If that is the case, that is a powerful reason for those of us who have voted against it in the past reconsidering our positions. However, I am not aware of any statistical proof to show that, where capital punishment has been reintroduced, it has had a

deterrent effect. If my hon. Friend cannot produce evidence of that, I urge him not to develop that argument any further.

**Mr. Riddick:** As it happens, I was not about to develop that argument any further, anyway. I do not pretend that I have any statistical information that backs up my claim.

**Mr. Sheerman:** It is a gut feeling.

**Mr. Riddick:** As the hon. Gentleman says, it is a gut feeling. It is a gut feeling that is shared by the vast majority of people in this country. I wonder how long the House can continue to defy the will of the majority.

I believe that there is one other aspect of the criminal justice system which needs to be changed. The time has come to abolish the suspect's right of silence. If it is good enough, just enough and fair enough for Northern Ireland, it is good enough for mainland Britain too.

One class of person alone is helped by the right of silence—the guilty. Any policeman would tell the House that it is the guilty man who employs the right of silence to give him time to put an alibi together or to buy time. If an individual is innocent, he has nothing to fear from telling the police what he was up to or where he was at a given time. If someone has something to hide, the right of silence helps him to hide it. Juries should be allowed to draw their own conclusions from a suspect's refusal to talk.

So far, I have said little about the Government's record on law and order, but I intend to put right that omission. There is no doubt that there are more police now than there have ever been and that the morale of the police has been transformed from the appalling state of despair that existed when the Government took office in 1979. The carrying of weapons for criminal purposes has been made subject to tougher penalties. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 made it an offence to carry a knife in public without good reason.

I congratulate the Government on giving courts the power to confiscate from drug pushers the proceeds of their crimes. I am glad that, later this year, other criminals will also be subject to such confiscation. One of the most significant moves made by the Government has been to give magistrates the power to make convicted burglars pay compensation to their victims.

I congratulate the Government on the firm, and in some cases the far-reaching, measures that they have already taken to combat the rising tide of crime. The Government's record on providing the courts with increased powers, providing the police with increased resources and on heightening the profile of crime prevention is good. I wonder whether I have time to compare that record with the Labour Party's record—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, do."] I am grateful to my hon. Friends for their encouragement. I shall make that comparison brief, as I know that my hon. Friends wish to participate in this debate.

The House will note that, so far, I have ignored the positive record—if there is such a thing—of the Labour party on crime. I have ignored it because the Labour party has nothing to offer. In the early years of this decade, the Labour party said that the rising tide of crime was caused by unemployment. In the latter years it has said that crime has been caused by too much affluence—the yuppie syndrome. That is what the Labour party has had to say about the problems of crime in the 1980s.

**Mr. Sheerman:** The hon. Gentleman has made some allegations about Labour party policy and perhaps he could give us chapter and verse——

**Mr. John Patten:** What about the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)?

**Mr. Sheerman:** It is nice to get help from the Minister. On what statements does the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) base his allegations?

**Mr. Riddick:** Such statements have been made. The hon. Gentleman's boss, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has referred to the "loadsamoney economy". If my hon. Friend the Minister has anything further to say, I will happily give way.

**Mr. Patten:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for characteristically making the time to give way to me. My hon. Friend entered the House in 1987, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will recall the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition talking about the "loadsamoney society" and the bad effect that that has had on crime rates. I have been behind the Dispatch Box when the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has attributed the rising crime rate to unemployment and to affluence in the same breath. Surely that is schoolboy sociology of the worst kind.

**Mr. Riddick:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us the facts, chapter and verse.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Huddersfield cannot deny that his party has continually voted against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974. The Labour party voted against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which gave the police the tools with which to fight crime. It also voted against the Public Order Act 1986, which helped the police to stop disorder on the streets. When the Labour party left government in 1979, police morale and pay were at rock bottom and the number of police officers was 7,000 below establishment.

We all know that the Labour party has been playing around with the rather unfortunate suggestion that local councillors should have some part to play in the operational duties of the police. The 1985 Labour party conference voted to introduce democratic control of the police authorities by councillors to influence and direct local policing policy and practice. The 1987 Labour party mainfesto also said:

"Locally elected police authorities will be given clear statutory responsibility with the police to enforce the law"

That represents a dangerous and sinister threat to the rights and ability of the police to fight crime unhindered, particularly bearing in mind the examples that I have already given that prove how hostile some sections of the Labour party are to the police.

Crime can be prevented because many crimes are opportunist and are committed on the spur of the moment. Crime prevention is not only practical, but it helps to involve the individual in the fight against crime. Neighbourhood watch schemes are one visible part of crime prevention and improving the physical security and design of existing houses is another. We must actively encourage such developments in new housing. Motor manufacturers must be persuaded to improve the design of their vehicles so that they no longer represent easy pickings for the thief. I also believe that insurance companies should be encouraged to charge lower premiums to those

*[Mr. Riddick]*

householders who have taken steps to improve security in their homes and in their cars. Street lighting also has an important part to play in the prevention of crime.

I hope that the Chancellor will continue to use the tax system to promote low-alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks and that the police and the courts will come down heavily on those clubs and pubs that are badly managed and which encourage irresponsible drinking.

It is interesting to note that, in Brighton, publicans have introduced an identity card system for drinkers to screen out the under-aged drinker and the trouble-maker. There is no doubt that irresponsible drinking is the cause of much unnecessary and stupid crime. Before Christmas, I spent about six hours with the police in Huddersfield town centre. Practically every incident to which we were called was drink-related. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will continue the good work on which he has already embarked to maximise the opportunities to prevent crime from being committed in the first place.

A Government can do only so much, but this Government have done more than most to combat lawlessness. The thrust of Government policy on education, housing, trade unions, health and the economy has been to give more power back to individual citizens, who now have more responsibility for running their lives. I believe that, if one gives people more responsibility they act in a more responsible manner. The fact that there was a reduction in the number of crimes committed last year surely suggests that there are signs that that policy is beginning to work. At the end of the day, however, the key to controlling the problems of lawlessness lies with every one of us. It is we, along with those who influence us, who must develop and improve our standards of behaviour and our self-discipline.

10.18 am

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East) The speech by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) was disappointing because his constituency has a great tradition of radicalism, liberalism and radical Socialism. The hon. Gentleman expressed crude, Right-wing, hanging and flogging notions.

The motion calls for moral leadership but there is an omission from it. Broadcasters are mentioned and they tend to be in connection with radio and television, but we also need to mention the press. Questions about moral leadership should be directed to the Murdoch press. It should exercise moral responsibility and take on board the fact that there are different views and values in society that need to be reflected in the press but are not.

The approach of the hon. Member for Colne Valley was simple-minded. He expressed constitutional views for tiny tots and deplored any deviation from the norm to which he adheres. Anything that in any way puts its toe into the water of engaging in struggle on behalf of people in trade unions to act against the measures that he mentioned is beyond acceptance. In that context I want to talk about the poll tax, which is a constitutional monstrosity. It attacks the fundamental rights of British people and even the franchise.

We are told that at all times we have to stay entirely within the law and have to be careful because the courts have a tendency to alter the boundaries of the law and we must not do anything to obstruct them. That means that it is difficult to act effectively against a measure and to show one's opposition beyond formal methods of holding meetings and demonstrating.

Even the right to petition poll tax registrars against the operation of the tax has been turned on its head by a Scottish Minister who said that petitions against the poll tax will be used to register people on the poll tax registers. That is saying to people, "Do not sign petitions, because if you do they will get hold of you and put your name on the register." That is duress against people's formal petitioning rights. That is the most ancient right of ordinary people because it goes back to Anglo-Saxon times when there was no franchise. At that time people had the right to petition the Crown and later to petition Parliament without duress, but even those minimal rights are being offended by the Government.

Some people will begin to think of other methods to keep the pot on the boil and to awaken people to problems so that when the next election occurs the issue of the poll tax will be high on the agenda. People have been involved in a struggle against the tax, and actions which in other circumstances might not be justified can be defended and advocated on democratic and constitutional grounds. That is because the people involved in such actions are democrats who are trying to save democracy and the spirit in which it operates. Other people take the simple-minded attitude that somebody just has to have a mandate. They say, "We shall have a dictatorship for a few years and we need not consider what will happen in future because we will be able to fiddle and manipulate through advertising and get hold of people's minds and push ourselves into office again." That is not the spirit of democracy.

**Mr. Wilshire:** I was beginning to enjoy the hon. Gentleman's fairy story and trip into wonderland. Earlier in the debate he tried to deliver a lecture to Conservative Members about democracy in Greater London. What is the difference between complaining about one thing half an hour ago and now trying to tell us that when it suits him he does not like the democratically expressed will of the House backed by a general election?

**Mr. Barnes:** As I said in my intervention, democracy is not merely about having one election by which people are placed in power and can then continue in power. It is about the circumstances for the next election. In London, people were not allowed to decide their own future or to express their support or otherwise for the GLC. If that was democracy, we could say that the election of Adolf Hitler was democratic because he had as many votes as the Thatcher Government when he was elected. He altered the system by due process—admittedly with much force—to get an enabling Act to allow him to continue in power. We know that his system was not democracy because he did away with all the methods and avenues of democracy, and it was his will that operated. As a minimum, democracy must involve future elections. The poll tax seeks to fiddle with the franchise. The argument that there is a nice system that we should stick with and that we should never put a toe into any kind of illegality does not have the strength and moral force that it used to have.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** The hon. Gentleman spoke about getting hold of people's minds. Is he aware of the absolute filth put about in Manchester public libraries

a day or two ago by the Manchester Gay Centre which advertised a meeting by a thing called Nestwork, an organisation for the self-insemination of women?

**Mr. Barnes:** I do not know about the matter to which the hon. Lady refers, and I would require a great deal of information about it because I have no respect for her views upon that issue. During debate on clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, she said that she supported acts of lawlessness in terms of the burning down of a place run by gays in London. The hon. Lady has never apologised for that.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** I never said that, and I made that clear to the Speaker. I said that we should not tolerate evil and that I regarded sodomy as being evil. I still do.

**Mr. Barnes:** We should not tolerate the evil of a Government who seek to manipulate the political system and to destroy the normal and traditional democratic rights that have been fought for and squeezed out of previous Governments, mainly through the organisation of the working class and movements such as Chartism in the 19th century, trade unionism and the suffragettes, who fought for an extension of the franchise. We represent the political party which emerged from that struggle and which was in its vanguard. Conservative Members belong to a party which at that time tried to batten down the hatches and only gradually gave way to democratic demands. That is occurring in Poland at the moment, where Solidarity has accepted a temporary solution which is rather like the temporary solutions of 1832, 1867 and 1884 which were encapsulated in Reform Acts. Those were democratic advances that were pushed from the bottom to allow a democratic say to ordinary people. That democratic right is now under attack.

**Mr. Wilshire:** The hon. Gentleman cannot be allowed to get away with this sort of thing. In response to challenges from Conservative Members, he has said that democracy is whatever he says it is, and that elections are fine when he approves of the results. He has made repeated allegations about fiddling the franchise but has not offered one shred of evidence or made one attempt to justify his statements because he knows there is no justification for them.

**Mr. Barnes:** If I am allowed to develop my theme without being interrupted, right hon. and hon. Members will hear my arguments behind the ten-minute Bill I shall be introducing, the Re-enfrachisement of the People Bill.

The only clear evidence we have of franchise figures was given in a parliamentary answer on the size of the electorate in Scotland and other developments. Since the last election, scotland's registered electorate has fallen by 1·5 per cent. In Glasgow, the loss is nearly 5 per cent., with about 14,000 people missing from the electoral register since last year. I appreciate that changes of a demographic nature have some effect, but it is interesting to note that Scotland's electorate increased through all the early years of the current Government until 1987. I acknowledge that there is a falling birth rate and an aging population, so that those whose names leave the register through death are not replaced by younger electors. But for Glasgow, despite population and housing changes, to lose 20,000 of its population—because to the figure of 14,000 existing electors one must add their children—is highly problematic.

Despite the strong arguments that are to be made for not selling one's birthright to the franchise, if people cannot pay the poll tax, they will come to understand that the way to evade it is to avoid not only registering for it but the next obstacle, which is to have one's name recorded on the electoral register. Some people will still be traced, because draconian powers in the legislation allow the registrar to attack all manner of civil liberties. Theoretically, it is possible that people recorded on the poll tax register will also find themselves reinstated on the electoral register at a later stage. Nevertheless, I encourage everyone to register for elections, as well as the development of facilities and resources that will enable electoral registration officers to do their jobs properly and ensure the maximum possible franchise. The poll tax legislation tells against that happening.

Initial figures for Scotland illustrate what is likely to happen. I have been unable to obtain any figures yet for England and Wales, because my inquiries in the Library show that those electoral figures have not yet been published. However, I know from speaking to other right hon. and hon. Members that they are seriously worried about the size of the electorate in areas such as Liverpool. I hope that I shall be able to produce further information on that aspect when I introduce my ten-minute Bill.

It is clear that the franchise is under threat because of the Government's attempt to perpetuate their term of office. Democracy is about the spirit in which the electoral system operates, not just about a technical electorate arrangement, however essential that mechanism may be. That spirit of democracy embraces civil liberties and the rights of the individual. We are not supposed to elect dictatorships for five-year periods. Ours is supposed to be a pluralist democracy that sustains different interests and different power sources. Although the Executive have the right to govern, they must also take into account other pressures. Even Hobbes, in "The Leviathan", written in the 17th century, emphasised that, to avoid anarchy, the monarchy would be wise to listen to the interests of others, otherwise there could be rebellion. He felt that, although citizens did not have the right to rebel, rebellion was likely to occur if a Government, however dictatorial, failed to be sensitive to and to acknowledge other views and values in society.

**Mr. Kenneth Hind** (Lancashire, West): The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind that the Government's community charge proposals were clearly spelt out in the last general election. Throughout the country—and in Derbyshire very markedly—the electorate voted for the return of a Conservative Government, knowing full well that they would introduce the community charge. We encourage the hon. Gentleman's efforts to ensure that everyone registers for the franchise because there is no wish on these Benches to denigrate the franchise. Nor do we need measures to help perpetuate a Conservative Government, because the public are persuaded by our arguments. I am sure that they will re-elect us again.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean):** Order. This is a wide-ranging debate on lawlessness, but I should like to hear that word mentioned a little more often.

**Mr. John Patten:** The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) is advocating law breaking.

**Mr. Barnes:** I adopt the position that I do in respect of the poll tax because of the Government's attack on democracy and constitutional provisions. In those circumstances, action might be justified that would be described by the Government as being lawlessness.

**Mr. Hind:** What kind of action?

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Action by the IRA?

**Mr. Barnes:** I refer to the mobilisation of forces so that people can defend their democratic rights. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) asked me what kind of action could be taken. The legislation is draconian, making vast attacks on civil liberties, removing local government authority, and placing control in the hands of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who in this respect will act as a municipal Mussolini in order to run the whole system. The public may advocate, as they do in Scotland, mass non-payment, non-implementation campaigns, but to me that is not a feasible course of action. Although I understand the depth of feeling, it is unlikely that such a line can be held. When it is broken, many people who have not paid their poll tax will find themselves in considerable debt. Their earnings can be attached—and if they receive benefits, even those can be attached.

Many poor people in Scotland rely on credit to pay for their clothing and furniture. If their earnings or benefits are attached, they are likely to lose credit facilities, and their future livelihoods will be in jeopardy. I do not gaily seek widespread support for non-payment among people who could find themselves in such circumstances, however hideous it may be for them to pay the poll tax. However, selective non-payment by people who wish to give a political lead, for example—I shall not pay the poll tax and will have an attachment of earnings levelled against me—is needed. It will soon be needed in Scotland, whereas England and Wales still have one year before the full force of the law applies.

I refer only to non-violent acts of civil disobedience, which are not to be likened to action of the type taken by the IRA. I speak of an entirely different sphere of activity—legitimate civil disobedience, behind which are principles that should be understood by anyone who has read world history and of the actions of people such as Gandhi who fought against oppressive systems. Civil disobedience need not even be the immediate course of action. Legitimate avenues can be explored, such as demonstration and petitioning—if that is allowed. The approaching county council elections will also provide an oppportunity for people to argue their case, adding to the Government's growing unpopularity.

After a while those who involve themselves in campaigns against the poll tax in England and Wales may begin to ask, "What do we do now? The poll tax is still there; should we just do more of the same?", and the campaign will begin to decline. A lead will need to be taken—as principled a lead as possible. Groups will need to be set up to take part in selective non-payment. Many committees of 100, such as have been established in Scotland, could be spread across England and Wales. The mutual respect, despite differences of attitudes and approach, that exists among CND's committees of 100 is what is needed here.

This highly centralised system will attack civil liberties and smash local government, forcing it to act on the whim of central Government. It even seeks to fiddle local election results. A recent Conservative party political broadcast presented the Tories' views on the poll tax rather well for propaganda purposes. It showed someone receiving his poll tax demand, screwing it up and throwing it into the waste paper basket. He knew what to do: vote Conservative.

The measure is intended to manipulate the electoral system. It will alter not only the number of people on the franchise but the number who will vote. People will be pushed into a Hobson's choice. Either the Labour council cuts services to survive, hurting its people in the process, or it hurts them with a high poll tax because it is they who must pay to provide their own services. When the people become depressed because they cannot pay, in come the Conservatives and poll tax organisations like the ratepayers' organisations of the past.

In a democracy Governments are entitled to take action that attracts votes. They are not entitled to fiddle the system to further their own political interests.

**Mr. John Patten:** May I ask the hon. Gentleman two short questions? First, will he confirm that he is advocating that certain groups, to make their protest known, should not pay the community charge? Secondly, what action will the hon. Gentleman be taking? Will he not pay the charge?

**Mr. Barnes:** I shall advocate selective non-payment as part of a general campaign of civil disobedience, and I shall be involved in that action. The poll tax legislation provides in cases of non-payment for attachment of earnings, sending in the bailiffs or imprisonment. In my case it would be attachment of earnings, because I am fortunate enough to have reasonable earnings that can be easily attached. [HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Member will break the law."] I will break the law, and will gladly suffer the consequences, as a legitimate means of protest against an unjust measure. That is an entirely respectable and justifiable position. The hon. Member for Colne Valley represents a seat once occupied by men such as Victor Grayson, who expressed views entirely in line with mine. The hon. Gentleman should be proud to follow such men rather than presenting us with such nonsense as today's motion.

**Mr. Hind:** If the hon. Gentleman's party were in power and introduced a tax that I, as a Conservative Member, did not like, what would he think if I deliberately refused to pay it?

**Mr. Barnes:** If the tax fiddled the franchise, attacked civil liberties, centralised Government power and was so unfair as to constitute an abuse of the norms of any Western democratic system, the hon. Gentleman would be justified in taking such action; but he would have to stand up in Parliament and argue his case, as I am doing.

I agree that if someone decides to buck the system in a small way—and I am talking about doing it in quite a small way—the onus will be on him, especially if he is a parliamentarian, to prove his case. It will not be a matter of mathematical proof; the case will not be so easy to establish. Balanced argument will be necessary. I am putting forward a balanced argument, and I hope that if

our circumstances were reversed the hon. Member for Colne Valley would do the same, in defence of parliamentary democracy.

**Mr. James Cran (Beverley):** Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that he is giving youngsters outside the House an appalling example? They will look to him and then decide that if a Member of Parliament can say in the House that he will break the law, they can do the same. Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that his remarks will lead to anarchy and the destruction of democracy, which is exactly what he is pontificating about today?

**Mr. Barnes:** I do not take such action lightly: I think carefully about the likely consequences. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about young people, he should read the poll tax legislation more carefully. Many young people will leave their homes because they have become an extra tax burden. Finding that they cannot afford to pay the charges imposed by this and other measures forced on them by the present Government, they will get on their bikes—if they happen to have them—and move from place to place, trying to survive in a culture of lawlessness. The Government are forcing such action on them. They should take responsibility for what they are doing.

I am by no means an anarchist. I am arguing for the norms and traditions of democratic pluralism for which people have struggled and fought, sometimes involving themselves in civil disobedience. Presumably hon. Members believe that in the 19th century people were justified in taking action to extend the franchise. The argument seems to be that, once a democratic pluralist system is in place, people should stick to it because it can be adjusted to accommodate their wishes.

Some Conservative Members may not understand the nature of a massive campaign to fiddle the system. Perhaps only the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment understand it fully. Those with political nous realise that the way to achieve objectives—such as the sinking of the Belgrano—is not through a democratic system but by using any method that is to hand. Those who defend democracy but who use such crude methods as this dangerous poll tax to further their interests should be condemned. The poll tax is unfair. It is a tax on voting. It merits the types of response to which I have referred.

An attack has been made on the Derbyshire county council. The members of the Derbyshire county council have been described as loonies.

**Mr. Hind:** They are.

**Mr. Barnes:** They are perfectly respectable people. What they are doing needs to be considered properly and fully. Crude, misleading arguments should not be used against them. They are all being lumped together and described as people who are not politically responsible. If one goes to a meeting of the Derbyshire county council, one finds that its leadership—David Bookbinder, Geoff Lennox and others, including my agent, Harry Seddons, who is a county councillor—wipe the floor with the Conservative opposition in debates. The leader of the Conservatives on the council—Mr. Marshall—then grunts a few things which later appear in local newspapers as headlines. There is a manipulation of the media in that area that puts Rupert Murdoch to shame.

**Mr. Hind:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. My hon. Friends and I have come here to debate lawlessness, not to listen to a party political broadcast on behalf of the Derbyshire Labour party. I think that we are straying away from the subject of the motion on the Order Paper.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** As the debate continues, I am beginning to realise that lawlessness is a very wide subject. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) is in fact addressing himself to the motion before the House.

**Mr. Barnes:** The Derbyshire county council is not involved in acts of lawlessness. Its members are trying to act within the framework of the law, to be as responsible as possible and to provide a massive range of services for the county. The Derbyshire county council's education record is one of the proudest. It heads the shire counties in terms of its teacher-pupil ratio. It is top in special education and in secondary education. Its primary education is a hair's breadth behind that in Nottinghamshire—another Labour-controlled council. It can be very proud of its education record.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I defended the hon. Gentleman a moment ago, but he is now beginning to stray outside the terms of the motion.

**Mr. Barnes:** I was trying to point out that the criticisms levelled at the Derbyshire county council are irrelevant to the discussion. I have tried to correct the record and to show that the Derbyshire county council is a fine authority that keeps within the constraints that the Government have placed upon it. Those constraints will be made even worse by the poll tax.

It has been argued that the Labour party's policy on the prevention of terrorism in Northern Ireland and other issues is immoral and has encouraged lawlessness. We need to tackle the unemployment, the homelessness and the difficulties encountered by the Health Service in Northern Ireland if we are to overcome lawlessness and disruption. Working class people in Protestant and Catholic areas have a common interest in overcoming the problems, but they are solidly divided against each other on sectarian grounds.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive can be proud of the new homes that it has provided, but as soon as they are erected the gable ends are covered with sectarian paintings. As soon as a struggle takes place, barriers are put up. Northern Ireland politicians demand the erection of barriers as soon as trouble breaks out between the Catholic end of a street and the Protestant end of a street, instead of trying to get the people together to find out whether they could co-operate with one another.

Working people in Northern Ireland have more interests in common, because of the increasing plight in which they are being placed by the Government, than issues that divide them. Government assistance to build up the economic and social structure of Northern Ireland would far more effectively deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland than the present policies. The people of Northern Ireland need to be given some hope that their problems can be solved.

If I advocate civil disobedience because of the poll tax, it is not right that I should then be linked with people who advocate other forms of lawlessness and with those who use techniques that are abhorrent in any type of society and that are entirely counter-productive. I have talked

*[Mr. Barnes]*

about peaceful civil disobedience and about people being willing to face up to the consequences of their actions. I shall follow that course as strongly as I can. Some of us would be willing to be imprisoned rather than be faced with attachment of earnings. I feel so strongly about the poll tax that I believe that stronger measures ought to be taken against me. However, the Government will not allow such people to be imprisoned. They realise that that would result in a martyrs' charter. We are entitled to use the law when we are struggling against the poll tax. Utter disrespect for the law is not involved; the aim is to advance democracy.

The pluralist nature of democracy that existed before the Government came to power was limited and restricted. I do not advocate its mere continuance. I am critical of many of the procedures in the House. These buildings should be turned into a museum. Parliamentary buildings should be erected elsewhere. A modern legislative chamber should be built in the middle of the country to which people could gain easy access. Then they could make full use of it. I should like more people to be involved in our democratic procedures, which would result in an extension of worker control and democracy.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will return to the subject of the motion.

**Mr. Barnes:** My point is that, although our democratic rights are imperfect, they should be held on to, re-established, nurtured and developed. As a Democratic Socialist, I want our democracy to be extended.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the House that many hon. Members wish to speak in this important debate and that time is moving on fast.

10.59 am

**Mr. David Wilshire** (Spelthorne): I find myself in an incredibly difficult position, following what I consider to be one of the most outrageous and dreadful speeches that I have ever had to listen to. If I were to give vent to what I feel privately, I fear that I might bring myself and the House into disrepute. It stirred in me all my deep beliefs, why I wanted to come to the House in the first place and defend what it stands for, and why I am absolutely determined, as are virtually all hon. Members of whatever political persuasion, to hand on to my son and our children that democratic heritage which until now has flourished. In those circumstances I shall leave until later some detailed observations. I may then be somewhat calmer, more rational and more able to put a clear argument to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes).

When I asked whether it would be possible for me to speak in the debate I made it clear that, unfortunately, I would not be able to stay for the end and I apologise for that. I have a lunchtime engagement and setting the example of reliability is relevant to what I want to say.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on a stimulating introduction to the debate and a comprehensive review of matters that worry the overwhelming majority of British people and on giving most of us a chance to address these issues rather than to ramble around revolutionary Left-wing politics.

Normally debates on lawlessness do not take the form that we have just heard. They tend to start from the premise that we are living through an epidemic of lawlessness, and statistics can be produced to suggest that that is the case. They then tend to focus on the shortcomings of the young which leads sooner or later —usually sooner—to calls for stiffer punishments, better deterrents and more police. I support those calls in principle, but, as I had to make clear in an intervention in my hon. Friend's speech, while we can support the principle of those calls, there is a limit beyond which I, at least, cannot go.

That sort of approach strikes a chord with the electorate. It is high profile on action. It describes the world in which we live, but simply to opt for those high profile, instant responses does not explain in detail why the troubles happened in the first place. If I dare say so, that approach has not produced as much improvement as we should have liked.

My purpose in speaking, therefore, is not to add to the catalogue of woe or to make further calls for instant action, but to suggest where we might look for the real explanations and the lasting cure to the problem of lawlessness. The weakness in the familiar approach of instant action is that it describes the symptoms of lawlessness rather than the disease itself. It urges action to suppress those symptoms rather than suggesting how we may achieve a lasting cure. To suppress the symptoms is no bad thing, which is why I support stiffer punishments, more deterrents and more police, but those actions are all essentially reactive and short term. We must look at how we might plan for the long-term future and ensure that the disease itself is tackled.

Clearly, lawlessness has an infinite number of forms and my hon. Friend surveyed the scene well. In a short debate individual speeches can focus on only one aspect of lawlessness, and, as I feel most strongly about lawlessness among the young, I shall concentrate on that.

We are all too familiar with many of the symptoms: truancy from school, vandalism, the antics of the lager louts and attacks on passers-by. Huge numbers of people are desperately busy addressing each of those symptoms. The Government, charities and many others are investing huge sums in trying to tackle them. Progress, however, is slow and certainly does not appear to be getting much faster.

What is it that ultimately causes lawlessness among the young? I do not accept any of the fashionable theories. I am not impressed by the argument that it is deprivation or by the argument that it is affluence. It is too simple to blame Churches or materialism, or to take that sort of approach. All of us as adults are to blame—each and every one of us and society at large. If I am right, it means that the cure lies with us rather than with the young. Carl Jung in "Psychological Reflections" puts it better than I can when he says:

> "If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves."

There are some things that we must change in ourselves if we are to cure lawlessness in the young. The first is the role models that we provide for them. The second is the attitudes to authority that we encourage among ourselves

and that we have heard encouraged today. The third is the anti-social behaviour that we occasionally condone. I shall suggest how we should respond to each.

Should not many of the role models that we provide for the young give rise to great anxiety? The most powerful model is undoubtedly the parent, and my hon. Friend touched on that. I wish I knew whether family life is not what it was. That is often asserted, but sometimes I suspect that our historic image is based more on a misunderstanding of the life of a privileged minority and that if it existed, it was an untypical, brief period in our history. Yet there are statistics to show that family life is changing, even if it is not getting worse.

All too often we see latch-key children going home to empty houses, and statistics suggest that more children grow up in broken homes. Whatever we make of the statistics, the children involved face an uphill struggle. To be left alone and not to grow up in a natural family unit takes its toll. It is high time that we started to question the wisdom of making it ever easier and more fashionable for mothers to leave their children all day. We should question whether the time has come to reverse the trends of the divorce statistics and the break-up of people living together. Until we tackle those problems, the role model of the family will not lead to a reduction in lawlessness.

Parents are not the only role models that we should think about. Society's fictional heroes and community leaders have an enormously powerful influence on young people. We need look no further than Iran or the programmes any night on television for examples of that. As my hon. Friend touched on teachers as role models, I can leave them to one side.

We parade fictional heroes before the young and my hon. Friend produced appalling statistics from one night's viewing of television. Until he said that they came from one night, I thought that he was going to say that they came from one episode of "EastEnders". The facts are there for all to see. The fictional hero that we glorify is violent, often a criminal and generally uncaring of those around him. Therefore, should we be surprised when children seek to follow that example?

All too often today's community leaders present one of two role models. They are aggressive, assertive and demanding; they set the example that if we throw our weight about we shall get what we want. At the other extreme, there are community leaders who are apologists for virtually everything and excuse even the worst behaviour. They deride the values and standards of today's society. Is it any wonder that, confronted with those role models in their community leaders, young people are only too willing to trample on, abuse and decry the values of those with whom they live?

How do we tackle the problem? We must take a number of practical steps. First, we in this House should tackle, once and for all, television and cinema violence in a firmer way. It is time that we, as leaders, reasserted the importance of holding for ourselves clear values and standards for other people to see.

Secondly, we must change attitudes to authority and the way in which we encourage others to mock the examples that we set them. Lawlessness will not improve while we glorify sports personalities who bend the rules or defy the referee. It will not improve while we adults tolerate schools that deny the need for discipline. Yesterday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph* carried the headline:

"'Clip round the ear' governor is sacked."

The article continued:

"A school governor was sacked yesterday for suggesting that naughty children deserve a clip round the ear. Mr. Bob Wheeler, retired schoolmaster and SLD councillor, made his remark at a meeting of the governors of Knowsley junior school, Springhead, Oldham, Lancs. . . .

Mr. Wheeler, who retired from secondary school teaching two years ago, was unavailable for comment yesterday. But he had earlier defended his views, saying: 'Clearly, one does not bash or clobber a child round the head.

But I am very much a firm believer in the chastisement of a child.'

He said his remarks followed complaints of pupils using bad language to school dinner ladies.

'I was not advocating corporal punishment, or the use of the cane, strap or slipper.

I was only suggesting the sort of reaction a child could expect if he or she stepped out of line with a parent. Some deterrent must be seen to be available'."

That is merely one example of the hundreds that all of us could cite about the position that we have allowed to develop in our schools.

Another aspect of our attitude to authority is the way in which we allow and encourage the abuse of police and the undermining of what they stand for. That was summed up by an officer who recently said to me that, all too often, he finds that he is the first person to say no to a teenager, and to mean it. If that is so, it is hardly surprising that it leads to confrontation. How often do adults condone what a young person does and side with him or her against the police, who are trying to uphold authority on our behalf? Until we tackle that attitude, we shall not make progress.

Thirdly, adult society must face up to the fact that for too long it has too regularly shown a willingness to excuse anti-social behaviour, which is carried out in the name of either achieving change or responding to cultural differences in society. My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley touched on the trade union problems. I still think that, because of the period in which they took place, they provide the best example of what can happen if a society allows such behaviour to develop.

When we were undergoing trade union disputes—as it seemed, every day—we were witnessing the use of lawlessness to achieve change. If we preach that unity equals strength, and, the more united we are and the more muscle we have, the more we can achieve, it is not surprising if the young follow our lead. If we argue that solidarity is all about manning picket lines, demonstrations, riots and seeing off the police, should we really be surprised if the young people who watch these things on television night after night decide that it will be a good idea to follow that example?

We must accept that if any hon. Member or anyone else wants change, they must seek it within the law. I was going to cite another example from the clause 28 debate, in which I was involved and which I feel strongly about. Instead, I shall take the example of seeking revolutionary change, about which we have heard this morning from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, and describe where such action will lead. He used words such as "smash", "fight", and "struggle". That is the language and image of violence and when children hear it they will think that it would be good to take such action if they want change. The hon. Gentleman's argument was founded on nonsense—the idea that the franchise was under threat. Despite my requests for examples, he could not produce one shred of evidence.

We should have heard it said that we are talking about freedom of choice and of the individual—freedom to vote

*[Mr. David Wilshire]*

and to register to vote must be equalled by the freedom not to vote and not to register. There is no evidence to suggest that people have been refused admission to the electoral register or have been forcibly taken off, so that argument collapses.

What worried me most in the context of lawlessness——

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** The hon. Gentleman used the argument that everyone should have the right to put his or her name on the franchise or not to do so. The current legal position is that we are obliged to register and if we do not, we could be fined. As an advocate of pure law and order, the hon. Gentleman should recognise that.

**Mr. Wilshire:** The hon. Gentleman's intervention takes my argument even further. There is no attack on our freedom to register or vote, and he made that case admirably. What concerns me most about lawlessness is the sort of language and issues that we heard suggested as ways of advancing the society in which the hon. Gentleman believes. The phase "non-violent civil disobedience" trips off the tongue rather well and sounds respectable, but there is a simple word for it in the dictionary—"lawlessness". The rule of law is absolutely fundamental to a civilised society, because the only alternative to it is the rule of the jungle.

We have heard today about the abandonment of the principles that matter—civilised standards, courts and judges—and about the undermining of the police and everything for which they stand. We heard a call for lawlessness and selfishness, and the argument that non-payment is a means of proving something. It is not. Non-payment is a means of making someone else pay for our services, which is intolerable in a civilised society.

In the hon. Gentleman's party-political propaganda we also heard that to vote Labour in Derbyshire was to vote for a lawless Derbyshire, and to vote to be trampled on by those who no longer respect the rule of law in this country. What the hon. Gentleman said was a disgrace and when he comes to write his autobiography he may find that, singlehandedly this morning, he has achieved a great deal more than he knows to ensure a fourth term for the Conservatives.

I was also concerned about excusing anti-social behaviour, which leads to increases in lawlessness, in the name of multi-cultural harmony. My experience in local government in the west of England involved me in the St. Paul's riots, when I saw at first hand that riots are all too often triggered by demands from minorities for exemption from the laws of the majority; when the majority tries to enforce the rule of law on a minority, riots break out. It is often the young people in the community who take the lead in such riots. The elderly people stoke up the flames and then encourage lawlessness in the young.

The episode of "The Satanic Verses" is another case in point. Many crucial international issues have been raised by it, but one or two connected issues have not yet been debated. Where cultural ghettos exist, there follow demands, sometimes with menaces, for special treatment for those ghettos. The burning of books has awful echoes of the burning of people—and in the protests that follow, young people of these communities are frequently in the vanguard.

**Mr. Sheerman:** I am a little concerned about the expression "cultural ghetto". Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the cultural entities in this country do not have the right to pursue their own religions and culture within the rule of law? Like him, I condemn book burning and censorship, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not going on to say that these cultural entities have no right to a viable existence in this country.

**Mr. Wilshire:** History bears out the fact that the ghetto mentality leads—some might say for justifiable reasons —to violence and lawlessness.

**Mr. Sheerman:** The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. Is he suggesting that a group of people with a distinct character, tradition and religion encourages violence in the host community by its very existence? This sounds very dangerous. Will the hon. Gentleman clarify exactly what he means?

**Mr. Wilshire:** The hon. Gentleman and I have been picking our words carefully. I have not been saying what the hon. Gentleman fears I might have been saying. I say that a cultural ghetto can all too readily lead to requests and demands for special treatment and exemption from the laws of the country. If that is allowed to continue, I draw from it the lesson that we must tell people who come here of their own free will—we are pleased to have them —that the law-abiding future lies not in multicultural separation but in cultural integration. Those who come here with every right to their beliefs, cultures and languages must accept the lesson of history, which is that when people move to an alien culture they must adapt. The history books are littered with examples of the lawlessness and violence that ensue if they do not—

**Mr. Sheerman:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene again. I also thank him for his words of clarification.

There has been immigration to this country for the past 20 or 30 years, and the people who have come from the Indian sub-continent and the West Indies have distinguished themselves by their willingness to adapt. I praise the members of those communities who have adapted, and the vast majority of them who live within the law. Ethnic and cultural minorities have every right to pursue their religions and cultural differences as long as they obey the law, and that is what ethnic minorities have done in this country for hundreds of years.

**Mr. Wilshire:** The hon. Gentleman makes my case for me. When communities have adapted, changed and integrated, peaceful co-existence has resulted. The trouble comes when people seek separation.

The challenges that I have discussed must be faced up to if we are to find a lasting cure for lawlessness. These challenges are daunting, inherently controversial and unavoidably long term. Reliance—dare I say it?—on the short sharp shock highlights the wrong target. Adults, not the young, are to blame—if we are seeking to apportion blame. All of us in adult society set the examples for young people to follow. The rising tide of lawlessness will be turned only when we all commit ourselves to self-discipline and the rule of law. Only then can we hope successfully to impose discipline on the young and bring them up to a better world.

11.25 am

**Ms. Mildred Gordon** (Bow and Poplar): The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) has raised an important subject for debate today. When most people think about lawlessness, they are concerned about the lawlessness that makes women feel unsafe to go about after dark and that makes them stay at home from early in the day during the winter. They think of the lawlessness that makes them worried when they go on holiday that they will find their homes broken into when they return. They think of the violence of drunken people hanging around outside their estates at weekends. These things are important to the quality of everyday life. I shall seek to show that it is Government policies that are causing the increase in this sort of lawlessness.

Before doing so, I must point out the large scale lawlessness about which the average person does not think and often does not know. It was only earlier this week in a debate in the House that I realised the involvement of the Mafia in massive fraud in the EEC. Most people do not know about the carousel of lorry-loads of food that are taken from one country to another to obtain grants from the EEC until the food reaches a state of putrefaction. This country loses billions of pounds because of the multi-millionaire firms which sail close to the law with the help of legal advisers. They keep within the letter of the law, but not within its spirit. The ordinary working person has tax deducted from his wages, but these huge conglomerates get away with paying no tax to the country by registering abroad and other devious devices.

The blame for everyday lawlessness is often not put on its originators. The press conspire in this. There has been much talk about lawlessness on the football terraces. After the Heysel stadium incident, it was left to the Belgian press to reveal the role of the National Front; only then did our papers mention it—and they soon stopped doing so. We read of crowds of Germans—the Nazi salute is banned in Germany—standing in amazement while English football fans raised their arms in Nazi salutes in small German towns.

Incitement to racial hatred on the football terraces has been a major cause of violence. The Race Relations Act 1976 should be enforced rigidly. We need a new Act that will deal more severely with people who perpetrate incitement to racial hatred. That would go a long way to clearing up the problems on the football terraces. The Government's proposals for identity cards are not the answer. This is a political problem to which a political solution is needed to tackle the people who encourage this form of violence.

The motion states that the causes of the increase of lawlessness are many and varied, and it seeks to blame teachers, church leaders and politicians. It might well blame politicians because it was the Prime Minister who said that society does not exist, and this Government spread the idea that everyone must stand on their own feet, and that everyone must look after himself and look out for himself. That is surely a continuation of the "I'm all right, Jack" attitude of the Macmillan Government that society does not exist and the weakest go to the wall. It is regarded almost as a crime to be unfortunate and unsuccessful. The punishment for being unfortunate, unsuccessful, disabled, having a large number of children or losing the race for jobs is to live in abject misery.

Government policy has caused the increase in lawlessness. The cuts to local authorities have led to a deterioration in the provision of street lighting. I spoke in the debate on the safety of women on London Transport and mentioned that the cuts in the number of guards in the Underground system and the lack of frequency of bus services have led to increased attacks upon women. What I said in that debate holds true throughout the country. Lawlessness is made easier when the money for services which improve the environment and social conditions is cut.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) spoke about latch-key children. I taught children for many years and I know how awful it is for them to come home to an empty house. Children and mothers do not want that. The Government should be paying for carers to enable men and women to care for the old, the disabled and children in peace without worrying about every penny or being driven to the breadline, yet the Government have frozen child benefit, the only money that goes directly to mothers. They have introduced new social security provisions whereby women seeking unemployment benefit have to fill in a questionnaire to prove that they are ready for work immediately, even if they have to arrange for the care of babies. If they give the wrong answers, they are not eligible for benefit. Those measures are putting the squeeze on family life and increasing lawlessness.

The cuts in rate support in my area mean that swimming pools have closed down, there is less money for grants to youth clubs and play centres where children can go after school so that if mothers have to go out to do waged work their children are well taken care of. More children are roaming the streets looking for excitement and getting into trouble. The cuts that the Government have imposed are causing the situation to deteriorate.

The Government's new laws are criminalising many poor people. Ministers say a great deal about the virtue of family life, but the horrendous unemployment created by their monetary policy has done more than anything else to cause the break up of families. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) told people to get on their bikes and look for jobs. Young people in particular have to move around the country to look for jobs and some of them are getting into trouble. There is nothing wrong with mobility and young people leaving their families and seeking independence, provided that society provides a safety net so that they do not get into trouble. The Government are tearing away that safety net.

When 16 to 18-year-olds are thrown out of home, they can claim no money and there are often no places on training schemes, so they sleep rough and try to find food. When they sleep rough, they meet rough people and often have no alternative but to break the law or to starve. Not every child between 16 and 18 can go back home. They are not always wanted. They come from homes which may have all sorts of pressures and difficulties. Sometimes they go to big towns to seek work, or simply to seek excitement and adventure. There should be a safety net. They should be able to claim social security until they find their feet. Young people seeking jobs should not be forced to move from town to town every few weeks because of the bed-and-breakfast rules. This has led to hardship and trouble and to increased conflict with the law.

The Department of Social Security seems to believe that all people under 25 live at home with their parents. It may pretend that that is the case, but in the real world that is

*[Ms. Mildred Gordon]*

not what happens. In 1986 young people who needed money to enable them to look for jobs received £30 a week, but now they receive only £26. At the same time, the law has been changed so that supermarkets can sell beer. That is no small matter. I believe that the sale of spirits and beer in supermarkets has been a major cause of the increase in drunkenness and lawlessness. A licensee would be quite experienced in assessing who is under 18, but everything is done in a hurry at the cash desk in a supermarket and no one cares. Something should be done about that as it is part of the cause of the increase in lawlessness. Will the Government, who work in the interests of profit, do anything about it? Is it more important that supermarkets make hugh profits or that we do something to stop teenage drunkenness?

**Mr. Sheerman:** Does my hon. Friend agree that over the past 10 years there has been almost total neglect of the enforcement of the law relating to young people and alcohol? In the United States laws have been introduced to prevent young people from drinking until the age of 21.

**Mr. John Patten:** Is that Labour party policy?

**Mr. Sheerman:** It is not Labour party policy. The Labour party policy is that the Government should throw off the shackles of its great friendships in the brewing industry and enforce the law relating to drinking under the age of 18.

**Ms. Gordon:** I agree with my hon. Friend that the law needs enforcing more rigorously to ensure that people under the age of 18 do not drink alcohol, especially in large quantities. The fact that alcohol is sold in supermarkets makes it impossible to enforce that law, so it should be stopped.

**Mrs. Wise:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there is an excessive amount of advertising of alcohol which pressurises people?

**Ms. Gordon:** Yes. In the interests of the mighty god profit, lives are ruined by over-consumption of alcohol as it is made to seem glamorous.

Because of rising prices and the lack of facilities because local authorities are so hard pressed, there is no cheap way for young people to spend an evening except to go to the pub and have a pint. If there were viable alternatives and if the threatres, groups and concerts that used to be funded by local authorities had not dried up because of lack of funds and rate capping, young people would not be turning to pubs as the only way to spend an evening out that they can afford. If more young people had well-paid jobs and were not so poor, they would not be so restricted in their recreational activities. The hon. Member for Colne Valley suggested more repression as a solution to increased crime but nothing could be more false.

In the 1960s—I know that it is a long time ago, but the principle remains the same—I was a visiting teacher at Holloway prison. My first surprise was that, because of the regulations in those days, the women I taught preferred to receive a two-year sentence to an 18-month sentence because if they got two years they could spend their last nine months in a hostel in the prison grounds. They could go to work and part of their wages was banked so that they had some money on leaving the prison. They had to be in by 10 pm and could go home at weekends. They were happy to be supported on that scheme and preferred it to a shorter sentence.

Most of those women were recidivists. On coming out of prison, their furniture would come out of store, they would pay off their debts and their children would come out of care, but because they could not get a decent job or because they had several children and could not work they could not manage on their small amount of money. Those women could not withstand the pressures of life or manage money as well as most. On the whole, they were inadequate, unfortunate people who needed help. If there had been a safety net or some help available they would not have continually been in trouble, ending up in prison over and over again. Indeed, although they were bad at the crooked things that they did and were always being caught, they had no alternative because they could not manage in any other way, and, once they left prison, society did not give them the help that they required.

Child abuse is a form of lawlessness that I fear society will rapidly try to sweep under the carpet. It has become horribly clear in the past few months that that form of lawlessness—the physical and sexual abuse of tiny children—is happening on an enormous scale. When society saw that it was something with which it did not know how to cope, its reaction was to put the frighteners on the doctors so that they would not reveal the truth. I do not want to go into the dispute about the doctors involved and whether their methods were as good as they might have been—the main point is that the frighteners have been put on doctors so that they will not continue to disclose the extent of that problem. That will not solve anything. Such abuse is a major form of lawlessness that society must face up to and do something about.

Many of the women in Holloway to whom I have referred and, indeed, other offenders—I am not saying "all" because there will always be some people who will be in trouble no matter what help they receive—have no alternative but to offend. However, if being poor were not made a crime, if poor people were not criminalised and if many ordinary law-abiding people who had kept within the law all their lives were not forced to do a job on the side while taking social security because otherwise they would starve, much of the lawlessness would stop.

In my surgery I see a continual procession of old-age pensioners. Sometimes the men weep, saying "I was in the Army and have worked hard all my life, but now my rent has been put up and I cannot manage. What am I going to do?" I also see a continual procession of women who are now desperate. Those women have brought up their families through hard times and depression and have sometimes gone out to work for wages as well as doing their unpaid work of keeping house. The Government are driving people to desperation and criminalising the poor. They are cutting to the bone the money for local authorities and increasing lawlessness through their savage policies.

11.43 am

**Mr. Kenneth Hind** (Lancashire, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) for the opportunity to debate lawlessness—this most important subject on today's Order Paper. In the past few years, the Government have been driving forward a major radical reform programme in all aspects of

government. It is important that we continue that momentum when dealing with the problems of lawlessness that we face in our streets, homes and schools as we try to create a much more ordered society.

Conservative Members are bursting with ideas and initiatives to try to deal with the problem. However, we feel that the responsibility for ensuring law and order and for dealing with lawlessness rests first and foremost with the individual and, not least, Members of Parliament. Yet this morning we have been treated to an extraordinary exhibition of lack of responsibility from one of our colleagues, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). As a Member of Parliament, he advocated for the rest of the community an example that most of us would totally reject—that we should break the law by non-payment of the community charge. If we follow the logic of his argument, we would say, "I do not like income tax, so I will not pay it." If that argument were extended to its logical conclusion, the whole fabric of our society would crumble and there would be anarchy.

Conservative Members believe in democracy. If a Labour Government were elected, we would oppose their proposals in the Chamber. Perhaps they would propose a new tax, but we would honour the democratic views of the population of this country by paying that tax, should it be passed through the House. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East should show the same responsibility in relation to the problem of lawlessness by recognising that the community charge was part of our manifesto, that it was supported by the public during the election and has accordingly passed through the House. He should respect the democratic view of the House and of the people of this country and pay that tax. It is astonishing that an elected representative can flout the rule of law in that way and bring the House and the views of the public into such disrepute.

One matter that is of grave concern to me is the issue of sentencing on which we should take a major initiative to attack the problem of lawlessness. In the past few years there has been a growth in our prison population. In 1969 it was 32,400; in 1978 it was 41,800 and today it is 50,000. If we project it forward to the year 2000, it will be 70,000, with the attendant need for more prison places and more prison officers.

A major reason for that increase is our ladder system of sentencing offenders. When a young man or a young girl appears before the juvenile court for the first time, he or she will probably be told off, given an absolute or conditional discharge and allowed to go his or her way. On returning on several occaions, such young people receive conditional discharges, supervision orders, care orders and fines. Often they will appear five, six or seven times before a court says, "Enough is enough. We must now deprive you of your liberty to stem the tide of your criminal behaviour." However, during that period we have established in the mind of the offender the idea that he or she can get away with what has been done. The offenders develop contempt for our court institutions for the police and for the institutions of law and order generally. We must face that problem sooner or later. I advise my hon. Friend the Minister of State that the way to deal with that problem is to sort out those offenders much earlier. We should not allow offenders to climb the ladder of offending in the way that they have been doing in the past. So many of our non-custodial sentences constitute a minor form of punishment and offenders believe that they are getting away with it. That can only breed contempt.

I call for an entirely different approach and I suggest that it will take about 10 years to deal with the problem. If someone is a first offender and the offence is relatively serious, that person should be deprived of his liberty immediately, but for a very short period. Many judges subscribe to my view that often a few days spent in an elderly prison, of which we have many, like Armley, Strangeways, Lincoln or Wandsworth here in London, would be sufficient to deal with the problem. Before that offender becomes used to the regime, he is released. He carries burning in his mind the memory of the unpleasantness of an old Victorian prison. I advocate that for adults who offend for the first time.

A similar approach should be taken towards younger people who offend for the first time. We could use old detention centres or youth custody for a short time. If we closed the door of the cell behind the offender for about two weeks that would burn into his mind the knowledge that he will find himself in a similar environment if he appears in court again.

The sentence should have two aspects. First, it should act as punishment, for which I have advocated the short sentence. Secondly, there should be rehabilitation and involve many of the good ideas set out in the Green Paper "Punishment Custody and the Community" produced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. The probation service, social workers and supervision should help the offender through the few months after the end of his sentence and so help him in the community.

It is most important that we stop offenders in their tracks early. If we do that, we will build respect for the police and our institutions. However, that will take a long time and it might take 10 years to roll back the contempt which has been built into our society.

As a criminal practitioner with years of experience in the law, I know that many of my clients with records have received non-custodial sentences. They have walked away from court and their parting words to me have often been, "But I got away with it." To a certain extent, we must rethink the process.

A programme such as that which I have described, will involve the prison service. I respect the point made in the Green Paper that we need to build more prisons, and we are in the process of doing so. However, my hon. Friend the Minister should consider the type of prisons which should be built. I believe that we should be building remand centres. I advocate that we separate our remand population from our prison population. Prisons should be reserved for people who have been sentenced. We should in no way cross pollinate the remand centres with prisons. We are dealing with people on remand who are innocent until proven guilty. We should deal with those people differently. The major problem in our prison service lies with the remand population, not with prisoners. If we removed the remand population, there would be no problem.

Where should we locate the remand centres? The major problem with the courts involves transportation from the remand centre to the courts. There are also problems with consultation involving lawyers and with visits from relatives, which avoid alienation. Therefore, remand centres should be built in town centres, as close to the courts as possible. We should draw on the American

*[Mr. Kenneth Hind]*

experience. The Americans have remand centres which look more like condominiums or tower blocks than old-fashioned prisons. Those centres work on a different principle from ours. We move the prison population around. Our prisoners move towards the dining hall and other services. In the remand centre system in the United States, the services go to the population. With different types of offender on different floors, a young offender who may be a first offender having been refused bail, is not mixed with old lags who might influence him adversely. Offenders are separated. That is a better way to deal with the remand centre population, as it removes adverse influences.

All that might take time. In the meantime we should recognise the anxieties felt by the public. Some people are allowed bail in circumstances which many of us would question. Therefore, a tagging system must be introduced, particularly as it safeguards the interests of the public. It would also reassure magistrates who worry about the size of the prison population.

Sometimes magistrates wonder whether they should let someone go into custody and deny bail. In those circumstances magistrates often err on the side of caution and release that person. A tagging system would give the public confidence, because many offences are committed by people who are on bail. It is astounding to consider the number of burglaries that an accused person commits while on bail and which he asks at his trial to be taken into consideration. Tagging would be a very good way to deal with that.

Some of my hon. Friends have raised the matter of right of silence in police stations. It is time that the right of silence for people in custody was abolished. It was introduced at a time before the accused person could give evidence in court on his own behalf. In 1972, the Criminal Law Commission advocated in a report by Lord Justice Lawton that the right of silence should be scrapped. We should really consider that now.

In rape cases in which I have been involved in the defence, I have known the accused man's defence and I have seen a girl enter the witness box six months after the allegation was made and for the first time face the proposition that she consented to the sexual act which led to the charge of rape. That was the first time that that was put to her, because when the accused was interviewed in the police station, he exercised his right to silence. We must stop the ambush defence and create a situation in which, if the accused enters the witness box, he can be asked why he remained silent in the police station when he had the opportunity to provide an explanation. The jury has a right to know.

The accused would still have the right to remain silent in the system that I advocate. However, he has the responsibility, if he gives evidence in the witness box, to explain to the jury why he elected to remain silent. The jury will have to decide whether that explanation was appropriate, and that can be weighed in the balance of guilt or innocence.

When dealing with lawlessness, we must not forget the legal profession. The administration of justice is of the essence. Many hon. Members, particularly those of us in the legal profession, welcome the proposals in the Lord Chancellor's Green Paper on the legal profession as a breath of fresh air into a profession which has been protected for many years by what can only be described as restrictive practices.

I must say to my colleagues at the Bar, in the House of Commons, in the Lords and in the community that, if they are specialised advocates and their work is of a sufficiently high quality, they will have nothing to fear from competition. I believe that in the future there will be a specialised independent Bar, especially in relation to criminal matters, that will be able more than adequately to deal with the problems of the British public.

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): Did my hon. Friend notice any similarity between the way in which the barristers in the Bar Council were squealing about the excellent suggestions put forward by the Lord Chancellor and the way in which solicitors generally became very worked up and started shouting when the idea was proposed, with equal justification, to demolish the conveyancing monopoly?

**Mr. Hind:** My hon. Friend made a good point. It is a sad sight to see a profession defending its corner against principles that we in the House believe in—protecting the consumer and open competition. I see it, sadly, in my own profession.

I believe that the Green Papers will open the door to that specialised criminal advocate among solicitors who wants to come into the Crown court and has an expertise to offer, and who will improve the service that is offered to the public. In the same way, a specialised advocate at the Bar, who is a criminal specialist, has nothing to fear from competition.

I regret that I must leave the House, so I shall not be able to hear the reply of my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) or the speech of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), and I apologise for that. However, I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that much of what he is doing is vital if we are to drive forward radical reforms in the area of lawlessness. I advocate that he continues his work, and he has my wholehearted support. I hope that he will take on board some of the thoughts of both myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley, which were put forward in the most charitable way, to assist him in his task.

12.1 pm

**Mrs. Audrey Wise** (Preston): We live in a violent society, and not all the violence is illegal. We live in a society where the state spends a considerable amount of its resources on weapons which threaten the survival not only of the entire human race, but of our very planet. The society in which people grow up nowadays is an extremely violent one. The concept of lawlessness does not go far enough in considering the seriousness of the matter.

I believe that it is quite impossible for young people to grow up with the respect for humanity and human life that they should have, when they are set such examples by a society that is in possession of nuclear weapons and that has made a deliberate threat to use those weapons. Of course, hon. Members are aware that the NATO Alliance, of which we are part, is committed to using nuclear weapons first if there is any outbreak of what are euphemistically called hostilities. A violent society is a bad setting in which to live. Not all the violence is illegal, as I have said, but it should all be remedied.

I notice that the motion calls for moral leadership, and lists a number of people and bodies from whom that leadership should come. However, it conspicuously omits the Government. I believe that the Government have a great responsibility to give moral leadership, to show how much they respect other people, how much they understand their problems and how much they seek to help them and to provide a society in which it is easier for people to help one another. I may wish to develop that theme a little more later.

I deplore a violent society and the images of violence which constantly assail people—whether those images are of the real world or whether they are of so-called entertainment. There has been quite a bit said so far about the role of television and I agreed with many of the comments made. I believe that television has shown much irresponsibility, which has nothing to do with artistry or with freedom of expression, but is more a gloating over images of violence. However, not much has been said about the press. I want to draw attention to the images of women which are carried day by day in the popular press —supported and honoured by Conservative Members— which degrade women and which amount to an incitement to rape. As a member of Parliament, I feel that I should read all the newspapers. Of course, they are all provided for us, so that is easy. We do not even have to use our own money to pay for the trash.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** *rose*——

**Mrs. Wise:** I find it a difficult task to read the so-called popular press. When I do read the tabloids, at the end of the process I feel soiled and degraded. I think to myself that this is what is happening to people every day. The images that people are picking up of what is news or even what is entertainment are absolutely degrading.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Does the hon. Lady not regard this awful pamplet as degrading to women? It refers to alternative insemination and a public meeting to be held on 16 March in Manchester. It has been advertised by the Manchester gay centre. It is a pamphlet that was on display in Manchester public library. Is that not degrading to women?

**Mrs. Wise:** The hon. Lady has already used an intervention to make that point. It has already been explained to her that much more information would be needed than the fact of the hon. Lady standing up and saying that she possesses a leaflet. I know nothing about the issue, so I have no opinion about it. It is my practice to have opinions only on matters that I can back up with knowledge. It is an abuse of the House for the hon. Lady to make the same intervention twice. She is using up the time of the House unnecessarily.

She has not, of course, done what I hoped she would, which was to reinforce my statements about the images of women which are contained not in an obscure leaflet, but are contained every day in a newspaper with a mass circulation. The hon. Lady has refrained from giving us her valuable opinion on that matter. I take it that she approves of what is put forward, for example, in *The Sun*. I take it that she believes that that is an admirable picture of womanhood, and very helpful to women. I take it that the hon. Lady approves of the constant imagery used in advertisements, which portrays women either as brainless or as sex objects.

In fact, not even whole women are portrayed, but just bits of women are constantly shown on the advertising hoardings, which suggests that we are not real people at all. We never see a man displayed without a head. We never see the occasional man's leg around. However, that is the way in which women are portrayed. Such advertisements are extremely damaging. It is up to all of us, including Conservative Members, to tell the popular press that it has some responsibility and should not bring this country into disrepute by giving us the worst popular press in the world.

Much has been said about crime but not, funnily enough, about the victim. I want to draw the House's attention to the fact that the people who suffer the most from crime are people who live in the poorest areas and already have more than enough problems to cope with. The people in those areas often say to me that they want a type of policing with which they can identify and have confidence in, rather than a type of policing which suggests that, somehow, they deserve the problems they face. People who live in leafy suburbia do not have the most to fear from crime.

In common with most women, I am anxious to have a lawful society. People should be able to go about their business quietly in peace and in confidence. I do not believe that the present Government's activities contribute towards that feeling. The Government's concepts about crime are repressive, but singularly ineffective. The same can be said about their views on punishment. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) spoke about locking doors and "burning into people" and he used a particular tone of voice which was rather chilling. He was advocating a type of punishment which is ineffective.

We have a much higher proportion of custodial sentences than the rest of Europe, but that method is not working. I have no particular sympathy for the criminal and, in general, I have a considerable hostility towards him. Even when I understand why some of them take to crime, I am still hostile towards them because I believe that they should find other ways in which to sort out their problems. I do not take my stance out of sympathy for criminals, but because of my concern for the effective protection of society.

The present methods adopted to combat crime are not working and the rate of re-offending, re-conviction, re-sentencing and return to prison is enormous. We should look at the statistics and learn some lessons from them. We should listen to what the prison officers are telling us. Those officers, by definition, have no love of criminals. The other day I attended a meeting Upstairs where I heard a serious description from a prison officer about what is currently happening in our prisons.

**Mr. Hind** *rose*——

**Mrs. Wise:** I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that his intervention is relevant.

**Mr. Hind:** The hon. Lady and I agree that the present system is failing. Does she agree that one possible way in which to approach the problem is to deal with people much earlier, before they develop a contempt for the law and become recidivists? That is what I was advocating, and that approach could solve many of the problems that the hon. Lady has outlined.

**Mrs. Wise:** What struck me about the hon. Gentleman's speech was what he said about tagging as a means of dealing with people. There was a notable omission in his speech about prevention; rather, he dwelt on punishment.

Prison officers have no love, affection or softness towards convicted criminals, but they have said that, because of the circumstances, people are being treated like animals. There is no adequate sanitation in prisons, and people are locked up for many hours of the day without any privacy or facilities for the normal functions of life. I have always been an opponent of "slopping out" as it is called, but, before the meeting I attended recently, I had not considered it from the point of view of the prison officer. He described vividly what the absence of proper facilities in prisons meant to him. When the slopping out is done, a good deal of the slop finds its way on to the prison officer, but he just has to bear it.

We are asking prison officers to cope in prisons without providing the conditions in which they can do constructive work. In addition to the loss of liberty—the punishment intended—people suffer a total loss of dignity. If one treats people like animals it may well make them like animals. That is no way in which to protect society.

The prison officers could tell us a good deal of useful information. I was surprised to discover their anxiety to do more constructive rehabilitation work. I realise that I have not been disposed to listen sufficiently in the past, but perhaps a Back-Bench Member has more excuse than the Government.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West spoke about the tagging system, but he should listen to the probation officers who also have the job of trying to rehabilitate people so that they do not commit crime in the future—they are bitterly opposed to tagging. The Government appear to consider anything except constructive solutions.

The Government are also using the prison system as yet a further test of their doctrinaire desire to privatise everything in sight. I was stunned to hear that we are to have private remand centres and private security facilities for escorting people to and from prison. It appears that people will make profits out of another person's loss of liberty. Society has a right to protect itself, but it does not have the right to give private companies the opportunity to make profits out of people's loss of liberty.

The example set by the Government is appalling. As well as the obvious types of violent crime, there is the quieter lawlessness, which receives a good deal of equally quiet, tacit approval from Conservative Members. Lawlessness is inherent, for instance, in the practice of some employers of ignoring the minimum wages laid down by the wages councils. Those minimum wages are not——

**Mr. John Patten:** Order. This is the subject of the next debate.

**Mrs. Wise:** I am drawing attention to an aspect of lawlessness. If the Minister wants to make an intervention or a point of order, I suggest that he does so, rather than harry me from a sedentary position, but I warn him that I am not easily harried, so he might as well be quiet.

The quiet, but none the less important, lawlessness to which I wish to draw the attention of the House is the widespread practice of ignoring the statutory minimum rates of pay that are laid down by the wages councils for 2·5 million workers in this country. I regret to say that many employers flout the laws, but those laws affect people's purses. When people are deprived of their legal entitlement to wages laid down by law, it is robbery. It might be quiet, but it is robbery just as much as it would be if the employer went to the handbag or the pocket of his employee and took the money.

**Mr. Dykes:** As a responsible legislator, the hon. Lady must be extremely concerned about such breaches of the law, especially as she suggests that it is on a large scale. It is her duty to notify the authorities and to give them all detailed information so that they can take out the necessary prosecutions. Has she done so?

**Mrs. Wise:** For once, I am grateful for a helpful intervention. Later I shall describe how the Government can find out about this widespread flouting of the law. The Government claim that there is very little such law-breaking, but that illustrates their failure to read their own statistics. Perhaps that is part of the reason why they tend to reduce the amount of statistics available to us. Luckily, we still have the new earnings survey, which shows that 10 per cent. of female shop assistants are paid less than £2·10 per hour. The wages council legal minimum rate for shop assistants is £2·33 per hour, which means that more than 10 per cent. of female shop assistants are being robbed. My example is generous because, clearly, the proportion on lower rates is higher than 10 per cent, if we add those getting between £2·10 and the legal minimum of £2·33.

Hon. Members do not need to act as private detectives for the Government, because the Government should be aware of this widespread law-breaking. It is illustrated in their own statistics, yet they deny it. In so far as the Government can be said to be at all embarrassed about such law-breaking, they propose that the best way to proceed is not to tackle the law breaker but simply to remove the law. That is an odd attitude to lawlessness. The Government also have the mechanism of inspection to discover law-breaking, and trade unions are eager to draw the Government's attention to specific cases of flouting of the law. However, the Government are simply not interested in that, because it is merely low-paid, hard-working people who are robbed. We never hear anything about that from Conservative Members.

There is another form of law-breaking in employment; it relates to those employers who neglect to ensure that working conditions are safe even though they have a legal responsibility to do so. Perhaps I had better rephrase that. It is their legal duty to do so "as far as is reasonably practicable", but employers tend to interpret that as meaning, provided it does not cost them very much.

There are far too many accidents at work, but what was the Government's reaction to that? Was it to make sure that breaches of the law which frequently lead to death and disability were found? That was certainly not their reaction. They reduced the number of factory inspectors, although numbers were already inadequate. Even the Government realised that they were going too far, and they have started to move timidly in the other direction slightly to improve once again the number of factory inspectors. However, the number remains substantially below that which existed before the Government came to office. That is quite scandalous and shows a lack of moral leadership by the Government to employers to ensure that

there are no avoidable deaths and disabilities at work. However we hear nothing about that, because Conservative Members are not interested.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) would have done the House a bigger service if he had taken the opportunity to draw to the attention of his Government the matters that I have raised. I have not even touched on the large-scale fraud, the technical robbery, frequently perpetrated by the friends of Conservatism in the City of London. I shall leave it to other hon. Members to deal with that. Perhaps even Conservative Members, who know more than I do about the workings of the City, would care to say something about it. Somehow I doubt it.

I reiterate my view that the best way to prevent crime, lawlessness and violence is to provide people with an environment in which there is no institutional and state violence and in which the Government are working for a peaceful world instead of brandishing weapons which could destroy it. That is the first step towards prevention.

The second step is for everyone, including the Government and hon. Members to use their influence on those whose money has given them power to control the press.

The press is not controlled by people who are particularly good at writing or particularly interested in freedom of expression. It is controlled by those few people who have the money to do it. By using their money in this way they have degraded the term "freedom of the press" and the profession of journalism. The attention of such people should be drawn to their responsibility for providing an environment that does not glorify crime, which does not incite people to commit crime by implication, and which treats everybody with respect. They could play an important role, but at the moment their role is wholly disreputable.

The Government could choose to show compassion and encourage other people to show it. They could provide an environment in which hostels for homeless people, battered wives and mentally disturbed people could be helped. Instead, many such hostels will be compelled to close their doors after April. The Government could ensure that such places, which do useful work, could be financially helped, instead of being financially choked.

The Government could provide young people with help, instead of waging war on them. They could draw attention to the quieter but no less obnoxious crimes that lead to workers being robbed through their wage packets and being placed in unnecessarily dangerous working conditions. If the Government did that, we would live in a better society and there would be no need to concern ourselves so much with lawlessness, because it would be of much smaller proportions.

12.28 pm

**Mr. David Amess** (Basildon): The debate has revealed an enormous gulf between the two sides of the House on the question of lawlessness. I, for one, am particularly pleased that I sit on this side of the Chamber.

**Mrs. Wise:** So are we.

**Mr. Amess:** I believe that the general public are also pleased that we, rather than the Opposition, are in power.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on the eloquence of his speech. Those right hon. and hon. Members who heard it will clearly understand how it was that he wrested his seat from the hands of Socialists after 102 years.

**Mr. Sheerman:** The hon. Gentleman cannot get even that right. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) took the seat from a Liberal. I hope that the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) will wake up, and that his speech will improve as it goes on.

**Mr. Amess:** I am glad that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) intervened, but I know perfectly well that it was a Liberal seat. I just happen to believe that all right hon. and hon. Members who sit on Opposition Benches, with the exception of the Ulster Unionists, are Socialists. I do not understand why the hon. Member for Huddersfield is sensitive about Liberals being regarded as Socialists. I thought that he would be very proud of that. There are not even any Liberals in the Chamber to hear the debate—that is how much they care about lawlessness.

I congratulate also our team of excellent Home Office Ministers. I applaud them on all their initiatives of the past few years. The only matter of disagreement between us is the restoration of capital punishment. That is a topic on which right hon. Members decide as individuals, but I for one believe that life has become very cheap these days, and that the restoration of capital punishment—though I would never wish to see it carried out—would serve as an effective deterrent. I believe also that my view has the overwhelming support of the people of this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley was right to mention the concern that people feel about lawlessness. However, the public should not imagine that right hon. and hon. Members are unaware of what is going on in our country. Three years ago, my cousin's wife was murdered in broad daylight. Only three weeks ago, my own flat was broken into. It was a violent attack, with an axe being used to gain entry. The thieves were not particularly bright, because there is nothing of value in my flat other than some pictures, which the burglars left while taking other items that I regard as being rubbish. My right hon. and hon. Friends are well aware of what is going on in the country, but, judging by the disgraceful speeches made by Opposition Members this morning, nothing is being done by them to improve the situation. Rather they are undermining efforts to do so.

Since 1979, the Government have increased police manpower by 21,300 officers. Police pay, training and equipment have also been improved. I do not agree with those people who believe that more police, and more officers on the beat, are needed. In my county of Essex, the Government recently increased the police establishment by 70, which I welcome. Also important is the way in which police are deployed, for we must make the best use of the limited resources at our disposal.

Government spending on the police has risen by 52 per cent. after inflation since 1979, and no other public service has enjoyed such a large increase. More officers are being put back on the beat. Since 1983, about 3,300 officers in forces outside London have been released for street duties by engaging civilians to do desk jobs. There are now 750 more officers on street duty in London than there were 12 months ago, and I applaud the Government for that improvement.

*[Mr. Amess]*

As to crime prevention, I am delighted that 64,000 neighbourhood watch schemes are now in existence, including an excellent one in my constituency. The police believe that they help to prevent some of the 19 in every 20 crimes against property. The latest figures show an 8 per cent. drop in the number of domestic burglaries. I am delighted—I know that the public feel strongly on the subject—that the Criminal Justice Act provides for a right of appeal against excessively lenient sentences.

We have the biggest prison building programme of the century. By the mid-1990s, 28 new prisons will have been built since 1979. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) spoke of the state of our prisons, but the Liberal-Labour Government that we had to endure between 1974 and 1979 did very little in that regard.

I wish that hon. Members who have spoken this morning had expressed some sympathy for the victims of crime. As constructive Members of Parliament, we should display much more sympathy for them. That is why I am delighted that the Government are making available £3·7 million in 1989—90 for local victim support schemes. More than 300,000 crime victims were referred to the schemes last year, and I applaud the one now operating in Basildon.

When I was sent to the House six years ago it soon came to my notice that many people had a poor view of Basildon. They assumed—a typical assumption—that it was full of rough east enders and was a lawless area. As an east ender myself, I was not going to let people cast aspersions, and I am pleased to say that Basildon's image has improved dramatically over the past few years. My hon. Friend the Minister has been to see the excellent work being achieved by the local community. Six years ago we had one police station. We now have three—one in Pitsea, one in the town centre, and one in Laindon. The public's response has been wonderful: people feel much more confident that there is a local point of contact.

Six years ago we also had the highest lawlessness figures in the county; the latest figures show a decrease of some 11 per cent. in recorded offences. The number of reported burglaries and vehicle crimes has fallen by 13 per cent. Let me quote from the latest statement issued by the chief superintendent:

"our current strategy of creating greater awareness of crime by the public together with specific target operations appears to have"

had a considerable effect. The overall detection of 30 per cent. over the past 12 months is just below the county rate of 32 per cent. Unfortunately, however, crimes of violence continue to cause concern, with an increase of 19 per cent. across the county.

All Members of Parliament observe the aggressiveness of a minority of members of the general public. We see it on the tube and in the streets, and particularly in the way in which people drive their cars. A total of 72,453 offences have been reported in Essex over the past 12 months, of which 12,342 have occurred within the Basildon division. Last year we launched a campaign called "I love Basildon". Car stickers were issued, and there has been a wonderful response to the campaign—the burden of which is that we are creating a fine town and wish to keep it that way.

The schools in Basildon have responded marvellously, rallying round to assist our campaign to solve the litter problem. I regard litter as an important subject, and I very much hope that the Home Office and the Department of the Environment will take careful note at the successful project that has been launched in Westminster. One of my constituents is working with the ZIP patrol in Westminster. He says that within a very short time Westminster council has been able to do something about litter. I commend to the House the ten-minute Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) has introduced, which would lead to on-the-spot litter fines.

Basildon is conducting a campaign to discover why young people are standing on street corners and causing annoyance to the general public. It is not because there are no leisure facilities in Basildon. The 52 per cent. rates increase announced by Basildon has nothing to do with health, education or welfare; it has all to do with expenditure on leisure facilities. There is no earthly reason why some young people stand on street corners and cause annoyance to members of the general public in Basildon.

The "I love Basildon" campaign is all about involving the community in improving law and order. No hon. Member has a simple or complete answer to the difficult problems with which we are trying to cope. It is all about people's personal behaviour; it has nothing to do with unemployment, or low pay, or with the Government's policies. I applaud their policies. I hope that all hon. Members will help to take the political heat out of the issue by supporting the Government. Then I am sure that lawlessness will be greatly reduced.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** Sir William Shelton.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that hon. Members are called according to the rules, but, before Tory newspapers or the media generally refer to the fact that two Tory Members of Parliament were called in succession because no Labour Members were on their feet, I want to put it on record that there was at least one Labour Member standing at that time. The point that I am making has nothing to do with the Chair.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The point of order that he has made has nothing at all to do with the Chair.

12.42 pm

**Sir William Shelton** (Streatham): I apologise to the House for arriving here shortly after 11 o'clock. I have been here ever since. I was unable to arrive before then because I was attending a press conference in Lambeth town hall that was addressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. It was a very successful press conference. Many people who have been trying to buy their council houses from Lambeth for up to three years were present. The good news for them was that from midnight last night the law allows them to put their rent against the price that they have to pay for their council house, if they suffer undue delay.

I believe, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), that the Home Office has got it about right. the chief superintendent in Brixton, to whom I was talking the other day, thinks that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 has many advantages and that the Criminal Justice Act 1988 covering sharp

instruments is very good and is working well. He thinks that a period of consolidation is needed, together with a continuation of what I call community-style policing.

The results of community-style policing can already be seen in Brixton. The police tell me that there is little or no tension in that very sensitive area. That is quite different from the position several years ago. I am told that burglaries are down on last year, that auto-thefts are down on last year and that street robberies are 40 per cent. down over the last two years. However, drugs are still very much a problem. That is because successful drug dealers make money from them and because drugs unfortunately provide them with power and status in the local community. This leads to murder, shootings and all sorts of difficulties.

The position is also improving in Streatham. We have the difficulty of prostitution and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who was here a moment ago, kindly answered my recent Adjournment debate on that, so I shall not talk about prostitution now. Street robbery, or what we may call muggings with violence, is falling. The numbers are still much too high, but at least they are falling. The chief superintendent in Streatham is greatly worried about the type of weapons used. In February there were 15 attacks, involving 12 knives, a baseball bat, a hand gun and an air pistol. At least the use of knives has fallen and, as far as we can tell, is continuing to fall.

There is great anxiety about gratuitous violence, which is often drink related. It is the type of violence that we see at football matches. Incidentally, I welcome the introduction of identity cards for club members. Drink-related, gratuitous violence does not seem to be consequent upon the relaxation of drinking hours during the morning. It usually takes place late at night after the pubs shut. Those involved are usually young men between the ages of 17 and 26.

Another worrying aspect that may appear trivial, but is certainly not trivial to those involved, is the increasing number of attacks on the top deck of buses that go through my constituency late at night. They have become prevalent on four routes. I must ask the Minister, and I shall ask London Buses, why we cannot have video recorders on top decks filming the occupants and a notice saying that a recorder is in action. That would do much to reduce that unpleasant problem.

The victims of those various attacks are mainly schoolboys between 10 and 16 and women between 16 and 30. In the past month there have been only four attacks on people over 60. That means not that youngsters and women are the chosen victims, but that elderly people are not prepared to go out at night because of lawlessness.

Burglaries are decreasing in Streatham. There were 369 in December compared with 247 in February. The fall is due to a big effort by the police after Christmas which produced extraordinarily good results. Between 20 January and 19 February 23 officers were put in a special burglary squad. They made 62 arrests and cleared up more than 100 offences. That is excellent. A major problem is that it is difficult to apprehend villians. Autocrime is at a consistent level. The drug problem seems to be slightly more under control. In 1977 there were fewer than 100 arrests and in 1978 there were only 60 arrests for possession.

The excellent chief superintendent tells me that he feels like a juggler keeping balls in the air all the time, catching this one here and that one there. As problems arise he has to switch his forces to cope with them and he cannot give the service wanted on all sides all the time. His force is more or less at full complement, which is a great credit to the Home Office. However, he has suggested, and I entirely agree, that more thought and resources should be diverted to stop youngsters offending. He has been doing precisely that, and I congratulate him.

Last August, the Streatham police, led by Roger Street, launched the Gipsy Hill initiative. The police borrowed or rented a hall and encouraged youngsters from problem estates to come to meetings at which the police played and talked with them. Activities ranged from volleyball to talks on how to look after pets. The police took them in a bus to Crystal Palace, where they practised archery and football. Four hundred youngsters were involved in the initiative and, as a result, there was a significant decrease in crime in the area compared with the rest of the division.

The cry will go up: "Who paid for the scheme?" It was paid for by local businesses and charities who contributed some £4,000. In the last few days the police have sent out 200 letters to local businesses so that the initiative may be repeated this year. It is to be called "South Lambeth Summer Capers." A committee of members of the community and the police has been formed to raise money which will be allocated to this year's community and police projects. I regret that Lambeth council did not see its way to collaborating with us. To what extent are other police forces throughout the country kept informed of initiatives that take place in other areas?

**Mr. John Patten** In the Home Office, we do our best to transfer information about excellent schemes such as that in Lambeth. I hope that my hon. Friend will pass on the congratulations of the Home Office to the police in that division. Counties such as Staffordshire have set up schemes, and we try to ensure that police authorities learn what is going on in different parts of the country. My hon. Friend's report to the House is important because it shows the close co-operation between business, the community and the police force. The lack of encouragement of any sort from Lambeth council is disappointing.

**Sir William Shelton:** My hon. Friend's remarks were reassuring. The police force has an internal news sheet called *The Job*. I have I have never seen it and I do not know whether it spreads the word about good practices. It is certainly true that any major international company, such as ICI, has an active system to keep each managing director in each country informed about what is happening, what has been tried, and whether it has failed or succeeded. I am delighted to hear that such a system is very much in the minds of Home Office Ministers. I urge my hon. Friend to consider the experience of international companies, although, in the light of his response, I am sure that I do not need to do so.

When more funds are available, it is surely better to use all the resources not to catch offenders but to try to prevent the offences from happening. The small initiative in Lambeth must have the support of us all and I am sure that, over the next 20 years, such initiatives will be the way forward. Our police force should not be continually rushing round putting out fires while spending little or no time on preventing them. I am sure that such initiatives present the way forward and I commend them to the House.

12.53 pm

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield): I welcome the debate on lawlessness which has been initiated by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). Those of us who know the hon. Gentleman well heard what we anticipated from him—the voice of the Conservative party conference. We clearly heard the engine that drives the Home Secretary and his team of Ministers; we heard all the prejudices and the gut reactions expressed without reference to the facts or to in-depth investigations of the problem. The hon. Gentleman is to be congratulated on the articulate way in which he summed up all the prejudices of the Conservative party on this issue.

I was astonished to hear Conservative Member after Conservative Member failing to refer to the crime statistics since 1979. Usually they are happy to talk about the record of the past 10, five or three years, but, given the facts, I am not surprised that they did not do so this morning. We heard only one or two references to statistics.

Let us examine the facts. A Scottish newspaper this morning spoke of the terror of the knife men and the growing nightmare of the violent use of knives in Strathclyde. What has happened in this country since the so-called party of law and order became the Government in 1979? There has been a rising tide of lawlessness. The hard statistics show that, between 1979 and the most recent figures, violence against the person increased by 48 per cent., robbery by 160·8 per cent., burglary by 65·6 per cent., criminal damage and vandalism by 83·8 per cent. and sexual offences by 15·6 per cent. That catalogue of misery for many citizens is presided over by a Government who repeatedly claim on television that they are doing a grand job.

Some people back in 1979 were naive enough to believe that the Conservatives were the party of law and order. Any such pretension now looks hollow after 10 years of decline into lawlessness. It has become increasingly clear as time has gone on that the Government who claimed to be the party of law and order espouse a philosophy, ideology and policy that have brought about the crumbling of law and order of the past 10 years.

The Government's attitudes, values and beliefs are fundamental, because law and order and a safe society are based on certain principles that I want to discuss this morning. The Government have reacted to the incontrovertible evidence of soaring crime by introducing disastrously misconceived policies which have exacerbated, not eased matters.

Let us examine some of these policies. The Government have poured money into the criminal justice system. They have commenced an historic prison building programme as a remedy for lawlessness. Yesterday I visited one of the new prisons near Doncaster. It is an old RAF camp, now housing more than 1,000 men. When it was opened, it was supposed to be for category C and category D prisoners and to take the pressure off the prison system. But every time there has been an expansion of the prison capacity in Britain, the Government have found a way to fill it. They have embarked on a prison-building programme on which they plan to spend £1·25 billion.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) said, we now send more people to prison than any other major western European country—55,729 people as of 1 February this year. The Government used to be able to say that Turkey sent a greater percentage per head of population to prison, but this year, as the Minister will know, even Turkey does not commit as many people to custodial sentences as we do. The recent statement by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders underlines that dramatically.

The Government's policy of having more people in prison and more prison capacity goes hand in hand with their policy of stiffer sentencing. That was one of the planks of the 1979 Conservative manifesto which promised tougher sentencing policy, more prisons and more prisoners as a deterrent, but it has not worked and there has been some squirming among Conservative Members.

Today's debate seemed so dismal and the Conservative party seemed to have learnt so little over the years, but it gave us a lift when we heard the brave voice of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) taking to task the hon. Member for Colne Valley on his facts about the deterrent value of capital punishment. That was a small glimmer of light.

**Mr. Riddick:** Will the hon. Gentleman read out the statement from NACRO to which he referred as I am not familiar with it?

**Mr. Sheerman:** The statement gave some facts and figures on imprisonment in western Europe. Ms. Vivien Stern, the director, said:

> "It is shameful that this country now has a higher proportion of its citizens in prison than any other major West European country. These disturbing figures reinforce the case for a greater use of non-custodial penalties for non-violent offenders."

That is what NACRO said, and more power to its elbow for bringing that to the Government's attention.

The other side of the picture is that the Government's policy has not worked. There are more prisons and they get filled. We have a tougher sentencing policy which does not deter. There has been a massive increase in the prison population and a great increase in crime, criminality and the number of victims affected by crime. The policy has been bankrupt for a long time; it does not work. But the Government, terrified of the Secretary of State's next appearance at the Tory party conference, plough on with a policy that they know is bankrupt and does not work. The result of high spending and toughness is that, in 10 years, recorded crime has risen by 53 per cent.

I am sure that the Minister will grasp at one small straw. Unless I am wrong, or unless he edits it out, the Minister will say that up to June 1988 there had been a 1 per cent. drop in crime. That is a pretty small straw to grasp. Violent crime has still been increasing rapidly. In the past year violence against the person and sex offences have risen by 17 per cent. That is the reality. This morning my hon. Friends talked about the vulnerability of women in society. They are absolutely right. The Government have presided over a doubling in reported cases of rape —we know that sexual offences are under-reported. In 1978, there were 1,243 reported cases, but in 1987 the figure had risen to 2,473. Those figures are a disgrace in a civilised nation, and they should be a disgrace to a Government who pretend to be interested in law and order.

All the evidence shows that violence is all around us. There is violence around football matches, although the proposed system of identity cards will do little about that other than to push violence outside the ground and harm

football clubs and decent football supporters and stop them from getting to the games that they want to see. Evidence shows that violence does not take place only in urban areas—although the Government have ignored the fact that most crime occurs on the large council estates and in inner city areas. There is crime in rural areas, too. It also happens on all forms of public transport. Indeed, it has given us a new vocabulary. Who would have known what a "steamer" or a "lager lout" was a few months ago? That vocabulary is a symptom of the new wave of criminality in our country.

Although the violence is there for all to see, the Government are embarking on a new tack and saying that there is not really much violence or crime in this country, but that the perception or fear of crime is the problem. Indeed, the Government have gone as far as appointing Michael Grade, for whom I have great respect as a television producer and programmer, to head a working party in the Home Office to persuade people that they should not be fearful of crime. It is astounding that the Government are taking one of our top media people—goodness knows what he wants to do it for; I cannot understand it, but perhaps he is after a knighthood——

**Mr. John Patten:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that among the membership of the steering committee that suggested that the fear of crime should be a topic for next year's standing conference on crime prevention is the director of NACRO, Vivien Stern, the chief constable of the Northumbrian constabulary and others from all spheres of interest, not just the Home Office?

**Mr. Sheerman:** Yes; I have seen the membership of the committee and I understand that point well. I was not talking about the people who will inject enthusiasm into the working party. I was saying that once again it is the Government's intention to give the impression of doing something about the problem without actually doing anything that would have any effect. The fact is that there is rising lawlessness in this country, and we have a Home Office committee—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister of State wants to intervene again, he may do so. We have a Home Office committee that will tell the world that the problem is fear of crime, not the real criminality that is shown by the rising crime statistics.

I bring to the Minister's attention the second phase of the Islington crime survey. The figures for our capital do not show that the problem is people's fear of crime as something distant that will probably not happen to them. The survey showed that the real fear of crime bears a close correlation to violence or criminal activity that has impinged on the person interviewed, a member of his household or his peer group in the past five years. There is a direct correlation. People are not affraid because of fancy things that they have read in the newspapers about muggings; they are afraid because such crimes have happened to them or to someone in their close circle. That is the fact of living in an inner city today. The Government will not get off the hook on that.

Why is there greater lawlessness in our society? Opposition Members have rehearsed familiar but important arguments and have referred to the fact that poverty and unemployment have risen in the past 10 years, affecting particular groups and causing criminality. Research evidence is available, not from the Tory party conference, but from universities, NACRO, independent foundations and all-party foundations which shows that poverty and unemployment breed criminality. There has been much poverty and unemployment under this Government.

The Government's economic and social policies flow from their ideology. The hon. Member for Colne Valley referred to amateur sociologists. We do not need to be amateurs to consider Conservative party ideology as it emanates from the Prime Minister and from the party generally. Conservatives are not ashamed of their ideology of applauding the notion of the rugged individual entrepreneur in society. That ideology considers the individual to be most important. In his concluding remarks, the hon. Member for Colne Valley referred to the individual. He did not talk about the community, society or group effort; he referred to the individual. That reveals the core of the Government's misunderstanding of the problems of tackling crime, criminality and lawlessness.

We can solve criminality and lawlessness only by working together as a community and a society and by believing that society is more important than the individual. We must believe that something holds us together which is more important than personal greed, personal selfishness and getting one's own way in the world.

Greed and selfishness are at the heart of the present Conservative ideology. Once that ideology is imposed on society, it breeds crime and criminality like nothing else. People who have nothing are not impervious to that ideology. They want everything yesterday, just like the £100,000-a-year young stockbroker in the City. Because they cannot get it, they commit crime. However, that is a result of the culture produced and underpinned by the Government.

The Government's ideology breeds crime in the deprived inner cities and on large council estates where poverty has increased. It also breeds crime in the rural areas. It breeds crime among unemployed young people and also among young people who are in employment and are at the bottom end of the wage scale. The notion of an envious society and the widening gap between incomes breeds discontent which often leads to crime.

Very little activity is provided for young people in so many areas. Some hon. Members today referred to ways to stop crime before it occurs. The Government seem to be obsessed with catching criminals. The Opposition are far more interested in preventing criminality in the first place. The Government have done precious little about the growing area of criminality among our young people.

More enlightened Governments have acted quickly. For example, the French Government witnessed a rising tide of criminality, urban disturbances and riots in major cities. They implemented a major programme to allow young people proper access to productive leisure of all kinds. Unfortunately, those large programmes meant real resources from central Government. However, the French Government acted and already they are getting very good results and are reducing crime among young French people.

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): The hon. Gentleman has referred to acquisitiveness and its effect on young people. There may be a degree of truth in what he says. On the other hand, we must also consider, as the hon. Gentleman was beginning to imply, the question of individual responsibility, which is learnt when one is very young. Will

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he consider the problem caused by many schools in areas run by Labour local authorities where the police have been discouraged from working with the schools?

**Mr. Sheerman:** It is a very tiny minority of authorities that have banned police from schools. I do not approve of that, and nor does the Labour party. Of course, Labour local authorities have a democratic right to make their decisions, but that is not the official Labour party line. We believe that a partnership in the town, in the vilage and in the city between local authorities, the police, local businesses, voluntary groups and the resident associations is the kernel of getting a safer community.

In so many of the areas that I have been considering in the past few minutes few leisure activities are provided for young people. We have seen time and again that one of the ways into criminality and crime is the abuse of alcohol and, indeed, drugs. Many underprivileged young people who do not have constructive alternatives drift into the use of alcohol. I do not approve of that, but it is a known fact that they drift into heavy drinking, drug taking and solvent abuse and, to keep the habit going, they drift into crime. That is a sad state of affairs. That is why I intervened to say that we should have creative alternatives for young people. Of course, I want to stop young people drinking before they are 18—that is the law. It is a good law and one which we should take seriously. On the other hand, I believe that we should make creative alternatives.

Young people in my town say to me, "What is there but the pub?" What is provided for young people over 15 years? There is very little when one considers the matter. So much of our community has closed down. How many churches have closed down? People of my generation went to youth clubs and found them quite enjoyable, but they do no longer exist. Little is provided so that young people may spend their leisure time in a creative and interesting way, especially in areas of greatest urban stress.

What Government policies have there been to enhance realistic attractive leisure activities? The Government have taken £20 billion from the rate support grant. They are starving local government of any initiative of this sort. The Government are even moving towards the selling off of leisure centres to private operators. Private operators will not provide the sort of low-cost deals for young people that we want to encourage.

The Minister knows that the peak age for offenders of both sexes is 15 years. One half of all recorded offences and three quarters of all recorded burglaries are committed by young people under 21. The relationship between youth and criminality is staring the Government in the face. All they have come up with over the past 10 years is the short, sharp shock—and what a disaster that was.

France has a positive policy. It is spending money. It has a commitment to do something about a perceived problem. At the heart of the problem in this country is the individualistic philosophy of the Government—the "me" society that wants everything yesterday. That leads to the rejection of society and of the community and, ironically, to the rejection of the family. There is only one concept in Tory philosophy today, and that is the individual. The Opposition believe that that is the core of the problem of lawlessness today, because the foundations of a lawful society have always rested on the community and society working together

The Minister will say that, typically, the hon. Member for Huddersfield has not said what his party would do. I shall tell him what we would do. The answer for those of us who yearn for a return to a lawful and safe society lies in a rejection of a selfish society and its values and a reversal of the Government's key policies that stem from it. Of course, we shall have to wait until the next general election to get it. We have started, however, in our efforts to achieve that reversal.

We must recognise that the Government's criminal justice policy has got it wrong. There are alternatives. Vast sums of money have been spent on dealing with the problem after the offence has been committed, on prison building and on imposing stiffer sentences. That has been done at a high cost to the taxpayer who is faced with a poor return. We believe that we should concentrate on the prevention of crime. The Government are involved in some crime prevention, but their efforts and the expenditure on it are pitifully small.

The Government have taken £20 billion of rate support grant away from our impoverished towns and cities, but at the same time—it is reported in *The Guardian* today—the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has responsibility for the inner cities, has announced

"the extension of the Home Office's Safer Cities crime prevention scheme to the Wirral and Hull"

That is all well and good, but that scheme means the expenditure of £250,000 and a lot of publicity. That money will convert the entrances to about five blocks of flats—that is how far the Government's commitment goes towards safer cities.

We believe that the Government have got themselves into a terrible twist, because the only way to tackle lawlessness is to work with local government. I note that the Minister curls his lip, but that is the truth. The Government have a pathological hatred of local democracy and therefore they are unable to use society's most effective weapon against lawlessness—a democratically organised and supported community. The Government do not believe in that, and for the past 10 years they have waged outright war against local democracy.

We believe that, if crime prevention and safer communities are to mean anything, there must be a partnership based on democratic consent between local councils, the police, neighbourhood and resident associations and local businesses. That partnership, based on democratic leadership, is the way forward, but the Government will not accept that.

Local councils must have a prime role as they could provide valuable leadership in so many areas. They could provide sensible housing management policies, home security policies and better street lighting. They could improve neighbourhood estate management and set up crime prevention community safety committees. They could raise the awareness of their staff about crime and improve staff training. They could develop crime monitoring schemes and introduce crime audits. They could raise public awareness and introduce minimum standards of security for all their properties. They could address the particular needs of groups who are vulnerable to crime. They could influence public transport policies and assist low-income owner-occupiers to secure their homes properly. They could improve recreational and youth provision. If the Government gave the resources and the backing to local government, it could get on with those

exciting things. My goodness, we could do something about lawlessness if the Government would throw off their prejudice against local government and give local democracy a chance to work.

If local democracy was given a chance, the great bonus would be that there would be no need for vigilantes or for residents taking the law into their own hands. We are, of course, in favour of neighbourhood watch, which is a good thing, and of residents taking an active interest in the security of their neighbourhood. But at the end of the day there must be a proper chain of responsibility, and that is why so many of us are worried about the importation of vigilantes and the growth of that mentality. We are worried about the proliferation of private security facilities. That problem is increasing because the Government have allowed it to grow unsupervised and disaster is looming.

If local government is involved in the fight against crime, a chain of responsibility is provided which makes sense and brings order to disorder. The essential thrust of my remarks is that that involves local democratic leadership and public expenditure. The Government will not countenance those two matters.

We need real action, not the illusion of activity. If there is anything in the epitaph of Conservative government over the past 10 years it will be that they were masters of creating the illusion of activity without actually doing anything. We need real action, but that costs money which has to come from taxpayers and ratepayers. We believe that people are willing to pay for a safer society, but we do not expect to persuade the Government about that.

**Mrs. Wise:** Before my hon. Friend leaves the issue of local democracy and the importance of local government, may I ask him whether he agrees that if we had better street lighting and better public transport it would be easier for people in general and women in particular to get out and about at night? Going out to meetings and other such democratic participation keeps democracy alive, whereas at the moment there is almost a self-imposed curfew and people stay in their own little boxes and become more and more afraid.

**Mr. Sheerman:** My hon. Friend is right. Those of us who travel in London have seen over the last 10 years during which I have been in the House a steady decline in security on public transport. That is because for 10 years the Government have exerted pressure on public expenditure. That is why we never see a member of London Regional Transport staff on platforms or in the trains. They used to be there for security purposes, but that is no longer the case. We all know that their absence leads to tragedies. Such people can stop crime on the tubes and buses. What Government would have thought of taking the conductor off the traditional London bus? He prevented clogging of the system and was a means of protecting the citizen. Why have we not had ministerial activity to stop the ridiculous policy of one-man buses?

**Mr. Bowis:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman about increasing security on public transport. He said that we have too many custodial sentences and his policy appears to be not to have so many people in prison. What would he do with all the people who are arrested for violent crimes? Will the women of London who wish to travel at night feel more secure when they know that Labour party policy is to put violent people back on the streets?

**Mr. Sheerman:** The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting matter with which I propose to deal later. We want to prevent crime, because if that can be done fewer people will need to be sentenced. We want a sentencing commission and a proper attitude to sentencing.

Most of the people in our prisons are not violent criminals. They have not been involved with drugs and are not sex offenders. Only about 18,000 people have been convicted of such offences and many of the other 55,000 should not be serving custodial sentences. They are in prison for non-payment of fines and other such trivial offences. Women have been snatched from their families before Christmas and we have seen two-week-old children snatched from their mothers' arms so that the mothers could be sent down for Christmas. That is not the sort of society that we want, but it is the sort that we have under this Government. The examples that I have given occurred in London in December.

The majority of people in prison are not violent criminals, nor, as I have said, were they involved in drugs or sex crimes. Many people outside Britain misunderstand that, and the Conservative party and the Government mislead people. Mr. Michael Grade is an honourable man and he and Vivien Stern should demand a broadening of the terms of reference so that people may have real information about the fear of crime. Such fear can be exaggerated and it frightens some old people. Let us tell people the truth about why people are sent to prison and about what life is like in our ghastly prisons. Let us expand the remit of the Home Office advisory committee on the fear of crime.

The Government do not want to admit the close correlation between reductions in public spending and increased lawlessness. That link was not mentioned in the speech of the hon. Member for Colne Valley. Every day people can see on the tube and on other public transport that lack of staff leads to disorderly conduct and the lawlessness that we all want to stop. We know that the vulnerability of the public increases the more that one ceases to pay for good public services. Good street lighting and other services, properly designed communities and good housing cost money, but they are much more effective than a good press release or television advertising.

I reiterate that we must give close scrutiny to the question of youth criminality and base our policies and answers on facts, not emotions. If one listens perceptively, one finds that good arguments come from both sides of the House. Government action should be based not on emotion, not on the latest spasm at the Tory party conference, but on facts. There are many experts around who know the answers—but the answers are complex, and the Government too often go for the quick fix, the gimmick, which they can sell to the public but which does not achieve anything. This morning we saw paraded the ultimate quick fix of capital punishment.

If policies are to succeed, they must have the consent of local people, which is something that the Government do not understand. If one is to achieve a lawful and safe society, one must involve local people in the community through democratic procedures. Tougher sentencing and a higher prison population have been shown not to work. That is not surprising because, according to the Carlisle report, only 7 per cent. at most of offences reach the courts. Of those who are in prison, 60 per cent. reoffend within two years. One must draw the conclusion that Government policies of the past 10 years and the

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philosophies from which those policies spring must be rejected. Policies must be based instead on specific changes to the criminal justice system that will be known to work.

Neither the Home Secretary nor the Prime Minister needs to wear a red nose today to look ridiculous, because their policies for ensuring protection of the citizen and safety on our streets and in our cities are ridiculous in themselves. Tragically, the real victims of their policies are the victims of crime, those disturbed by the prospect of crime who live in fear, and, last but not least, the criminals whose lives are distorted and ruined by the crimes that they commit.

1.33 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten):** I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who, as always, put his points forcefully and clearly. There is some agreement between us, particularly on the importance of preventing young people from falling into criminal activity. My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) gave the wonderful example of a local scheme that is doing just that. However, there is much that separates the hon. Member for Huddersfield and myself—notably, his great concern for the offender. We should all be concerned about offenders, but the hon. Gentleman demonstrated precious little concern for their victims, which is characteristic of most speeches of the past decade made by Labour Front Bench spokesmen.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on having given the House an opportunity to debate a subject of widespread concern. There is no one with whom I would rather spend a Friday morning in the House debating lawlessness. I am grateful to him for making it possible for me to participate. His speech will bear careful reading by us in the Home Office and by everyone who is interested in law and order. We also heard some notable speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), for Basildon (Mr. Amess) —he reminded us of the "I love Basildon" campaign—and for Streatham.

I hope that all hon. Members believe that in this country we are and should remain subject to the rule of law. Our laws are made by Parliament or have evolved over centuries in our independent courts. I wonder what those independent courts think of the Labour pledges that we have heard today to introduce a sentencing commission. The Labour party is now beginning to say what it is going to do, which takes us into some interesting territory. Intervening in the independence of the courts is clearly one of the things that the new Labour party wants to do.

Our laws exist to ensure that we can go about our lawful business. We are all subject to the law and, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said recently, we cannot choose to obey some laws but disobey others—a line that did not strike a resonant chord with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), to whose disgraceful speech I shall return. It is against the background of the rule of law that individual freedom and parliamentary democracy have developed.

As has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley and others on both sides of the House, hon. Members and members of the public are rightly concerned at the decline in standards over the past three or four decades. There seems to be less respect for the law and for lawful authority; there is more indiscipline and violence. We see the manifestations all around us. The smashed park bench, the graffiti on public buildings, the stench in public subways and the state of the lifts in high-rise blocks are all stark evidence of a change in individual attitudes to self-discipline.

I do not think that a few years ago we lived in a golden age; I am sure that 50 years ago young men got drunk on Saturday night and brawled in the streets and market squares. No doubt they did so 500 years ago, and will do so in 50 years' time. But the knife culture of some of London's streets was yet to be born 50 years ago. Violent crime, like crime in general, has been rising for more than three decades under Governments of both political colours, in times of high and low unemployment, of prosperity and economic difficulty, of feast and famine. If we are to understand why crime has risen, some deep analysis is necessary.

I certainly agree that the fear of violence can have a corrosive effect on people's lives, especially in our large cities, and no politician can be complacent while people fear crime. That is why I was so interested to hear the hon. Member for Huddersfield say—and it will be in the *Official Report* for us to read on Monday—that he appreciated that from time to time individuals' fear of crime was much greater than the reality. I agree with him. Often, however, the fear outruns the danger.

The Home Office research and planning unit is an independent body which produces research of worldwide standards, universally praised. Its findings do not always make comfortable reading for the Government of the day, but such work is rightly praised by Vivien Stern of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. Some new research from the unit tells us that, for example, while one third of women over 60 say that they feel very unsafe to go out at night, only 0·5 per cent. have experienced any sort of street crime in the last year for which we have records.

In general, the fear of becoming a victim of crime tends to increase with age, while the actual chance of becoming a victim of crime diminishes very sharply with age. I say that not to attempt to divert public opinion and debate from the central core of what we are seeking to do, which is to turn back the tide of crime of the last three decades, but to point to an additional aspect that needs to be considered and which the hon. Member for Huddersfield generously recognised—that sometimes the fear of crime can outweigh the actuality of crime.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To put my remarks in context—I want them to be regarded not as prejudiced but as balanced remarks—the Islington crime survey, an independent survey, suggests that the fear of crime is linked to real experience. Even on the figures that the Minister has just quoted, in any community there is a one in 200 chance of knowing someone or of being someone who has been the victim of crime. I was saying that we do not need yet another Government campaign to try to take people's eyes off the fact that violent crime is on the increase by suggesting that there is no reality to their fears.

**Mr. Patten:** In no sense are the Government seeking to do that. They are seeking to deal with the crime problem at large—both the reality of crime and the perception of crime.

When I visited Leeds, not Huddersfied, last Wednesday, the soon-to-retire chief constable of the West Yorkshire constabulary, Colin Sampson, said in a speech that he felt that the most important task facing us today is to transfer the fear of crime, whether real or false, from the innocent to the people who might be tempted to become criminals. The chief constable's remarks should be remembered by us all. We must transfer the fear from the threatened to the threatener. That is why we need to obtain the fullest possible view of the reality of crime. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Huddersfield decided to launch an attack on Mr. Michael Grade and those who support the new inquiry into the fear of crime. When he reads what he said in *Hansard*—it may also be reported by some newspapers—he may be rather ashamed.

Just as there is a relationship between the actuality of crime and the fear of crime, so also is there a relationship between the media and the fear of crime. Those who are listening to the debate can rest easy; I am not about to mount an attack on the media. It would be wrong as well as fruitless to suggest that the media should not report violent crime. Part of the positive duty of the broadcasting and written media in this country is to report violent crime and to bring home the facts. It is also important that, from time to time, violence should be portrayed in television drama, because violence is part of everyday life.

However, alongside reports of the rise in crime or of violence in television drama, I should like to see stories on television and in the newspapers of estates that were previously ridden with crime pulling themselves together by means of active tenants' associations. I should like to hear about improvements in design, about neighbourhood watch schemes that are leading to a reduction in the crime rate and street violence and about the efforts being made by the police to deploy their forces more effectively. It is up to us all to ensure that we supply good news to the media so that the media can decide independently, with their editorial freedom, whether they want to promote it.

We must also show the public that it is false to think that, inevitably and irresistibly, crime is on the increase. It would be wrong if people shaped their lives on a false premise. Equally, while it is right for violence to be portrayed in the media and in television drama, I sometimes wish that producers would show us the consequences of violent acts. Often they show us the violent acts and the knife or gun. I watch some television, particularly at the weekends, and it is rare to see the consequences of the violent action portrayed.

**Mr. Skinner:** That was done with Dirty Den.

**Mr. Patten:** I do not want to go into Dirty Den. I must be one of the few people in the House never to have watched "EastEnders", and I do not intend to break my record. I understand that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, may have similar good taste and the whole House recognises it.

It is critical for part of the story line sometimes to be about how awful it is to be stabbed or in a wheelchair for the rest of one's life. It is important to take the audience into the minds of the grieving parents or the sorrowing wife or husband. I hope that there can be all-party agreement at least on that.

**Mr. Sheerman:** I should like to agree, Dirty Den notwithstanding, but the American presidential commission on violence and the media, which must be 15 or 18 years old by now, claimed that when the great director, Sam Peckinpah, depicted violence horrifically in "The Wild Bunch" and other Westerns, it was the greatest stimulant to emulation, rather than the type of violence that the Minister is describing. I urge a little caution and more thought about whether gory details of the results of a shooting or stabbing would have the effect that he suggests. I can understand the thrust of the emotional response, but I do not think that scientific work would back him up.

**Mr. Patten:** I was not suggesting that we show gory details. I have rather a weak stomach for such portrayals on screen. I was saying that the consequences of grief and human suffering can make just as good drama as the gory details of the actions. Mr. Grade and his committee will have a chance to look at these issues and to report back on them in December, and we wish that committee well.

The problems cannot be solved by the Government alone. My hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley and for Basildon and others referred to the fact that the presence of more police officers on our streets helps to reassure people. That is why the Government have increased police manpower and there are 13,500 more police in England and Wales and more than 7,600 civilian staff now than in 1979. A further 1,100 police are to come in 1989-90.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about the potential growth—it is hardly there—of vigilantism and the Guardian Angels. We want the public to support the police. They do that in neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels. We want them to be the eyes and ears of the police. If they wish to give practical support, and be the arms and legs of the police, they should join the special constables. We are in favour of active citizens becoming special constables. We do not approve of private forces roaming the country on underground railways or elsewhere.

Several hon. Members have shown their interest in being special constables. For many years, my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) was a special constable, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, until he had to put on plain clothes in the Government Whips Office later in his career.

**Mr. Skinner:** What is the hon. Gentleman now then?

**Mr. Patten:** My hon. Friend is now putting the excellent experience that he gained as a special constable on the streets of the capital to good use as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. He is the only one of us in the Home Office who can speak with certainty about what it is like to put a hand on the shoulder and take someone down to the station. We are a deeply experienced Government.

The roots of crime, which the police and the special constables who help them, have to deal with begin with the young. My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley

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suggested, in his complex and interesting remarks, that the media, schools, Churches and, in particular, families, had a special responsibility to prevent youngsters from offending. I agree but I remind him of the powers that the courts already have to make parents responsible for their children, which was one of the themes of his speech.

First, when juveniles—those under 17—are charged, their parents can be required to attend court, which is good because they will be confronted with the fact that their children have offended and with the consequences of that. Secondly, if children are convicted, their parents can be required by the court to pay the fines, costs or compensation which are imposed on their children. Thirdly, although, rightly, children under 10 in this country cannot be prosecuted for criminal offences, juveniles can be taken to court for care proceedings, when there are grounds for doing so. One such ground is when the child is beyond the care of his or her parents.

It is clear that a formidable range of powers already exist and we should make fuller use of them to make parents face up to their responsibilities. For example, in 1987, only about 20 to 25 per cent. of parents were ordered to pay their children's fines. It is essential that courts should use that and other powers more extensively. The Government are considering whether there are other ways in which parents can be encouraged to take their responsibilities more seriously and to be more effective in carrying them out—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley is very concerned about that. This is a difficult matter which involves personal freedom and complex issues but, if we wish to reduce crime, it is crucial to pay special attention to it.

In particular, it is important to do all that we can to divert young people from crime. That is why I was very pleased to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham said about what was happening in Lambeth, where local businesses, the community, the police and the voluntary sector were all putting their hands in their pockets, their organisational abilities to the plough and their time to the needs of children by producing schemes to divert youngsters from crime. I was shocked at Lambeth council's refusal to support those efforts.

If the hon. Member for Huddersfield is so keen on facts and says that only a few Labour councils do not support such activities, he has only to go two and half miles down the road to Lambeth town hall to persuade the brothers and sisters to support them. He will be allowed on the premises—unlike the police who, until recently, were not allowed on council property without the permission of the local authority.

**Mr. Sheerman:** Like other hon. Members, I like to check my facts before I make a statement about any council. Why have hon. Members and the Minister constantly picked on one particular authority which is carrying out activities that they do not like? What about the dozens of Labour authorities that want to participate in the safer cities schemes and have been waiting for months to hear whether they have been chosen? Of those chosen, there is a distinct bias towards Conservative-held cities rather than Labour-held ones.

**Mr. Patten:** I do not understand the hon. Gentleman. A little earlier he said that he did not much care for safer cities schemes and described them as some sort of gimmick, but he now says that he wants Labour councils up and down the land to have them. A week or 10 days ago I received a generous letter from the Labour leader of Hull council saying how delighted he was that a safer cities scheme was to be operated there, as these schemes were beginning to work extremely well in Labour-controlled areas such as Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Coventry, Birmingham and a host of others.

I do not want to take up too much of the time of the House—as the hon. Member for Huddersfield did. We want children to grow up respecting the law. It was clear to me that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East does not particularly want children to grow up respecting the law. He stood in this Chamber, in which the laws of the land are made, and encouraged lawlessness. I note that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government is on the Front Bench to hear my remarks.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East hinted that there should be what he termed civil disobedience—in other words, breaking of the law—and that committees of 100 should be formed all over the country to enable people not to pay the community charge when it falls due. He seemed to offer himself as a leader of this great national movement. Because his speech was a little unclear, I intervened in it for the sake of greater clarity, and the hon. Gentleman agreeably and decently gave way. I asked him whether he thought that people should break the law, and whether he was going to break it. He answered, "Yes" to both questions.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield speaks with the full authority of a Labour Front Bench spokesman. He is extremely honest and always talks straight in the Chamber. Today, he must tell us whether it is official Labour party policy to promote lawlessness by non-payment of the community charge. If he says that it is not, I hope that he will make it clear to his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East that he condemns his stance.

**Mr. Sheerman:** The Minister knows very well what the Labour party view of non-payment of the poll tax is; we believe that citizens should remain within the law. I was not in the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East ( Mr. Barnes) spoke, so I cannot comment on what he said.

**Mr. Patten:** I invite the hon. Gentleman to return to the Dispatch Box and tell his hon. Friend to behave himself and stop inviting people to break the law.

**Mr. Sheerman:** We are not a Gestapo in the Labour party. We are a democratic party in which members express their opinions. My hon. Friend can make his own view clear if the Minister gives way to him.

**Mr. Patten:** The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. I have never heard such a pathetic performance by a Labour Front Bench spokesman in all my 10 years in this place. The hon. Member for Huddersfield shows no care or consideration for what the general public want, which is high standards of public leadership from both parties. They want the law to be obeyed——

**Mr. Harry Barnes** *rose*——

**Mr. Patten:** I give way to the allegedly law-breaking —or law breaker to be—hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, the leader of this great national movement.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** The Minister's remarks to the effect that I was inciting young people to lawlessness were a disgrace. I am not involved in forcing young people into difficult circumstances. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), I serve on the Standing Committee examining the Employment Bill. We have been trying in that Committee to protect 16 to 18-year-olds who are being attacked by having protection removed from them.

I tried very carefully to explain my non-payment of the poll tax, and my willingness to associate with people who, having thought about it carefully, were prepared to take action together. I deliberately said that mass non-payment would cause problems as it would place certain people in difficulty. However, I have respect for people who believe that the poll tax is so unjust that mass non-payment is a possibility, just as I have respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield, (Mr. Sheerman) who wants to fight against it entirely within the legal system. There are differences over what should be done about it, but there is no dispute about the obnoxious nature of the legislation. I was stressing that it is democratically and constitutionally unjust and therefore it might be possible to use acts of civil disobedience in the Gandhian tradition against it.

**Mr. Patten:** It is pushing analogy a bit far to suggest that the hon. Gentleman and Gandhi could bat in the same league. But I respect the hon. Gentleman, who always makes his views known. He is now on record as thinking that the law should be broken. He is doubtless one of a number of would-be martyrs who will spring up all over the Opposition Benches when the community charge is in operation for the first time, who represent not the loony Left, but the law-breaking Left who do not wish to obey the laws in this country.

Lambeth has been mentioned a great deal in the debate. It would be wrong not to reply to a debate, and I have always done so, so I shall say something about Lambeth. I recently received an object lesson in the effects that local authorities can have on crime. The hon. Member for Huddersfield said that we should get together with local authorities and use them as a vehicle for crime prevention. I co-operate happily with Labour authorities, with hung authorities and with Conservative authorities throughout the country and provide money for crime prevention.

Thanks to a kind invitation, I was taken to visit tower blocks in two randomly chosen boroughs—Lambeth and Wandsworth. The comparison was extremely interesting. They are two or three miles away from the House and separated by only a couple of miles. Both are inner city boroughs with a similar social profile and flow of incomes from central Government and from their rate base, yet the contrast in the contribution that a local authority can make to fighting lawlessness was startling, as my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham pointed out.

In Lambeth I visited a tower block where the tenants told me that they feared burglary and vandalism, and where police figures show that in 1988 one in 10 residents was burgled—a shameful record. There was no control over who was allowed to enter the buildings, there were no entry phones, no caretakers and no care for the tenants. The tenants told me that they never saw local councillors. It made me laugh—but the laughter was pretty hollow —that there was no lighting on the back stairs of the fire exit because there were no light bulbs. I asked, "Where are the light bulbs?", and the tenants replied that they had rung Lambeth town hall that week and had been told, "There are no light bulbs in Lambeth". I have heard of light bulb free zones, but it is an absurd suggestion that a council cannot provide its tenants with adequate lighting.

Lambeth is the most classic case and the closest example to the Palace of Westminster of a local authority which cannot run its own housing or clean its own borough. Its inability to deal with litter has made Lambeth one of the urban dustbins of western Europe.

How different it is in Wandsworth, which has a similar social profile, a similar flow of income into the borough, and, until three years ago, had a similar crime profile. I was pleased to see entry phones in the tower blocks in Wandsworth, and housing patrols to watch out for trouble makers on the council estates. There were also the improvements in street lighting that the hon. Member for Huddersfield wanted. There is also a Crimewatch scheme in Wandsworth which pulls together the crime prevention efforts of the different council departments. Wandsworth makes effective use of ratepayers' funds and national taxation. So, before Opposition Members lecture us on the need to fight crime or to co-operate with local authorities, they should have a word with Lambeth.

**Mrs. Wise** *rose*——

**Mr. Patten:** No, I shall not give way because this is my penultimate point and I should like to give my hon. Friends who wish to speak the opportunity to do so before 2.30 pm.

My penultimate point relates to crime figures. The hon. Member for Huddersfield used grossly inadequate statistics about recent changes in the crime rate. In the first three quarters of 1988, there were considerable falls in crime. Instead of using his outdated figures, the hon. Gentleman should have said that in the 12 months to the end of September last year, there was a 3 per cent. fall in recorded crime generally, and falls in recorded crime in all the metropolitan areas. Merseyside, for example, saw a considerable fall of 10 per cent. and Greater Manchester, which is not far from where the hon. Member for Huddersfield lives, had a fall of 6 per cent.

We are pursuing vigorously our policies to combat crime and to protect our citizens, but we are not helped by the Labour party's official policy. When I first became a Member in 1979, in our first period of office, we were told by the Labour party that unemployment caused crime. What an insult that was to law-abiding unemployed people in this country. That point was repeated again this morning—*[Interruption.]* Well, "unemployment" was the word that the hon. Member for Huddersfield used. In our second term, we were told that affluence somehow caused crime. I know what the next argument will be. When we see what I hope we shall all see—a continuing fall in crime —I expect that we shall be told that the reduction in the number of young people is causing that fall in crime, but that is not the case either.

The Labour party's analysis of crime is consistent only with its naivety. Instead of the schoolroom sociology that we have heard from the Opposition, they should have listened to the close analysis of the subject by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley, who opened the

*[Mr. Patten]*

debate so excellently by directing the attention of the House to the root causes of crime. The Opposition should have listened more closely to my hon. Friend, whom I congratulate on initiating the debate.

2.7 pm

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): The Minister said that when he became a Member he had one view about crime but that he now has a different one. I remind him that when the Prime Minister came to power in 1979, as well as saying that Labour was not working, when just over 1 million people were on the dole, she said that a main feature of her campaign was to clear up crime. I remember a phrase trotted out by the Prime Minister and the deputy Prime Minister at the time. They spoke about introducing a "short sharp shock". We do not hear a great deal about that now. The offenders were going to be put inside, with the result that crime would fall dramatically under the new, never-had-it-so-good materialism of the Prime Minister.

I am curious about why the Minister did not refer to the short sharp shock. Did it not work? After a short time the Government realised that it was just a slogan, like so many other things. It was a palliative which meant nothing. Now the Government have come up with another. It is called "electronic tagging". That is how the Government say that they will resolve the problem of lawlessness. We all know how that was invented. When Mark Thatcher got lost in the desert, somebody said, "Here's a good idea. We'll tag the offenders." The Government then dropped the idea of the short sharp shock and moved on to electronic tagging. They must now wish that they had put two on the mouth of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Such things are only slogans.

Today another Tory Back Bencher has come along trying to impress the Prime Minister so that when she has a reshuffle in the autumn he might take the Minister of State's job because the Minister has probably not been as dry as he should have been. The Prime Minister did not give any special favours to the Minister of State such as she gave the other night to the Secretary of State for the Environment who is one of the driest members of the Cabinet.

We will have such debates from time to time and the Government will still slag off local authorities. I am informed that in Derbyshire, as a result of the rate support grant being withheld and grant capping, despite all the efforts of the county council, the authority has been deprived of £15 million for the police. The authority's police bill is £15 million short as a result of the Government's attacks on that county council. I believe that the same attacks have been made on many other shire counties.

Not content with that, the Government have told the Police Federation, "Oh, by the way, we are going to take some of your jobs away. We are going to dilute the police force. We are going to allow certain sections to be privatised. We are going to change the system whereby people are on remand. We are going to use Avis rental cars instead of the police to bring prisoners in." No doubt the Government will also use Trusthouse Forte to provide the meals and will use the Guardian Angels to look after people on the Underground. It is no wonder that the Police Federation is fed up to the back teeth with the Government with all their slogans and promises over the past 10 years. In the face of all that, there is this motion on the Order Paper about lawlessness.

This debate implies that during the past 10 years under this Government and various Conservative Home Secretaries, somehow lawlessness has not been cleared up. Is there any wonder that the fabric of this Government is beginning to crack? Many of the Tory party's supporters in the media are now writing hostile editorials about the Prime Minister and about the end of this Government.

If the Minister of State is worried about anything at all, he should not have attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) about the poll tax. If he had any guts, instead of crawling to the Prime Minister, he would say to her, "Why don't you drop that poll tax, because we're going to lose votes? Why don't you drop water privatisation and one or two more of those things?" Instead, the Minister comes to the Chamber and trots out the usual parrot fashion stuff about Left-wing councils in and around London and elsewhere.

**Mr. Riddick:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Skinner:** No. The hon. Gentleman will be able to wind up, so I am told, if there is any time left, That is the usual practice. He will be able to have his say. I believe that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) also wants to speak.

Apart from the short sharp shock, when the Conservative party came to power, they also promised to set the people free. More prisoners have escaped and there have been more prison officer strikes under this Government than in the whole of my time in politics at this level or in local government. I have never known so many break-outs. Half a dozen films could be made every year based on the different plots and ruses for prison break-outs.

All this has happened under a Government who talk about lawlessness while we understand from books, some written by Tory Back Benchers, that spies have been engaged in breaking and entering for donkeys' years. In the Bill to reform the Official Secrets Act 1911 which the Government are trying to get through the House, the Government will legalise such actions. People will be able to do it willy-nilly and there will be no protection against it.

The Government have done nothing about City fraud. Some people may make £10 from social security while an army of inspectors is hounding women who are supposed to have been cohabiting. An army of inspectors is trying to round up those people, but what are the Government doing about the City of London, the Lloyd's insurance market, insider trading and insider dealing? They are doing very little.

The Minister did not mention fraud in the City of London. We have heard nothing about the fact that just over five years ago Peter Cameron-Webb and his mate Peter Dixon defrauded the insurance market of £40 million. That is well known to hon. Members on both sides of the House and I have not picked that figure out of the blue. I am not talking about someone who has pinched a tin of pilchards from Marks and Spencers. I am talking about massive crime.

What happened to Cameron-Webb and Dixon? They went to America and no one felt their collars, not even the

Minister who was a special constable. Why did they not send him over? Nobody went. They got away with 40 million quid. The Government have the cheek to lecture Labour authorities about lawlessness. I am not prepared to take it from the Government when those people have got away with it. What is the Tory Attorney-General saying about it? He has said that we cannot extradite them because they have been in America for more than five years. The Government talk about extraditing Paddy Ryan, when there are those people who have made money hand over fist. Every time we pick up the *Financial Times* we can see fraud oozing out of its pages.

Then, of course, there is the more topical subject—the Common Market fraud. When the House of Lord's Committee gets together from the sleepy den down the road and uncovers £6,000 million of fraud, we know that something is wrong. Those people have managed to find £6 billion of fraud. It is in all the papers today. It is in the Wapping press—the press that has backed the Prime Minister through thick and thin in the past 10 years. It now says:

"Governments blamed for failure over EEC frauds."

The report cites lack of exchange of information, insufficient powers to pursue fraud, few prosecutions, lack of proper auditing and administration and lack of publicity. All those lorries are going backwards and forwards over the Northern Ireland border and the cattle are following them. A report in one of the papers said that the cattle had now been driven over the border between Northern and Southern Ireland so often that they knew the way themselves. Every time they go over someone makes more money.

Another Tory paper says:

"Pigs and cattle smuggled across the Irish border and re-exported to qualify for refunds . . . invoices for grapes and wine were manipulated and wine strengths were understated."

That must have been Roy Jenkins doctoring the claret.

Then the Government come along with pettifogging little arguments about people who are prepared to stand up for their rights in Britain. They attack people who are trying to undermine the poll tax. When April comes there will probably be half a million people in Scotland who will not pay the poll tax according to information that is coming from somewhere not far from Tory party central office.

**Mr. Riddick:** What would the hon. Gentleman do about it?

**Mr. Skinner:** That is the scale of opinion and feeling against——

**Mr. John Patten:** Will the hon. Gentleman pay?

**Mr. Skinner:** The hon. Gentlemen will find out when it comes to England and Wales—if it ever gets there.

I do not want any lectures from Tories about our people. They should not only expose Labour councils. Why do they not start on Westminster city council down the road? That is run by Lady Porter, who sold off three cemeteries at 15p, and now they are valued at well over £3 million. There is no surcharge there. No one has been feeling Lady Porter's collar. The council has now sacked the chief executive and given him a £1 million handout so that he will not spill the beans.

Lawlessness and crime come in all sorts of disguises. The Tory party cannot lecture the Opposition about them, because the very ethos of capitalism is based on pinching money. Throughout the ages workers have been exploited. Industry has not paid wages council rates. Throughout the years the profiteers—the entrepreneurs—have trampled over working-class people, breaking laws left, right and centre. Millions of old-age people and the chronically sick and disabled are unable to have what is due to them—such as a telephone. The law is being broken because the Government will not pay the proper rate support grant. I am not prepared to have lectures from the Conservative Government about crime and lawlessness. They have practiced it all their lives. It is time that we saw the back of them.

2.19 pm

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): The speech of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was Parliament's contributiion to Comic Relief. As hon. Members leave, there will be a retiring collection. As usual, we enjoyed the hon. Gentleman's contribution.

The definitions of lawlessness that the hon. Gentleman discovered were interesting and, of course, "lawlessness" is an interesting term. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) used that term when he began this debate rather than that usually distinguished lady, Laura Norden. Lawlessness can mean the abuse of the law—that is how we tend to think of it—but it can also mean that no law is available or that people are practising outside the law. In "Childe Harold" Lord Byron, or was it Bobby Robson, referred to:

"Albania's chief—whose dread command is lawless law".

One can appreciate the dangers that could arise, if one was not careful. I would stick to Beachcomber's definition:

"Justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be believed."

Any hon. Member speaking to his constituents on their doorstep will think of that phrase because they tend to be worried about the safety of the individual—"I do not feel safe"—and the safety of property—"I am concerned about my motor car, my house and so on". They are also worried about the enforcement of the law—"Where are the police?". There is a general tendency to say, "What are they doing about this?" We should be concerned not about "them" but about "us". As a community we have a responsibility to solve the problem and work together to combat crime.

The Government are doing a tremendous amount and my hon. Friend the Minister outlined some of the actions of which the Government are rightly proud. Such policies are evident in my borough of Wandsworth where there is co-operation between my Government, my local council and my local community to solve some of the problems.

I was interested to note that many of the things that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) listed as what should be happening are happening. We could always ask for more, but the hon. Gentleman only suggested something entirely different regarding custodial sentences. It is important to remember that custodial sentences not only deal with the person who attacked or robbed Mrs. Jones, but protect the many other Mrs. Joneses who have not been attacked or robbed. Them and us equals cause and effect.

Many of my hon. Friends have outlined the need to study the causes of crime and to consider parental influences. We must consider what we can do to encourage parents to set a good example. Every time a parent throws a cigarette packet out of a car window he is encouraging

*[Mr. John Bowis]*

his children in the back seat to asume that that is the pattern of behaviour to follow. Those children will go on to throw their sweet wrappers and McDonalds wrappers on the streets. They will become the litter bugs, the graffiti experts and the fly tippers of the future. We must communicate to parents the extraordinary importance of their role of bringing up the next generation. Schools must play their part, too.

It is also important to consider the role of churches, which sometimes forgive the sinner, but forget to condemn the sin. One needs to do both. The new versionof the Good Samaritan is "Stop! Stop! You need help", but it appears to offer help to the man who has perpetrated the crime rather than the victim. The churches must consider their teachings to see whether they can also contribute to a better society.

My hon. Friends have referred to violence on television, and it is also important to consider the way in which television glamourises petty crime. Often the characters in soap operas are petty criminals—the shoplifter or the fellow who drinks too much and half assaults his girl friend. Those images are as bad as examples of serious violent crime. Television must consider its responsibilities.

Local councils, which have been referred to many times in the debate, have an important role to play in supporting crime prevention and in planning their estates. If estates are properly planned, they present fewer opportunities for crime. Many authorities, of which mine is one, are removing some of the walkways by which villains escape, putting in lights and removing some of the dark corners.

I take seriously the point made about providing play areas. Perhaps in the past we have underestimated that matter. When we give children the challenge of adventure playgrounds and other play areas to suit their age, we are providing them with a challenge within society, and that discourages them from looking for challenges outside society. Perhaps we should look more closely at that. Shops have a role to play. The shopkeeper who sells drink to the under-age customer cannot complain when that customer consumes too much of it and breaks into the shopkeeper's premises. The same reasoning applies to other forms of illegal sales to minors.

We are looking for co-operative effort. I used to be in insurance broking, and I worked closely with the police in crime prevention campaigns. At that time the figures showed that there was a house burglary every two minutes, the average burglary took 90 seconds, and most of them happened between 2 o'clock and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The police alone cannot combat a 90-second burglary because, whether they are on the beat or even in fast cars, they cannot get there quickly enough.

Householders must take precautions, and we must get that message across. By all means they should take out insurance, but they should also fit solid doors, locks on accessible windows, door bolts and door viewers and chains. Householders should mark their property so that if it is stolen it can be retrieved. Above all, they should join neighbourhood watch schemes which bring down the crime rate. If we all work co-operatively, we can reduce crime.

We want to see the law enforced, and nowhere is that clearer than in the context of the enforcement of traffic laws in London. Police or council operatives should be around to ensure that "no waiting" restrictions are obeyed. People otherwise find their own ways to dodge the law, and that leads to a pattern of law breaking.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley on raising this important issue, and I also congratulate hon. Members who have contributed to the debate. I hope that the message will be heard by the Government, and that even more action along the present excellent lines will be taken.

2.27 pm

**Mr. Riddick:** One of the articles that I read when preparing for the debate started by referring to a minute that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office sent to his Home Office officials when he went to the Department. It asked the simple question, "Please, what causes crime?" I do not know whether the debate has enlightened him on the causes of crime, but from his comments it seems that he and I may well be in agreement about many of the basic underlying causes.

The debate had two purposes. The first was to raise in the House the fears of ordinary people about the breakdown of law and order. Secondly, it has provided a useful opportunity to examine some of the underlying reasons for the growth in lawlessness. Opposition Members should not be allowed to get away with suggesting that crime is rising inexorably. As my hon. Friends have said, crime has come down over the past year, and we are beginning to see a turning point as the efforts of the Government begin to bite.

If it has done only one thing, the debate has dug out the lawbreakers in the Opposition. I did not expect the title of the debate to be so abused. I suggested that the problems of lawlessness should be the title of the debate. In his speech the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) outlined to the British people the advantages of lawlessness. He advocated breaking the law. I complained earlier about the lack of leadership among opinion formers and among politicians. We have had two appalling examples of that—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East advocated that people should break the law, and the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who is the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, refused to condemn his hon. Friend for advocating that action. I accept the reassurances of the hon. Member for Huddersfield that he believes that the law should not be broken but respected, but he has, without question, a duty to condemn his hon. Friend for advocating that the law should be broken. I have no doubt that those chickens will come home to roost in future years.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.*

# Orders of the Day

## Private Members' Bills

### FUNERAL INDUSTRY (CODE OF PRACTICE) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd):** I cannot put the Question because the Bill has not been printed.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### LONDON GOVERNMENT BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### HARE COURSING BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### JUNIOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS (REGULATION OF HOURS) BILL [*LORDS*]

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 April.*

### MEMBERS' INTERESTS (REGISTER OF ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS, &c)

*Resolved,*

That the Resolution of the House of 17th December 1985 relating to Register of Members' Interests be amended, in the third sub-paragraph, by leaving out the words "All Party and Registered Groups", and inserting the words "All Party Groups, Parliamentary Groups and Groups whose membership is open to Members of either House of more than one party".—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That if Tuesday 14th March is an allotted day as provided under the Order [23rd January] relating to Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill (Allocation of Time), Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock interrupt proceedings on any Ways and Means Motion, and any Debate thereon shall stand adjourned.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

### SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

*Ordered,*

That, notwithstanding that the Scottish Grand Committee may not have reported that it has considered the matter of the National Health Service in Scotland, the Committee may at its meeting on 20th March consider the matter of Scottish Enterprise, referred to it on 27th February.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

## Rate Support Grant (Derbyshire)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

2.31 pm

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): About a fortnight or three weeks ago, I intended to raise the matter of Derbyshire county council and rate support grant, but it was late one night and a lot of Tories—about 70 in number—were tempted to ambush my speech. I was tipped off by someone who overheard the plot in one of the bars, so because I knew all about it, that great ambush never really came to pass.

All sorts of Tories were present on that night. There were the Derbyshire Tories who wanted to object to Labour's case being put, while others had come from the bar or from Lady Porter's flat after discussing the question of surcharges. There were also solicitors and barristers present. There were the Tory greens, the estate agents, the bookies' runners, and some from the South African tendency. All in all, the political wing of the SAS.

Now that I am able to raise the matter in a proper fashion, I will make the point that local authority work has changed dramatically over the past 20 to 30 years.

When I was on Derbyshire county council we were able to carry out the programmes and spend the money. Now the Government have cut rate support grant repeatedly throughout the country, notwithstanding the large-scale increase in the need for services. The school-leaving age has risen twice, ending up at 16. More young people go to universities and polytechnics—although not enough—which has imposed an increased strain on local government. We have also had to bear the cost of additional administration.

All in all, one would think that, in a decent world, rate support grant would have been raised because of those extra demands. In the past 20 or 30 years many more people have come to own private cars, and road traffic has increased massively. The problem is not just police cars but general road maintenance, and there are more bypasses. All that means that local government, including Derbyshire county council, needs more money.

Earlier today we discussed the growth in crime, and I pointed out that cuts in rate support grant had lost the Derbyshire police about £15 million. Over the past 20 years we have also had to contend with demographic changes. Most counties have an aging population, with 20 per cent. of pensionable age. That means that more services are needed. More elderly people also means more disabled and chronically sick people, who require more equipment, social services and telephones. Elderly people need more aids, meals on wheels, sheltered homes and home helps.

Local government should have received more money from central Government over the past 20 or 30 years, not less. Yet RSG and successor grants have been reduced from 61 to 43 per cent. nationally, and Derbyshire has been treated even more badly.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): My hon. Friend mentioned disabled people. Does he agree that Derbyshire county council has a fine record in assisting them? Ripley contains the Derbyshire centre for integrated living, which was established with council support, and in the running of which disabled people are themselves

*[Mr. Harry Barnes]*

involved. In Clay Cross, where my hon. Friend lives—he is one of my constituents—there is the Derbyshire coalition for disabled people, which also does fine work and is supported by the council.

The Government's Employment Bill hits disabled people by removing the protection that they currently enjoy in relation to dismissal notices. The period for such notification has been extended from six months to two years rather than steps being taken to ensure that disabled people generally receive full information when they are dismissed. That relates to their ability to obtain jobs, which will certainly interest those involved in the two organisations that I mentioned.

**Mr. Skinner:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I shall refer later to what we could have done with all the rate support grant that has been lost. I have a list of ways in which disabled people in particular could have been helped had the £121·8 million that the council has lost been available as a result of successive cuts during the past 10 years been available.

Local authorities have to run to stay in the same place. Derbyshire has increased its staff by about 8,300, but we are told by some Tory Members that they want to sack those people. They have put down an amendment to a motion on the Order Paper to the effect that if the Tories won the next election in Derbyshire they would want to get rid of them.

I want to let people in Derbyshire know where the cuts would come. The number of fire fighters has been increased. Will the Tories sack them? Because of the demographic changes there has been a dramatic increase in the number of social services staff. Will they get rid of those? Will they get rid of the extra people employed in nursery education? There has been an increase of several thousand in the number of home helps; do those Tory Members and their colleagues in Derbyshire want to get rid of them?

I said that the rate support grant nationally had been cut from 61·9 to 46·2 per cent. In Derbyshire it is worse. Since 1979 the grant has been cut from 61·9 to 37·4 per cent. Is it any wonder that if the Derbyshire county council Labour group wants to maintain and improve services it has had to take more money from the ratepayers? There is no other way to do it. Either we get the money from central Government or we get it from the ratepayers. Derbyshire county council decided to maintain its services. That is why a high rate has been fixed in Derbyshire.

**Mr. Tony Benn** (Chesterfield): Will my hon. Friend refer to a recent vote in a Chesterfield school? By an overwhelming 2:1 majority the parents voted to keep the school within the Derbyshire education authority's control, thus illustrating the confidence of Derbyshire people in that fine school's maintenance of an excellent education service.

**Mr. Skinner:** Yes. It was a very good campaign that had at its heart the views of Chesterfield people. It was an encouraging result. Ironically, that vote may help the Secretary of State for Education and Science. He has more schools on his plate than he bargained for, after the introduction of opting out. It had been decided to close some of those schools. Our Labour colleagues in Derbyshire made a conscious decision to ensure that services were maintained, even though it was difficult to do so. Against the most difficult odds, they have been extremely successful.

There are 23,450 home helps in Derbyshire. They look after not just Labour-voting people but all those who need their services. Nobody pays for their services; they are free. The number of home helps has doubled since Labour took over in 1981. The price of school meals in Derbyshire is the lowest in any shire county—45p in junior schools and 55p in secondary schools. The price of meals on wheels is the lowest in Britain—35p per head—and 750,000 meals are distributed each year.

During the miners' strike, the Derbyshire county council Labour group refused to pay the extra police bill. The Tory Government said that the bill had to be paid: that Derbyshire ratepayers—Labour, Tory, rag, tag and bobtail—would have to find £25 million. Derbyshire county council, and Opposition Members, led deputations to ensure that Derbyshire ratepayers would not have to pay the £25 million bill, with the result that Derbyshire ratepayers have not had to pay it. Rates were not increased, because of that deliberate stand not to pay money that the Government ought to provide. The Government sent in the police, so eventually they had to pay the bill.

Derbyshire also operates a travel scheme for the unemployed. Anybody who is unemployed travels for half price on public transport. I may be wrong, but I believe that it is the only scheme in Britain. It has been an antidote to what the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told people to do—to get on their bikes. In Derbyshire they travel on the buses at half price.

The Tory Government have used another method in recent years to force up the rates. They have introduced what is known as a grant cap, and Derbyshire ratepayers have had to pay an additional £70 million in rates. Many of them are Tory voters. I call on the Minister, who I believe is to meet some of these people at Matlock next week, to pay back the £70 million so that Derbyshire county council does not have to take the Government to court. We could save heavy court costs, the ratepayers would be better off and services could be improved. At least we shall be able to put the matter to the electors in May.

It is interesting to note that after the Government's decision to remove the rate/grant cap, the Derbyshire county council Labour group was able to reduce the rates. Rate/grant capping was imposed for three years. We told the Government that grant capping was forcing up the rates. When I was told last week that the Derbyshire county council Labour group had reduced the rates by 8p in the pound, I was not astonished. Many people were astonished, but I knew that, after the removal of the grant cap, Derbyshire county council would have more money to play with and that it would be able to maintain services and not sack employees. It proves my point that if the Government do not grant-cap local authorities they can set lower rates and provide the same or even better services. That has been proved in Derbyshire. I have now been able to put that on the record.

I hope that during the next two or three years, while they remain in office, the Government will look kindly on restoring to Derbyshire ratepayers the £70 million that they have taken away from them, so that services in Derbyshire can be improved even further.

It is important to remember what we could do with the money that has been lost. Since 1979 we have lost £121·8 million in central Government grants. We could have spent an extra £80 million on education, an extra £5 million on firefighters, an extra £15 million on the police, an extra £20 million on social services, and so on. Here are the matters which earlier I said I would explain. If we had had that money, we could have abolished all adult education charges, had 5,000 extra nursery places, a 100 per cent. increase in the number of youth workers, 4,500 extra teachers and lecturers, no school closure plans and an extra 1,500 personnel in both the fire and police departments.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** Despite all the cuts and what could have been done with the money, Derbyshire county council has an excellent record on education. It is one of the best shires. It has an excellent pupil-teacher ratio, it has the best ratio for special education and secondary education, and, by a hair's breadth, is second only to Nottinghamshire, which is also Labour controlled, for primary education. It provides money for adult education and for assistance for scholarships for working-class people and others to attend places such as the Northern college, which has a fine educational record.

**Mr. Skinner:** All those services could have been improved had that £80 million not been taken away.

The same is true of social services. If we had had that extra £20 million, which the Government have taken from us during the past 10 years, we could have had five additional day nurseries, 1,100 more home helps, who would have looked after a further 8,000 cases, two additional hostels for the mentally handicapped—we hear a lot of talk about care of the mentally handicapped, and here is a possibility of helping them—a 100 per cent. increase in aids and adaptations for handicapped people generally, four more day centres for the physically handicapped, a 100 per cent. increase in the flexibility care schemes for those leaving mental homes, a 25 per cent. increase in staffing at old people's homes and 10,000 extra telephones for the elderly and disabled people who are housebound and come under the terms of the chronically sick and disabled persons legislation. We could have done, and still could do all that if the grants were restored.

Next week the Minister has a meeting with the county council. He has a great opportunity. He can tell it that he will restore the grants. The court case would be dropped. We would save ratepayers' money on court costs, so everybody would benefit. We would be helping the pensioners with better services, and the disabled with all the services to which I have referred, and we would be providing a better, more dignified life for them. Young people would have better education. There would be no school closures or threats of them and the beautiful county of Derbyshire would remain as beautiful or become even more beautiful.

Those possibilities range before us. Clearly, if the Government cut rate support grant, in this case in Derbyshire but also in any other case, they will call on ratepayers of all views and descriptions to find extra money. What happens? If local authorities sack people, those people must go to the labour exchange, so they are paid for out of the pockets of ratepayers or taxpayers by a different method. What economic lunacy. We have an aging population with people living longer and more disabled people needing more services. It does not make sense to hammer local government year in and year out. Let local government expand those services so that they can provide them for the people who really need them in Derbyshire and elsewhere.

2.49 pm

**The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Gummer):** For the past few years until this year, Derbyshire has had the highest rate poundage of any shire county in England, even though it was operating the same system as other shire counties. Therefore, using a system which provides money for local authorities, it has actually done worse by its profligacy than any other county in England. It has wasted ratepayers' money and increased its rates every year.

Last year, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) pointed out that the county stood to gain an extra £17·5 million in grant for 1988-89 if it fixed its budget sensibly. It could have increased its precept by less than a penny. I need hardly say what actually happened: the county's spending rose by 8 per cent. and the precept increased by 13·5 per cent.—another 35·5p. That was nothing to do with the Government but was straightforward extravagance on the part of the Derbyshire county council, which is the worst run county council in England.

This year, we shall get rid of the grant cap—which was an attempt to allow the extra gains to be phased in reasonably. I cannot say more than that because, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, a court case is under way and, therefore, I am restricted because the matter is sub judice. Derbyshire lost more in penalties than other councils because it spent more than any other county thought was reasonable. The losses in its grant were the fault not of the Government but of Derbyshire county council because it overspent knowing perfectly well that in so doing it would lose money.

**Mr. Skinner:** Rubbish.

**Mr. Gummer:** From a sedentary position, the hon. Gentleman shouts "Rubbish". The last time that we were on the radio together, the hon. Gentleman shouted "Hypocrite". He finds it extremely difficult to contain himself when the truth is told because he does not like the truth.

**Mr. Tony Benn** (Chesterfield): Lectures on waste come ill from a Government who wasted £1 billion on the Nimrod project and waste billions of pounds on weapons of war when, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, everyone knows that there are pressing needs for services in Derbyshire. The penalties to which he referred were imposed by the Government for the purpose of cutting services that are needed by the people in that county and throughout the country. The Government could well afford to pay for those services had they not engaged in wasteful military expenditure.

**Mr. Gummer:** Thank God that defence is our first priority. The reason that there is peace instead of nuclear war in Derbyshire is the strong nuclear defence of this country.

**Mr. Benn:** Rubbish.

**Mr. Gummer:** The hon. Gentleman and his friends undermined the possibility of peace by giving confidence to the hawks in the Kremlin to believe that Britain would crumple. The ludicrous nuclear-free zone on which Derbyshire council spends its money is disgraceful, as is its policy of promoting propaganda in schools by overprinting the children's literature and documents and holding up the peace programme.

**Mr. Benn:** For the sake of peace.

**Mr. Gummer:** The peace programme came to this country only because cruise missiles were introduced. The right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends are like the peace movement, which led to Hitler marching on and made war inevitable, which discouraged rearmament before the war.

**Mr. Benn** *rose*——

**Mr. Gummer:** I shall not give way because the hon. Member for Bolsover has given me much to say. The right hon. Gentleman has done more in his time to undermine Britain's defences than almost anyone else, and I am not prepared to listen to more lectures from him.

In 1989-90, comparing like with like, Derbyshire's grant will rise by £23 million. Its entitlement will be £148.6 million, a substantial sum by any standards, representing more than 30 per cent. of the spending level for which we have planned. That means that Derbyshire has a real chance to cut its rate properly, not by the small amount by which it has cut down. It could do that because of the extra grant that the Government have given it. The trouble with Mr. David Bookbinder is that he has cut the rates by much less than he could have done. He has taken the extra Government grant but failed to use it as he could, and as the administration that will replace him will.

**Mr. Skinner:** I find it strange that the Minister is attacking the rate cut that resulted in Derbyshire's rate cap being removed. His Tory friends on the council in Derbyshire voted against that rate cut. The Minister cannot have it both ways. Has he admonished his friends as well?

**Mr. Gummer:** The rate cut is good, but not good enough. Mr. Bookbinder could have cut it by much more, as I made clear in my letter to him and as I shall make clear to him again when I take up his kind invitation to see him next week.

As Derbyshire county council has now cut its rates, it is no longer the county council with the highest rate poundage of any county in England: it is the council with the second highest rate poundage, the first being the Labour run county of Cleveland. It is not surprising that the two counties with the highest rate poundage are Labour councils, both of which receive considerably more Government grant because of their particular needs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) made a good speech on this subject in the House in which he compared Derbyshire with Labour-controlled Staffordshire. It was not a party-political point. He showed that the trouble with Derbyshire is that it is such a wasteful county that it spends more to distribute fewer books in the libraries and more to run less good services than its neighbour. It is true that much could be done to improve Staffordshire, but a comparison with Derbyshire explains why, whenever I receive a delegation of Labour Members in the Department of the Environment, they are happy to discuss other authorities but they look under the table and pretend to have dropped their pencils if I mention Derbyshire. They do not want to have to defend Mr. Bookbinder's running of the council.

**Mr. Benn:** Cheap.

**Mr. Gummer:** If Mr. Bookbinder ran the council properly instead of appearing to promote not just the council but himself in particular, he would be able to cut the rates even more and make up for the continual rate rises since he came to power.

It is not surprising that the people of Derbyshire showed clearly what they thought when given the chance to do so recently; I expect they will do so again in the county council elections.

As a result of this generous settlement, I have given Derbyshire the chance to cut its rate by 8 per cent. Mr. Bookbinder has failed to do that, and is therefore taking more money than necessary, having already taken vastly more than was necessary from the ratepayers of Derbyshire.

Less money should be spent on political propaganda on the rates. I have in mind the so-called impartiality of "Derbyshire Insight", whose headline reads:

"Your privacy invaded: Poll tax threat."

**Mr. Benn:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Skinner:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Gummer:** It is difficult to find a single truthful fact in that organ. It is entirely aimed at misleading the people of Derbyshire and at making them pay to be led by the nose. They pay the price, and the fact that the right hon. Gentleman supports that shows how shamefully he has descended in the evening of his life. After all these years he ought to have grown wiser rather than sillier. Page after page of party propaganda is paid for by the ratepayers.

**Mr. Skinner:** Put it in the Library.

**Mr. Gummer:** An example of something that was put in the Library was a document asking people to write in so that Derbyshire could protest to the Government about the changes in arrangements for libraries. The article did not say that the leaflet was printed months after the final date for consultation. Derbyshire was asking for advice after consultation was over. Even if it is running its politics on the rates, it is incompetent as well as wasteful.

Derbyshire has no right to say to the nation that the taxpayer should further subsidise the appalling waste of ratepayers' money which has been the mark of the Derbyshire county council's activities. I am looking forward to going to Derbyshire to say personally and directly to Mr. Bookbinder, "Derbyshire's difficulties are your fault, and if you do not change your ways and reduce the rates by 8 per cent. as earnests of the future, the people of Derbyshire will wreak havoc on you when the election comes".

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.*

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 27 February 1989*

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Ethiopia

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to evidence of genocide by the Ethiopian Government, in deciding whether to continue aid to Ethiopia through Lomé III and IV.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** The human rights situation in Ethiopia is of serious concern to Her Majesty's Government but suspending the aid provided under the Lomé convention—which is going principally to finance the development of peasant agriculture and helps to reduce the underlying risk of famine—would hurt the poorest sections of the population. What the European Community is doing, and must continue to do, is to ensure that the aid supports more sensible policies and that it reaches those for whom it is intended.

### Lomé IV

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he will be making in the negotiations leading to the drawing up of the Lomé IV convention.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** I am playing a full part in the Lomé renegotiation and intend to continue to do so.

At the ministerial negotiating meeting in Brazzaville on 16-17 February, at the request of the Spanish presidency, I was EC chairman of the negotiating group which covered financial and technical co-operation and a number of other questions. I also worked closely with my Community colleagues on other aspects of the renegotiation.

## PRIME MINISTER

### TVEI (Insurance Cover)

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Prime Minister what guidance is given to Government Departments regarding personal accident insurance cover in respect of pupils pursuing TVEI work experience courses with Government Departments; and if she will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The Department of Education and Science has issued guidance to departments on work experience in general and this includes advice on liability and insurance requirements. The Training Agency does not issue specific guidance to Government Departments regarding personal accident insurance cover for pupils on TVEI work experience placements.

### Rating Reform

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements are being made for Government employees and similar groups, including members of the armed forces and prison officers, to receive help with poll tax, either by way of direct reimbursement or by way of special transitional arrangements; and if she will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** All Government employees will, unless exempt, be subject to the personal community charge in the same way as other members of the population. Where members of the armed forces occupy Crown-owned accommodation and have no choice over where they live, and pay a community charge in excess of the service average, plus £52, they will pay a lower rate of accommodation charge. The reduction in accommodation charge will equate to the amount by which the community charge paid exceeds that threshold.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Schools (Local Management)

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from schools on local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Butcher** My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from school governors and head teachers commenting on aspects of the local management of schools (LMS). Many authorities are now consulting their schools formally on their draft LMS schemes. I am impressed by the hard work which is clearly being devoted to the preparation of satisfactory schemes.

### Teacher Shortages

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has concerning shortages of teachers in English, mathematics, languages, science, craft and arts subject teachers in Suffolk and Norfolk;

(2) how many vacancies exist currently in primary, junior, middle, high and secondary schools in Suffolk and Norfolk for teachers in English, mathematics, languages, science, craft and arts subjects.

**Mr. Butcher:** Information held centrally relating to teacher shortages in individual LEAs consists of annual counts of vacancies in maintained primary and secondary schools. For primary schools, these are not broken down by subject specialism.

The latest figures available relate to January 1988. The table sets out information for Suffolk and Norfolk.

| | *Number of vacancies*[1] |
|---|---|
| Primary schools (including nursery and middle deemed primary schools) | [2]23 |
| Secondary schools (including middle deemed secondary schools) | [2]32 |
| of which, number in: | |
| English | 1 |
| mathematics | 0 |
| languages | 2 |
| science | 2 |
| craft, design and technology | 2 |
| arts subjects | 5 |

[1] Full-time permanent posts only.
[2] Or 0·5 per cent. of teachers in service.
[3] Or 0·6 per cent. of teachers in service.

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has regarding number and reasons for teachers of English, mathematics, languages, science, and craft in Suffolk and Norfolk leaving the profession in the past two years for which figures are available.

**Mr. Butcher:** In the year up to March 1985, 472 secondary school teachers in Suffolk and Norfolk left the maintained sector. In the year up to March 1986, the number was 491. This information relates to all secondary teachers. Data are not available on the subject they were teaching nor on their reasons for leaving. However, the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions, in its second report, found that the proportion of teachers leaving the profession was generally low and that fewer than 1 per cent. left to take up other employment.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate for all the schools which have so far applied for grant-maintained status those which local authorities intend to close.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The following schools have applied for grant-maintained status under the Education Reform Act 1988, and are subject to proposals to cease to maintain them under the Education Act 1980:

Hendon school, Barnet
Queensbury school, Bedfordshire
St. James's school, Bolton
Ramsden school for girls, Bromley
Bankfield county high school, Cheshire
Netherthorpe school, Derbyshire
Foster's school, Dorset
Lord Digby's school, Dorset
Sir James Altham school, Hertfordshire
London nautical school, ILEA
Castlemount school, Kent
Wilmington grammar school for girls, Kent
South Park high school, Lincolnshire
Blessed Hugh More RC secondary school, Lincolnshire

My right hon. Friend will consider both sets of proposals together on their merits but determine those for grant-maintained status first.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Ministerial Visit (Nottingham)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the leader of the council to discuss the safer cities campaign and other departmental matters when he visits Nottingham on 4 March.

**Mr. Hurd:** My visit is on 3 March and I have arranged to meet the leader of the council on that morning.

### Child Sexual Abuse

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the starting dates of research projects into child sexual abuse begun in 1988-89; how much was spent on each project to date; and how much he expects to be spent on the projects in a full financial year.

**Mr. John Patten:** One project on child sexual abuse began in 1988-89. This started on 1 February 1989. The study is examining the effectiveness of live TV links for child witnesses in the Crown courts, including cases of child sexual abuse. Payment of research grants is made quarterly in arrears; consequently no costs have been incurred to date. The study will take 12 months to complete and will cost £45,394.

### Confiscation Orders

**Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the offences for which *(a)* magistrates and *(b)* other courts can, upon conviction, issue confiscation orders.

**Mr. John Patten:** The Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 empowers the Crown court to make a confiscation order against a person convicted of a drug trafficking offence as defined in section 38(1) of the Act. Section 71 of the Criminal Justice Act, which is expected to come into force on 3 April 1989, gives a similar power to the Crown court in respect of other indictable offences, and to both the Crown court and magistrates' courts in respect of summary offences listed in schedule 4 to the Act.

### Plastic Bullets

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations cover *(a)* the training in the use of and *(b)* the firing of plastic bullets; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Those chief officers of police who hold plastic baton round equipment are responsible for ensuring that officers are trained in its use. Only authorised firearms officers are usually so trained. The position on the operational use of plastic baton rounds was explained by my right hon. Friend in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 19 May 1986 at columns *15* and *16*. This remains unchanged.

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when plastic bullets were first approved for use in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Plastic baton rounds for use in dealing with serious public disorder were first made available to forces in England and Wales following the riots in 1981.

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times plastic bullets have been used in England and Wales; under what circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Plastic baton rounds have not been used operationally in England and Wales.

### Crowd Control

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been carried out or commissioned by the Government into methods of crowd control; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The police service has long and extensive experience of policing crowds. The methods to

be used are a matter for the chief officers of police who keep their tactics under constant review, which may include research based on United Kingdom experience as well as practice abroad.

### Compensation

**Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people convicted in magistrates' courts in 1988 were ordered to pay compensation, other than for summary motoring offences; what was the average amount of compensation paid; and if he has any plans to raise the maximum amount per offence which may be ordered at a magistrates' court.

**Mr. John Patten:** The information for 1988 is not yet available. Information for 1987 was published in tables 7·24 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1987", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. There are no plans at present to raise the maximum amount of compensation awarded per offence.

### Animal Experiments

**Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of animal experiments for each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The information requested is published in table 19 of "Statistics of scientific procedures on living animals, Great Britain, 1987" (Cm. 515).

### Prison Statistics

**Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department as at December 1988, how many prisoners serving a year or more were from *(a)* the Republic of Ireland, *(b)* the Benelux countries, *(c)* the West Indies, *(d)* the United States of America, *(e)* the Indian sub continent, *(f)* South America, *(g)* the middle east and *(h)* Australasia.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The latest readily available information is given in the table below. The recording of nationality for citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and the Irish Republic is not always reliable.

*Prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1988 who were serving sentences of one year or more: by nationality*

| *Nationality* | *Number*[1] |
|---|---|
| Republic of Ireland | 370 |
| Benelux countries | 30 |
| West Indies | 510 |
| United States of America and Puerto Rico | 40 |
| Indian sub-continent | 570 |
| South America | 130 |
| Middle East | 90 |
| Australia and New Zealand | 30 |
| British and other nationalities | 26,940 |
| Nationality not recorded | 3,710 |
| All nationalities | 32,420 |

[1] Rounded estimates. Checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

### Irish Republic (Migration)

**Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of the Republic of Ireland migrated to the United Kingdom in each of the past 10 years.

**Mr. Renton:** The information requested is not available. However, it is estimated from the labour force survey that in 1987 just over half a million persons usually resident in Great Britain had been born in the Republic of Ireland, some 50,000 of whom had entered the United Kingdom since the beginning of 1977.

### Clergymen

**Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many clergymen who are citizens of the Republic of Ireland are presently working in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Renton:** The information requested is not available.

### Carlisle Baby

**Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will now place in the Library the information provided by the coroner on the case involving the death of the Carlisle baby.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We do not propose to do so.

### Security

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the security of the individual citizen in the urban environment at night.

**Mr. John Patten:** We have taken a number of measures which should help to improve personal safety at all times of day. These include an increase in police manpower; the safer cities programme, which will establish crime prevention projects in 20 urban, high-crime areas; and stricter controls on the possession of offensive weapons. We are also discussing with colleagues in the Departments of the Environment and Transport what might be done to encourage improvements in street lighting.

### Legal Advice (Detainees)

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of detainees in police custody exercise their right to legal advice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The recently published Home Office research study "Detention at the Police Station under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984", which draws on data collected in 10 police force areas in March 1987, indicates that of the over 5,500 detainees whose records are examined, some 25 per cent. had asked to see a solicitor. Sixteen per cent. of all detainees went on to see a solicitor and 5 per cent. spoke to a solicitor by telephone.

Where no advice was received, this was often because the detainee changed his mind, but in a third of such cases the police were unsuccessful in contacting a solicitor. Access to legal advice was delayed by the police in about 1 per cent. of cases.

## Terrorism

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all incidents of terrorist activity in Great Britain since 1979 which are attributable to groups connected with Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Hurd:** The table lists those terrorist incidents resulting in casualties. All were bomb incidents. There have also been a number of other incidents not resulting in casualties, but a full list of these could not be made available except at disproportionate cost.

| *Date and location* | *Killed* | *Injured* |
|---|---|---|
| 30 March 1979 | | |
| Car park Palace of Westminster, Westminster, London SW1 | 1 | — |
| 17 December 1979 | | |
| Post office sorting office, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire | — | 2 |
| Post office sorting office, Charlton Green, Dover, Kent | — | 2 |
| 2 December 1980 | | |
| Princess Louise Regiment Territorial Army Centre, Hammersmith Road, London W6 | — | 5 |
| 10 October 1981 | | |
| Ebury Bridge Road, London SW1 | 2 | 39 |
| 17 October 1981 | | |
| 76 South Croxted Road, London SE21 | — | 1 |
| 26 October 1981 | | |
| Wimpy bar, Oxford Street, London W1 | 1 | — |
| 23 November 1981 | | |
| Government House, Woolwich New Road, London SE18 | — | 2 |
| 20 July 1982 | | |
| South Carriage Road, Hyde Park, London W1 | 4 | 28 |
| Regents Park, London NW1 | 7 | 31 |
| 10 December 1983 | | |
| Royal Artillery Barracks, Repository Road, London SE18 | — | 3 |
| 17 December 1983 | | |
| Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW3 | 6 | 91 |
| 25 December 1983 | | |
| Orchard Street, London W1 | — | 2 |
| 12 October 1984 | | |
| Grand Hotel, Brighton, Sussex | 5 | 30 |
| 1 August 1988 | | |
| Inglis Barracks, Bittacy Hill, London NW7 | 1 | 8 |
| 20 February 1989 | | |
| Clive Barracks, Tern Hill, Market Drayton, Shropshire | — | 1 |

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all incidents of terrorist activity in Great Britain since 1979 which are attributable to groups not connected with Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Hurd:** Statistics of main terrorist incidents which have taken place in Great Britain from 1979 to date are listed. These do not include incidents apparently caused by extremist, nationalist or anarchist groups based in Great Britain, or by extremist animal rights activists. To list all terrorist incidents which have taken place in Great Britain since 1979 would have incurred disproportionate costs.

| *Date and type of incident* | *Location* | *Casualties* |
|---|---|---|
| *17 December 1979* | | |
| Explosive device | Turkish Airline Office, London | — |
| *17 January 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | Mount Royal Hotel, London | One dead, one injured[1] |
| *11 April 1980* | | |
| Shooting | Libyan journalist shot at Regents Park mosque | One dead |
| *25 April 1980* | | |
| Shooting | Libyan lawyer shot in Ennismore Garden Mews, Kensington, London | One dead |
| *30 April 1980* | | |
| Shooting | Siege at Iranian Embassy | Seven dead (including five terrorists) |
| *17 May 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | Queen's Garden Hotel, Bayswater, London | One dead[1], one injured[1] |
| *1 June 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | Kuwait Oil Co., New Bond Street, London | — |
| *12 October 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | Turkish Tourist Office, London | — |
| *12 October 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | Swissair Office, Leicester Square, London | — |
| *15 December 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | French Tourist Board, Piccadilly, London | — |
| *15 December 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | French Railways Office, Piccadilly, London | — |
| *28 December 1980* | | |
| Explosive device | Libyan Airline Office, Piccadilly, London | — |
| *23 June 1981* | | |
| Kidnap | Kidnap of daughter of Saudi General | — |
| *7 September 1981* | Attack on Iranian Consulate | — |
| *13 December 1981* | | |
| Car bomb | Connaught Square, London | Two dead, one injured |

| Date and type of incident | Location | Casualties |
|---|---|---|
| *26 February 1982* Hijack | Stansted, Essex | — |
| *14 March 1982* Explosive device | London | — |
| *3 June 1982* Shooting | Israeli Ambassador Argov shot Park Lane, London W1, plus find of bombs and weapons (N) | Two injured (includes one terrorist) |
| *31 July 1982* Explosive device | Middle East newspaper office, Cough Street, London | — |
| *9 September 1982* Explosive device | Lancaster Hotel, London. Plot to assassinate Turkish Diplomat (find of guns and bomb) | — |
| *31 August 1983* Explosive device | Leumi Bank, Woodstock Street, London W1 | — |
| *3 February 1984* Shooting | Murder of Mr. Mhatre, Assistant Commissioner, Indian High Commission, Birmingham | One dead |
| *10 March 1984* Explosive device | Five bombs in various locations in London | Twenty-three injured |
| *11 March 1984* Explosive device | Two bombs in Manchester | Three injured |
| *12 March 1984* Explosive device | Omar Kayyam restaurant and nightclub, Regent's Street, London W1 | — |
| *17 April 1984* Shooting | Shooting in St. James's Square, London | One dead, 11 injured |
| *20 April 1984* Explosive device | Heathrow Airport Terminal | Twenty-seven injured |
| *8 June 1984* Incendiary device | Indian High Commission, Liverpool | One injured |
| *5 July 1984* Kidnap | Kidnap of Mr. Dikko, former Nigerian Minister, London | — |
| *17 August 1984* Shooting | Murder of Mr. El Giahour, Bickenhall Street, London W1 | One dead |
| *12 November 1984* Incendiary device | Hindu temple, Heathfield Road, Birmingham | — |
| *30 November 1984* Incendiary device | Asian mosque, 18a Church Lane, Tooting, London. Attempted arson | — |
| *3 June 1985* Explosive device | Syrian Embassy, Mayfair, London | — |
| *6 June 1985* Explosive device | Travel Office, 8 Canans Corner, Stanmore, Middlesex | — |
| *15 June 1985* Explosive device | Dazzling New Peepshow, 33 Great Windmill Street, Soho, London | — |
| *16 July 1985* Incendiary device | Anti-Apartheid Movement Offices | — |
| *12 August 1985* Incendiary device | Warehouse at Eastleigh Airport, Hampshire | — |
| *11 October 1985* Assassination attempt | Plot to kill Indian Prime Minister | — |
| *23 September 1985— 7 November 1985* Explosive device | Suspected conspiracy, Central London | — |
| *21 November 1985* Shooting | Sikh moderate, Luton (Lidder) | One injured |
| *25 November 1985* Explosive device | Iranian Embassy, Letter bomb | One injured |
| *29 November 1985* Shooting | Exiled Seychelles leader, Horeau | One dead |
| *16 January 1986* Shooting | Sikh moderate, Middlesex (Sandhu) | One injured |
| *23 January 1986* Shooting | Sikh moderate, Middlesex (Toor) | One dead |
| *17 April 1986* Explosive device | El Al flight, Heathrow Airport | — |
| *24 April 1986* Explosive device | British Airways Office, Oxford Street, London | — |
| *19 August 1986* Explosive device | Kensington Video Company, Kensington High Street, London | One dead, 13 injured |
| *10 October 1986* Shooting | Sikh moderate | — |

| Date and type of incident | Location | Casualties |
|---|---|---|
| *18 July 1987* | | |
| Explosive device | Car bomb, Kensington High Street, London Mr. Parvix | One injured |
| *22 July 1987* | | |
| Shooting | Assassination of Mr. Al-Ali, Chelsea, London | One dead |
| *2 October 1987* | | |
| Shooting | Mr. Tavokoli Nabai and son Nadir, Wembley, Middlesex | Two dead |
| *11 November 1987* | | |
| Shooting | Shooting in temple, Southall, Middlesex. Singh Das Darshan | Three dead, two injured |
| *20 January 1988* | | |
| Poisoning | Iraqi poisoned with Hallium | One dead |
| *21 December 1988* | | |
| Explosive device | PAN AM jumbo jet crashed on town of Lockerbie, Scotland | 270 dead |

[1] Believed to be "own goals".

### Crime Statistics

**Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Bury for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** I understand from the chief constable of the Greater Manchester police force that some 12,500 crimes were recorded in Bury in 1988, 4 per cent. fewer than in 1987.

### Metropolitan Police

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing greater value for money from the Metropolitan police.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) and for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 2 February at column *386*.

### Prison Officers

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost of training a prison officer.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The cost of training a prison officer for the initial 11-week training period in 1987-88 was £3,549.

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Cubbon formula was not implemented in the Wandsworth prison dispute.

**Mr. Hogg:** The principles and the spirit of the Cubbon formula were preserved before and during the dispute at Wandsworth prison.

### Police Manpower

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the current level of police establishment in Cheshire; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 21 February at column *540*.

### Crime Prevention

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about current initiatives to reduce crime.

**Mr. John Patten:** Police manpower has increased substantially, and we shall add a further 1,100 officers in 1989-90. Under the safer cities programme, nine areas were agreed last year with seven more to be announced this year; two project teams are now in post and recruitment is well advanced in the other areas. The second phase of the Government's crime prevention publicity campaign was launched in November, and over two million copies of the new crime prevention handbook—"Practical Ways to Crack Crime"—have been distributed. At the local level, there are now 64,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales and it is estimated that some three and a quarter million households are now covered by neighbourhood watch schemes.

### Wakefield Prison

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to provide integral sanitation in Wakefield prison.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Wakefield prison will be examined during the next year to determine the best way of providing access to night sanitation, as will the other prisons without such access, to which my right hon. Friend referred in his reply to the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on 20 February at columns *506-08*.

### Wandsworth Prison (Police Officers)

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who paid for the services of the Metropolitan police officers deployed in Wandsworth prison; and how much it cost.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that although final figures are not yet available the cost of the Metropolitan police services provided at Wandsworth prison is expected to be about £975,000. The cost is being met by the Home Office prison department.

### London Underground (Police Officers)

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is paying for the Metropolitan police officers deployed on the London Underground; and how much are they costing.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that at present manpower levels the annual cost of Metropolitan police officers attached to British Transport Police would be about £1·6 million. The cost will be met by London Underground Ltd.

### Press Officers

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Government press officers he expects will be notified persons under the provisions of the Official Secrets Bill.

**Mr. Douglas Hurd:** My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) described to the Committee on the Official Secrets Bill on 25 January at columns *1128-29* how we expect the notification power in clause 1(6) of the Bill will be used. It is not the Government's intention to announce or list those who might or might not be notified within my hon. Friend's description.

### Greyhound Racing

**Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to what is *(a)* the general betting duty on off-course winning bets on greyhound racing, *(b)* the amount usually deducted from winning greyhound bets in off-course betting offices, and *(c)* the amount deducted from winning greyhound bets from horserace totalisator betting shops; and whether has considered introducing a levy scheme on off-course betting for greyhound racing.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* Under section 1 of the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981, general betting duty, on all off-course bets, is an amount equal to 8 per cent. of the amount staked. The amount of any deductions made in their mutual transactions is a matter for the bookmaker and the punter, subject to the requirement in the Licensed Betting Office Regulations 1986 for a betting office licensee to display a notice setting out the terms of which he invites people to bet. But I understand that betting offices customarily deduct 10 per cent. from either the bet or the winnings (if any), at the punter's choice, whatever the bet is on. The same applies in betting offices operated by the Horserace Totalisator Board. We have no proposals for legislation to introduce a levy on off-course betting on greyhound races, although we are considering representations on the matter.

### Horse and Greyhound Racing (Financing)

**Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will broaden his discussions on the 28th horserace levy scheme into a wider inquiry into the future financing of both horse and greyhound racing in relation to the increasing strength of the off-course betting market.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* It is not necessary to hold such an inquiry in determining what the 28th horserace betting levy scheme should be.

My right hon. Friend is considering a recommendation from the chairman of the Horserace Betting Levy Board that, following that determination, there should be an inquiry into the long-term financing of racing, and a request from the British Greyhound Racing Board for an inquiry into the off-course betting industry and its relationship to the finances of horseracing and greyhound racing.

### Race Relations and Equal Opportunity

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe his Department's principal achievements in respect of race relations and equal opportunity since May 1979.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 14 February 1989]:* Since 1979, the Home Office has taken, or been closely concerned with, a range of initiatives in respect of race relations and equal opportunity. These include:

*Race Relations—General*

The law relating to incitement to racial hatred was strengthened by the introduction of part III of the Public Order Act 1986. Other amendments to the Race Relations Act 1976 extended its employment provisions to offshore employment; applied it to decisions on planning and gave the Commission for Racial Equality power to issue codes of practice on rented housing. Under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, substantial funding has been directed by the Department to local authority services addressing the special needs of ethnic minorities of Commonwealth origin, for example for teaching English as a second language and for promoting better access to a wide range of services. The amount of local authority expenditure supported by this 75 per cent. grant has increased from £46·2 million in 1979-80 to an estimated £140 million in 1988-89. At the same time, the criteria for grant have been successively revised in the interests of ensuring that work is targeted and expenditure represents value for money. The report of an efficiency scrutiny, currently under consideration, provides an opportunity further to improve the effectiveness of the system.

Grants have also been made by the Home Office to national and key local organisations working to relieve racial disadvantage. These, and section 11 grants, support the ethnic minority business initiative under which the business advice needs of multi-racial communities are met by specially tailored enterprise agencies or outreach workers. EMBI is helping ethnic minority businesses to achieve their full potential within the mainstream economy and is stimulating the growth of new business.

The Department continues to support the Commission for Racial Equality in its work towards the elimination of discrimination and promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups. Its own Advisory Council on Race Relations continues to provide Ministers from all Government Departments with useful advice on race relations issues. Its two community relations consultants work within the Home Office and inter-related services to assist consideration of race relations policies and their implementation, particularly through training. Firm but fair immigration controls, which have a place in our strategies for good race relations, have been maintained and a rolling programme of visits to community relations councils and other ethnic minority organisations instituted to further understanding of policy and procedures. In furtherance of its commitment to treat all its customers and staff fairly, regardless of race, colour or ethnic or cultural origin, the Immigration Department has issued a policy statement on race relations to all its staff.

*Equal Opportunity—General*

A ministerial group on women's issues was set up in 1986 under Home Office chairmanship. It published in 1987 the Government's response to the forward-looking

strategies for the advancement of women which were adopted at the 1985 world conference at Nairobi, which ended the UN decade for women. The group also oversaw the preparation of the initial report to the United Nations on the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1986.

The procedure for making appointments to public bodies was reviewed with the object of making information on the appointments and the qualifications required available to women's organisations, and of ensuring that suitable women are included on short lists for appointments.

*Equal Opportunity and Race Relations—General*

Model guidance is being issued to all Departments to ensure that officials consider the equal opportunity and race relations aspects of all policy proposals to ensure that they comply with the Government's legal obligations and commitment to equality of opportunity.

*Race Relations—Criminal Justice System*

The Home Office has supported the police service in a wide range of initiatives including its increased recruitment of police officers from the ethnic minorities, improved training, the formation of community relations departments and policies for tackling racial harassment. In addition, racially discriminatory behaviour has been made an offence under the police discipline code.

The Department is committed to the elimination of racial harassment and, amongst other things, has led an interdepartmental working group on racial attacks and harassment. This group has examined the scope for a multi-agency approach for dealing with racial harassment and will publish its report shortly.

Home Office circular 75/88, introducing the Home Office statement on race issues in the probation service, asked each area committee to adopt and publicise a similar policy and provided a check list to monitor progress. Ethnic monitoring of students sponsored by the Home Office for certificate in qualification for social work courses has started and, following two surveys, the results of which were published in two Home Office statistical bulletins, work is progressing towards a permanent system of monitoring the probation caseload and probation staff.

In 1986, a public policy statement dealing with race relations in prisons was issued: race relations liaison officers have been appointed at all establishments and in most establishments there is also a race relations management team. A directory and guide on minority religious faiths in the prison service has also been issued, and monitoring of the ethnic composition of prisoners has been introduced together with local monitoring of regime services and activities. The provision of race relations training has been increased at all levels.

*Equal Opportunity—Criminal Justice System*

The Government gave support to the passing of the Sexual Offences Act 1983 which increased penalties for attempted rape and indecent assault and penalised kerb-crawling.

In 1986, a circular was issued to the police urging them to improve their assistance to women who have been the victims of violent attack. The Criminal Justice Act 1987 extends anonymity for rape victims and provides for compensation payments to women who keep a child conceived as a result of rape.

*The Home Office as Employer*

Since 1979, an equal opportunities policy as it relates to staff has been formally promulgated, with two equal opportunities officers to ensure policy is put into practice. To promote opportunities for women, a number of measures, including facilities for part-time working, job-sharing, flexible working hours and arrangements for special leave to cope with domestic difficulties have been introduced or extended. Opposite sex postings in the prison service have recently been introduced to broaden career opportunities.

Since 1987 all recruitment schemes have been monitored. Over 5 per cent. of Home Office respondents to the staff in-post surveys of ethnic origin say they are from an ethnic minority. Recruitment advertising campaigns take account of the need to attract ethnic minority applicants, and the Home Office is currently taking part in a pilot scheme to provide training for near-miss EO candidates, which has attracted considerable interest among ethnic minority applicants.

## Magistrates

**Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* stipendiary and *(b)* lay magistrates there are in England and Wales; and if he will list the cities in England and Wales in which stipendiary magistrates operate.

**The Attorney General:** I have been asked to reply.

In England and Wales on 1 January 1989 there were *(a)* 63 stipendiary magistrates and *(b)* 28,211 lay magistrates.

Stipendiary magistrates regularly sit in Birmingham, Cardiff, Doncaster, Kingston upon Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare, Pontypridd, Salford, Sheffield and Wolverhampton. When necessary a stipendiary magistrate has been authorised to sit in another area for a period.

# WALES

## Water Pollution

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the volume and *(b)* locations in Wales at which discharges take place into the aquatic environment of (i) ethylene dichloride, (ii) perchloroethylene and (iii) trichloroethylene.

**Mr. Grist:** The information sought is not held centrally. Information concerning the content of consented discharges to the aquatic environment is available in the public registers maintained by the Welsh water authority, in compliance with section 41 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

## M4 (Lanes)

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he has any plans to construct additional lanes on the M4 motorway in Wales.

**Mr. Wyn Roberts:** There are no current plans to construct additional lanes on the M4 in Wales. However, consultants have been appointed to undertake a study of traffic patterns on the motorway and trunk road network in south Wales area. This will identify if and where capacity is likely to be exceeded by future traffic demands.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those sections of the M4 motorway in Wales served by (i) two lanes in each direction and (ii) three lanes in each direction specifying the length to the nearest mile of (i) and (ii).

**Mr. Wyn Roberts:** Those sections of the M4 motorway in Wales served by two and three lanes in each direction with lengths to the nearest mile are:

| | *Length* |
|---|---|
| *Two lane motorway* | |
| Junction 22 Newhouse—Junction 24 Coldra | 12 |
| Junction 29 Castleton—Junction 32 Coryton | 8 |
| Junction 38 Margam—Junction 42 Baglan | 5 |
| Juntion 44 Lon Las—Junction 49 Pont Abraham | 12 |
| *Three lane motorway* | |
| Junction 24 Coldra—Junction 29 Castleton | 11 |
| Junction 32 Coryton—Junction 38 Margam | 25 |

## Local Authorities (Powers)

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to update the regulations governing *(a)* local authority planning powers and *(b)* environmental health controls in respect of the powers of local authorities to control or remove firms which undertake anti-social or unneighbourly activities under existing consent in residential areas.

**Mr. Grist:** The Government are currently reviewing the legislation relating to statutory nuisance and offensive trades. We have no plans to change local authorities' planning powers to deal with activities which have or do not need planning permission. Under section 51 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, local planning authorities may require the discontinuance of any use of land or its continuance subject to conditions if it appears expedient to the proper planning of their area.

## Council House Sales

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to change the financial basis on which the price of a council house is calculated or the percentage discount available to a tenant who seeks to purchase their home.

**Mr. Grist:** We have no immediate plans to make changes under the right-to-buy scheme. We do continually examine ways of extending still further the possibilities of home ownership.

## Imports

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the annual tonnage of imports landed at *(a)* Pembroke Dock, *(b)* Milford Haven and *(c)* Fishguard in each of the past 15 years; and if he will indicate for each year the total tonnage for (i) the United Kingdom market and (ii) onward transhipment to a third country.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The information is shown in the following table:

*United Kingdom imports through Milford Haven and Fishguard 1972-87*

*Thousand tonnes*

| | *Milford Haven (including Pembroke Dock)* | *Fishguard* |
|---|---|---|
| 1972 | 26,239 | 42 |
| 1973 | 32,113 | 83 |
| 1974 | 34,379 | 82 |
| 1975 | 26,315 | 121 |
| 1976 | 25,586 | 71 |
| 1977 | 19,026 | 89 |
| 1978 | 18,743 | 108 |
| 1979 | 17,539 | 104 |
| 1980 | 14,354 | 139 |
| 1981 | 10,932 | 103 |
| 1982 | 11,175 | 128 |
| 1983 | 7,984 | 119 |
| 1984 | 10,122 | 131 |
| 1985 | 10,664 | 139 |
| 1976 | 9,359 | 193 |
| 1977 | 7,151 | 193 |

*Notes:*

Figures compiled by the Department of Transport (1980-87) and the National Ports Council (1972-79) from annual traffic returns supplied by the ports.

Figures for Pembroke Dock cannot be disaggregated from the data held for Milford Haven. Statistics on goods transhipped onward to a third country are not collected.

## Planning Appeals

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of planning appeals lodged, together with the number granted by his Department, in respect of each planning authority in Wales, for each of the last three years.

**Mr. Grist:** Planning appeal records in Wales for years before 1989 were collated according to the district in which the planning application was lodged and not the planning authority responsible for determining the application. The figures for each district for 1986, 1987 and 1988 are shown in the following tables:

*Section 36 appeals: Wales*

| *District* | *1986* | | *1987* | | *1988* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Received* | *Allowed* | *Received* | *Allowed* | *Received* | *Allowed* |
| Carmarthen | 22 | 9 | 16 | 3 | 28 | 3 |
| Ceredigion | 36 | 10 | 31 | 8 | 57 | 8 |
| Dinefwr | 16 | 8 | 15 | 6 | 15 | 1 |
| Llanelli | 16 | 7 | 30 | 7 | 21 | 9 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 10 | — | 19 | 2 | 14 | 6 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 22 | 7 | 14 | 3 | 21 | 2 |
| Total—Dyfed | 122 | 41 | 125 | 29 | 156 | 29 |
| Afan[1] | 4 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 4 | — |
| Lliw Valley | 22 | 8 | 31 | 11 | 26 | 7 |
| Neath | 10 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 10 | 5 |

| District | 1986 | | 1987 | | 1988 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Received | Allowed | Received | Allowed | Received | Allowed |
| Swansea | 77 | 27 | 60 | 18 | 77 | 18 |
| Total—West Glamorgan | 113 | 39 | 111 | 33 | 177 | 30 |
| Brecknock | 34 | 9 | 26 | 6 | 29 | 4 |
| Montgomeryshire | 5 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 22 | 3 |
| Radnor | 11 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 13 | 3 |
| Total—Powys | 50 | 13 | 38 | 10 | 64 | 10 |
| Cardiff | 58 | 26 | 70 | 23 | 80 | 25 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 83 | 13 | 72 | 19 | 64 | 33 |
| Total—South Glamorgan | 141 | 39 | 142 | 42 | 144 | 58 |
| Cynon Valley | 17 | 3 | 14 | 4 | 22 | 2 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 16 | 6 | 10 | 4 | 21 | 4 |
| Ogwr | 51 | 6 | 42 | 8 | 62 | 12 |
| Rhondda | 19 | 12 | 10 | 1 | 14 | 5 |
| Rhymney Valley | 15 | 6 | 16 | 5 | 16 | 7 |
| Taff Ely | 40 | 15 | 38 | 6 | 21 | 4 |
| Total—Mid Glamorgan | 158 | 48 | 130 | 28 | 156 | 34 |
| Aberconwy | 30 | 9 | 33 | 10 | 34 | 15 |
| Arfon | 26 | 7 | 22 | 9 | 20 | 5 |
| Dwyfor | 20 | 6 | 31 | 3 | 34 | 11 |
| Meirionydd | 22 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 16 | 4 |
| Ynys Mon | 55 | 18 | 51 | 19 | 45 | 27 |
| Total—Gwynedd | 153 | 44 | 149 | 47 | 149 | 62 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 10 | 6 | 14 | — | 7 | 5 |
| Islwyn | 19 | 6 | 19 | 4 | 14 | 9 |
| Monmouth | 59 | 18 | 70 | 13 | 83 | 16 |
| Newport | 48 | 24 | 37 | 6 | 48 | 10 |
| Torfaen | 36 | 9 | 19 | 6 | 26 | 13 |
| Total—Gwent | 172 | 63 | 159 | 29 | 178 | 53 |
| Alyn and Deeside | 16 | 10 | 37 | 8 | 24 | 7 |
| Colwyn | 28 | 14 | 28 | 7 | 24 | 6 |
| Delyn | 24 | 3 | 24 | 5 | 25 | 4 |
| Glyndwr | 19 | 4 | 21 | 6 | 27 | 4 |
| Rhuddlan | 22 | 14 | 23 | 11 | 22 | 8 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 30 | 10 | 31 | 13 | 47 | 20 |
| Total—Clwyd | 139 | 55 | 164 | 50 | 169 | 49 |

[1] Now Port Talbot.

### Rating Reform

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the estimate made by each local authority in Wales of the cost of implementing and administering the poll tax, and the amount of grant each local authority will receive to cover its cost.

**Mr. Grist:** The individual estimates of local authority are not held centrally. After discussion with the local authority associations on an all-Wales basis, as is the normal practice, expenditure provision of £9 million was included in the 1989-90 RSG settlement to cover the cost of implementing the community charge. This was distributed between districts in accordance with a formula agreed with the associations and will count for grant support; but RSG as such is not hypothecated to individual services. For capital, the estimate made by the Committee of Welsh District Councils of expenditure of £10·3 million in 1989-90 has been met in full in allocations. These have been distributed between districts in accordance with the recommendation of the committee.

Discussions on the cost of operating the new system in 1990-91, and the level of provision to be made, will start soon.

### Welsh Water Authority

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money is being spent from public funds on behalf of the Welsh water authority on *(a)* television *(b)* newspaper advertising during the present financial year.

**Mr. Grist:** The Welsh water authority estimates such advertising expenditure at about £129,000 to date. The aggregate figure is not readily divisible into separate categories.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Visas (Iranian Nationals)

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which nations of the

European Economic Community will still be in a position to issue visas to Iranian business men in consequence of the Foreign Affairs Council decision of 20 February; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The decision of the Twelve is not expected to affect the capacity of member countries to issue visas to Iranian business men. Iranian business men wishing to visit the United Kingdom must continue to apply for visas in third countries as before.

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average time taken to secure a visa by Iranian nationals at Abu Dhabi, Geneva and other embassies used for this purpose.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The waiting time for Iranian and other visa nationals for personal interview, which is an essential part of entry clearance procedure, at the majority of diplomatic missions in Europe and certain parts of the middle east is currently less than three weeks. It can vary between two days (Athens and Madrid) and 20 weeks (Dusseldorf). Visit visas are usually granted within 48 hours of interview, except where reference to London may be necessary.

### Inna and Semion Frumkin

**Mr. John L. Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Soviet Union about Inna and Semion Frumkin who have applied unsuccessfully for exit visas.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Inna and Semion Frumkin have not previously come to our attention. We shall look into their case and consider what representations are appropriate. Any information my hon. Friend can supply will be gratefully received.

### Dimitry Shchiglik

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Soviet Union about the fate of Dimitry Shchiglik who first applied for an exit visa in 1973.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Dimitry Shchiglik has only recently come to our attention. We will now take every appropriate opportunity to press the Soviet authorities to issue him an exit visa.

### Rudolf Hess

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonweath Affairs whether any of the documents submitted to Chief Superindent Howard Jones by his Department on the matter of Rudolf Hess are in all or in part forgeries.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Such suspicions are unfounded and absurd.

### Ethiopia

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to ensure that Ethiopia's activities in the north of that country are brought to the attention of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We have always made clear our deep concern about reports of atrocities committed against civilians in Eritrea and Tigré. We shall refer to these concerns under item 12 at the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

### Mr. Charles Bester

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received a report on the case of Mr. Charles Bester from Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Staff from Her Majesty's consulate-general at Johannesburg have been in touch with Mr. Bester's lawyer. We understand that Mr. Bester has appealed against his sentence.

### Turkey (Human Rights)

**Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations on behalf of Mustafa Deprem, Suleyman Deprem and 11 others detained by the Turkish police in Gaziantep between 12 and 15 January.

**Mrs. Chalker:** No. We do not know the exact nature of the charges against Mustafa Deprem, Suleyman Deprem, and 11 others. In dealing with these and other similar cases, we expect the Turkish authorities to live up to all the internationally accepted standards concerning the treatment of detainees.

### Iran

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assurances he has received from his counterpart in the United States of America that the current policies of Her Majesty's Government and the European Community towards Iran, the middle east and against terrorism will not be undermined by negotiations or arms trade between that country and Iran.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** This is a matter for the United States Government. We welcome the strong support from President Bush on 21 February for the actions taken by the Twelve, in response to Iranian threats against Mr. Salman Rushdie and his publishers.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Justices of the Peace

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the number of justices of the peace there are in the Don Valley constituency by electoral ward and sex.

**The Attorney-General:** The information sought by the hon. Member is not available and could be ascertained only at disproportionate cost.

### Rapes

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases of rape reported by the police to the Crown prosecution service were marked for no further proceedings in 1988; and if any of these were so marked because of shortage of staff.

**The Attorney-General:** I regret that the information as to the discontinuance of proceedings is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Proceedings for rape are discontinued only where, after careful consideration by legally qualified staff and in accordance with the provisions of the code for Crown prosecutors, it is decided that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that there is a reasonable prospect of a conviction, or, where the evidence is sufficient, that the public interest nevertheless does not require a prosecution.

### Crown Prosecution Service

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest estimated annual cost to public funds of the Crown prosecution service.

**The Attorney-General:** The estimated net cost to public funds of the Crown prosecution service for the year 1989-90 is £175 million. This provision was included in the Government's expenditure plans 1989-90 to 1991-92, published in January.

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the estimated cost to the Crown prosecution service of employing a barrister to conduct Crown court trials, particularising both the estimated salary and the establishment cost.

**The Attorney-General:** The hon. Gentleman's question depends on the assumption that rights of audience will be extended to barristers employed by the Crown prosecution service. Any estimate of the costs of employing a barrister to conduct Crown court trials would depend on the civil service grade accorded to the barrister in question, the location of the area in which he was employed, and the date that he was employed to perform such a function.

### Lord Chancellor's Department

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the current annual cost of administering the Lord Chancellor's Department, broken down by convenient category.

**The Attorney-General:** Based on expenditure to date of £240·3 million, the Lord Chancellor's Department estimates full utilisation of the provision of £283·2 million for the current financial year for administration of the courts and other offices. This figure is broken down by convenient category in Supply Estimates for 1988-89.

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the current annual cost to public funds of *(a)* legal aid in civil cases and *(b)* criminal cases.

**The Attorney-General:** The net cost to public funds in 1987-88 of legal aid in civil cases was £178·0 million, and in criminal cases was £249·2 million. That is the last year for which figures are available. A breakdown of these figures is shown in the following table:

| | *Gross expenditure £ million* | *Receipts[1] £ million* | *Net expenditure £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Civil cases* | | | |
| Civil legal aid | 206·1 | 88·9 | 117·1 |
| Advice and assistance | 50·7 | 3·3 | 47·3 |
| ABWOR | 13·8 | 0·3 | 13·5 |
| Total | 270·5 | 92·6 | 178·0 |
| *Criminal cases* | | | |
| In magistrates' courts[2] | 114·0 | 1·8 | 112·3 |
| In the higher courts | 100·1 | 0·7 | 99·4 |
| Duty solicitor schemes | 28·0 | — | 28·0 |
| Advice and assistance | 9·8 | 0·2 | 9·5 |
| Total | 251·9 | 2·7 | 249·2 |

[1] The receipts consist of moneys recovered by the Legal Aid Administration of the Law Society in respect of contributions from assisted parties, and costs and damages awarded in civil cases on which the Legal Aid Fund has a first charge.

[2] These figures include payments and receipts in respect of legal aid in care proceedings which cannot be separately identified.

In addition the administrative cost of the Legal Aid Service in 1987-88 was approximately £37·5 million. This was made up of £25·5 million for the legal aid administration of the Law Society, £3·5 million for the DHSS assessment office, £0·6 million for the headquarters of the Lord Chancellor's Department, and approximately £5·4 million in the Crown and county courts and £2·5 million in the magistrates' courts.

### Green Paper

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General how many civil servants were seconded from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Lord Chancellor's Department to assist in the preparation of the Green Paper; and what was the cost of the secondment.

**The Attorney-General:** No civil servants were seconded from the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General what research questionnaires and surveys were conducted in connection with the preparation of the Green Paper by the Lord Chancellor's Department; and if he will make a statement.

**The Attorney-General:** The Green Paper on the work and organisation of the legal profession sets out from first principles the Government's provisional views on what the organisation of the legal profession should be in order to provide legal services of the right quality for the particular needs of the client. It does not proceed from material of the kind referred to, although certain published background material is referred to in the Green Paper itself.

### Conveyancing and Probate

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Attorney-General whether any investigations were made by the Lord Chancellor's Department of the effect which permitting banks and building societies to conduct conveyancing and probate would have on solicitors' practices in small towns and rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

**The Attorney-General:** None was made.

### Civil Service agencies

92. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he can announce any further progress in the setting up of Civil Service agencies.

**Mr. Luce:** Since I last reported to the House on 1 February, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that the Central Office of Information will become a next steps agency.

### Training

**Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what are the average days of training a year for each of grades 1 to 4 in the Civil Service.

**Mr. Luce:** The averages of days of training received in 1987-88 were: grades 1 and 2—1 day, grade 3—5·1 days and grade 4—3·2 days

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### "Fragile-Earth—Seal Mourning"

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the statement made by him to the producers of the programme "Fragile-Earth—Seal Mourning", with an explanation of the statistics therein;

(2) what changes he intends to make to improve the accuracy of the information contained in his import statistics relating to harp and hooded seals.

**Mr. Forth:** There has been no contact between Ministers and the producers of the programme. My officials discussed problems associated with statistics of trade in seal pup skins with a researcher for the programme, explaining that, due to errors in coding of goods, certain items had been wrongly classified to headings related to seal pup skins. These items included lambskins, leather and fox fur goods.

There is provision in the system for checking trade data to include specialised checks on specified commodities and/or countries. Action has now been taken to institute such checks in respect of headings involving skins of whitecoat pups of harp seals and pups of hooded seals (blue backs).

### Post Office Dispute (Edinburgh)

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what action his Department took to discourage the head postmaster at Edinburgh from recruiting casual staff, contrary to the Conduct of Employment Agencies Regulations 1976, from the McGregor employment agency, Edinburgh during the DRAS post office dispute in August to September of 1988;

(2) what was the expenditure incurred by the post office in Edinburgh in using the services of the McGregor employment agency, during the DRAS post office dispute in August to September of 1988.

**Mr. Maude:** There are matters which fall within the management responsibility of the Post Office, of which I would not expect to be informed.

### Television and Film (MMC Report)

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into television and film.

**Mr. Maude:** The Monopolies and Mergers Commission submitted its report on labour practices in television and film-making to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment, for Trade and Industry and for the Home Department on 9 February. The report will be published as soon as is practicable.

### Contracts (Iran)

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the value of contracts placed by Iran with Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom over the most recent 12 months for which figures are available.

**Mr. Newton:** The information available relates to the value of visible trade. The figures are as follows:

| | *12 months ended* | *Value (US $ million)* |
|---|---|---|
| United Kingdom | December 1988 | 399·7 |
| France | November 1988 | 187·2 |
| Federal Republic of Germany | September 1988 | 1,694·2 |
| Italy | June 1988 | 678·4 |

### Shipbuilding Industry

**Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide a breakdown of the relevant line of table 5.1 in Chapter 5 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm. 605), showing separately the amount of support from central Government given or planned to aerospace, shipbuilding, steel and vehicle manufacture year by year up to and including 1991-92.

**Mr. Newton** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* The breakdown of the line entitled "Support for aerospace, shipbuilding, and steel and vehicle manufacture" in table 5.1 of Cm. 605 is as follows:

| | *1989-90 £ million* | *1990-91 £ million* | *1991-92 £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Civil Aerospace Launch Aid | 131·3 | 73·2 | −24·1 |
| Home Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme—Interest Support Costs | 31·6 | 16·8 | 14·2 |
| Shipbuilding Intervention Fund (private sector) | 21·0 | 21·0 | 21·0 |
| Support for the Iron and Steel Employees Readaptation Benefits Scheme | 7·9 | 8·0 | 8·3 |
| | 191·8 | 119·0 | 19·4 |

**Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much shipbuilding intervention fund is included in the planning totals appearing in table 5.1 of chapter 5 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm. 605) for each of the three years covered.

**Mr. Newton** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* The provision for private sector shipbuilding intervention fund in table 5.1 is shown in my reply today to the hon. Member's question earlier. There is, in addition, a provision in the British Shipbuilders external financing limit for payments from the shipbuilding intervention fund in respect of those contracts for which the corporation retains responsibility.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Workplace Nurseries

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total amount of tax paid by parents on the benefit in kind of workplace nurseries and the number of parents who are taxed on this benefit in kind.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** I regret that information on which to base reliable estimates of the total amount of tax paid on this benefit in kind and the number of taxpayers affected is not available.

### Taxation

**Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people earn below the (i) tax threshold and (ii) lower earnings level of national insurance, broken down into women and men.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** I apologise for the delay in replying. The following provisional estimates are based on projections to 1988-89 of weekly earnings (adjusted to disregard short-term factors at the time of interview) recorded in the 1986 family expenditure survey.

Some 2·8 million employees (including part-time workers) earn less than the weekly equivalent of the personal allowance to which they are entitled: of these 0·5 million are men and 2·3 million are women. These include 0·2 million men and 1·6 million women with earnings below the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions. These estimates exclude people in receipt of statutory maternity pay or statutory sick pay.

### Estates

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what regulations there are governing time limits within which estates must be wound up.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** There are no time limits under either the general or fiscal law within which estates must be wound up.

### Corporation Tax

**Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of corporation tax paid by private companies in the United Kingdom for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** Payments of corporation tax excluding those made by public corporations were as follows:

| | £ billion |
|---|---|
| 1983-84 | 6·1 |
| 1984-85 | 8·2 |
| 1985-86 | 10·5 |
| 1986-87 | 13·4 |
| 1987-88 | 15·6 |

If the hon. Member also has in mind the exclusion of payments by public limited companies (and their associates or subsidiaries), I regret that the information on which to base an estimate is not available centrally.

### Pensioners

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many retirement pensioners in the county of South Yorkshire *(a)* aged 60 to 79 years and *(b)* aged 80 years and over pay income tax, also showing this as a percentage figure in relation to all retired pensioners in the county of South Yorkshire; and what are the comparable national figures.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

### Capital Gains Tax

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in how many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries the rate of capital gains tax is equal to the marginal rate of tax on incomes.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** In 20 of the OECD countries some taxable capital gains are taxed as ordinary income at the normal income tax rates. They are not in all cases formally treated as the top slice of that income, although this does not affect taxpayers' total liabilities. The overwhelming majority of these countries have no equivalent of indexation, which substantially reduces the effective rate of tax in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have a rate of capital gains tax as high as 40 per cent.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** Nineteen of the OECD countries which tax capital gains at income tax rates have a top income tax rate of at least 40 per cent. In addition, the Republic of Ireland has a separate capital gains tax with two higher rates above 40 per cent.

### Allowances and Tax Relief

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost of each allowance and tax relief for income tax, capital gains tax, stamp duty and company taxes.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** I refer my hon. Friend to table 21.1.25 in chapter 21 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm 621).

### Tax Deduction Scheme

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place a copy of his Department's report of its

inquiry into the working of the tax deduction scheme and 714 certificates in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* The recommendations of the efficiency scrutiny report are still under consideration. For reasons of tax security, the report itself remains confidential.

### Company Cars

**Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to bring the basis of assessing the value of company cars into line with other benefits in kind.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* The present system of scale charges has great advantages for the taxpayer in simplicity and certainty; it is widely recognised as better than the system of detailed individual calculations it replaced.

### Tax Allowances

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a comprehensive list of all tax allowances currently being allowed.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* A list of direct tax allowances and reliefs can be found in table 21.1.25 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm 621). Further information is available in table 1.7 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1987".

### Farmers (Taxation)

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there have been any discussions with representatives of farmers about allowing farmers who pay the poll tax for employees in tied cottages to set the sums involved against tax.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* There have been no discussions between Treasury Ministers and farmers' representatives on this point. Under existing law, any employer who pays any tax for an employee as part of the latter's remuneration package can normally claim a deduction for tax purposes. However, an employee whose remuneration package includes the payment of any tax on his behalf would normally be taxed on the benefit.

### Chartered Accountants

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many chartered accountants are employed by the Inland Revenue.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* Twenty-eight chartered accountants are employed in their professional capacity by the Inland Revenue.

### Employers and Directors

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the current level of higher pay for employers and directors for the purpose of taxing benefit were fixed; and what would be the level if it had been indexed.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* Employees whose earnings, including the value of benefits, are at a rate of £8,500 or more per year are liable to tax on benefits in kind. All directors are liable regardless of the level of earnings. The earnings threshold was set at £8,500 in 1979-80 and, if it had been indexed in line with inflation according to the statutory formula for increasing personal allowances and thresholds, the threshold in 1988-89 would be £17,000.

### Inland Revenue (Staff)

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many executive and clerical posts have been transferred in the Inland Revenue out of London and the south-east as a result of the move of work from tax offices to other regions; and how many posts have been created in each region as a consequence.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* The Inland Revenue currently has 4,664 clerical posts and 339 more senior posts in the provinces to deal with work moved from tax offices in London and the south-east in the last 30 years. The distribution of those posts is as follows:

| | *Clerical posts* | *More senior posts* |
|---|---|---|
| The North East | 586 | 37 |
| Central Scottish Lowlands | 1,169 | 74 |
| Wales | 174 | 8 |
| West Yorkshire | 617 | 45 |
| Greater Manchester | 2,109 | 158 |
| The South West | 9 | 17 |
| | 4,664 | 339 |

### Pension Plans

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer during the financial year 1987-88 what was *(a)* the level of additional voluntary contributions to occupational pension plans and *(b)* the value of the tax reliefs which they attracted.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* Comprehensive information in the form requested is not available, but it is estimated that additional voluntary contributions by individuals who were members of self-administered pensions funds amounted to some £370 million in 1987. No information on the tax status of these individuals is available.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Plastic Bullets

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what training is given in the use of plastic bullets; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** All members of the security forces who are likely to be issued with the plastic baton round gun receive full training in its use. This training covers the handling of the weapon and the rules of engagement under which it may be used. Only those members of the security forces who successfully complete the training and reach the required high standard of proficiency are permitted to use the gun in operational circumstances. Rules governing the use of plastic baton rounds provide, inter alia, that

they may be fired only when such a response is judged to be the minimum and reasonable amount of force necessary.

### Kilroot Power Station

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many construction jobs exist presently at Kilroot power station site, Carrickfergus; and for how long these jobs are expected to continue.

**Mr. Viggers:** About 500. This number is expected to fall to about 90 by the end of March 1989 as the project nears completion.

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether a decision has been taken to defer the start of conversion of phase two at Kilroot power station, Carrickfergus; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Viggers:** No. No decision has been taken as to the start date of the project. The matter is still under consideration.

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proposed start date for construction of phase two at Kilroot power station, Carrickfergus.

**Mr. Viggers:** The starting date for the construction of the Kilroot II is presently under consideration. The new capacity will be needed by 1995-96 and construction would have to begin by 1992 at the latest in order to meet that requirement.

### Short Brothers

**Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has plans for the capital reconstruction of Short Brothers plc in preparation for privatisation.

**Mr. Tom King:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given in the House earlier today to the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many proposals for purchasing Short Brothers have been received; and if he will make a statement about the likely progress of the measure to privatise the company including whether any legislation will be needed.

**Mr. Viggers** *[holding answer 17 February 1989]:* It would not be in the best interests of the privatisation of the company to disclose at this stage the number of replies received in response to the information memorandum. A short list of prospective purchasers is being compiled after which detailed negotiations will commence with a view to concluding the sale as quickly as possible. No special legislation will be required to effect the sale of the company.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Miners (Safety Regulations)

94. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the regulations governing the number of miners allowed in a heading with no separate means of egress; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nicholls:** I have received no representations on the existing legal restrictions (contained in section 24 of the Mines and Quarries act 1954) on the number of miners allowed in a heading with no separate means of egress.

Comments were invited and received during consultation on the proposals for the Mines (Safety of Exit) Regulations 1988. The Health and Safety Executive conducted full and extensive consultations on these proposals which included a series of meetings with the mining industry and representatives from the mining unions. The proposals were not submitted to the House until all matters on the draft were resolved and agreed with mine management and unions.

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the total number of unemployed people in Great Britain, using the same basis of calculation that was used by his Department in May 1979.

**Mr. Lee:** It is not possible to estimate unemployment on the basis prevailing in 1979. The unemployment count was then based on those registered at jobcentres or careers offices when registration was necessary in order to qualify for benefits. The introduction of voluntary registration in October 1982, when the claimant count was introduced, and other changes since then make it impossible to know how many people would now be registering under the old procedures.

**Mr Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the proportional increase in employment in *(a)* the education and health services combined and *(b)* the whole of the service sector since 1979.

**Mr. Lee:** Between September 1979 and September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there was a net increase of 4 per cent. in the number of employees in employment in the education and health services combined in Great Britain. In the same period there was a net increase of 12 per cent. in the number of employees in employment in the service industries.

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest estimate of the total number of persons unemployed in Great Britain using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development basis for calculation.

**Mr. Lee:** The labour force survey for the spring of 1987 gave an estimate of 2·88 million people who were without jobs, but available for and seeking work within the previous four weeks—that is, unemployed according to the ILO-OECD definition.

### Channel Tunnel

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the accidents so far on the construction of the Channel tunnel, their nature, and the ages of those concerned.

**Mr. Nicholls:** I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

## Employment Training

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of trainees on employment training; and how many are on placements with employers.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The number of people on employment training at 17 February 1989 was 151,000. This is a tremendous achievement after less than six months of the programme's operation. It is estimated that some 30,000 of these trainees were on placements with employers.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total size of the ET budget; if this sum has changed since *(a)* the announcement and *(b)* incursion of the scheme; and if he will give his reasons for any changes.

**Mr. Nicholls** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* For the period September 1988 to March 1989, the funding available for employment training (ET), excluding administration costs, was originally £491·3 million. This was revised in winter 1988 and spring 1989 supplementary estimates and is now £493·6 million.

The total size of the ET budget as shown in the Government's expenditure plan for 1989-90 to 1991-92, published in January 1989 (Cm 607) was £1·4 billion (including administration costs) for some 560,000 places.

This figure differs from the figures of just under £1·5 billion for some 600,000 places as published in the White Paper "Training for Employment" (Cm 316). The reduction in resources reflects the very welcome fall of 387,000 to January 1989 in the number of people unemployed for over six months.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportions of notified vacancies are in *(a)* catering and hotels, *(b)* retail and *(c)* are part-time.

**Mr. Lee:** Following is the latest available information which is also in the Library. A total of 14·3 per cent. of unfilled vacancies at job centres in Great Britain in November 1988 were in the catering and hotels industry and a further 19·5 per cent. were in retail and distribution. In December 1988 a total of 27·6 per cent. of unfilled vacancies at job centres were for part-time posts.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and which large companies have agreed to become employment training managers; how many places they have each been allocated; and how many of those places have been filled at the latest possible date.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Information is not available in the precise form requested because there is no standard definition of a large company. The table shows the position for those companies already operating as employment training managers with an allocation of 100 or more training places. In addition to these, there are several hundred other firms providing places for employment training trainees.

As the programme builds up to its target of 560,000 trainees in a full year, it is planned that an increasing range of employer-based training opportunities should be provided.

| *Company* | *Maximum Number of places allocated* | *Places filled at 31 December 1988* |
|---|---|---|
| J. Jarvis & Sons | 2,926 | 945 |
| J. Laing Construction | 2,338 | 805 |
| Henry Boot Construction | 950 | 110 |
| Invicta Training (Grand Metropolitan Catering) | 875 | 455 |
| Martin James | 735 | 337 |
| Geo. Wimpey | 666 | 73 |
| Mowlem | 405 | 46 |
| Comet PLC | 354 | 5 |
| Pilkington | 300 | 237 |
| Ferranti | 250 | 120 |
| Mill Garages Ltd. | 180 | 64 |
| Tower Radio Ltd. | 250 | 86 |
| Portals Engineering Ltd. | 250 | 199 |
| Marley Extrusions Ltd. | 200 | Nil |
| Ryder Ltd. | 150 | 108 |
| Team Greyfriars Ltd. | 150 | 150 |
| John Lawrence Group | 150 | 22 |
| ICI | 150 | 43 |
| Sumlock Business Services | 150 | 7 |
| R & D Associates | 158 | 158 |
| Simon Engineering | 110 | 67 |
| Coastline Ltd. | 100 | 35 |
| Strategic Marketing International Ltd. | 100 | 80 |

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all the local authorities who *(a)* are participating in the employment training scheme, and in each case how many places they have available and how many have been filled, *(b)* have refused to participate and *(c)* originally agreed to participate but have since dropped out; and in each case which is the controlling political party.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The local authorities participating in employment training as training managers are listed in table 1 and those participating as training agents are listed in table 2. Table 1 includes an indication of the number of contracted places, but information on those filled is not available. The tables have been drawn from information collected in the last quarter of 1988 and do not include many other local authorities involved in employment training as members of consortia or as sub-constractors to training managers.

Information on controlling political parties and on local authorities that have refused to participate or have dropped out of employment training is not available.

*Table 1*

*Local authorities participating in employment training as training managers*

| *County councils in England* | *Code for number of places available*[1] |
|---|---|
| Avon | 3 |
| Bedfordshire | 2 |
| Berkshire | 3 |
| Cambridgeshire | 2 |
| Cheshire | 3 |
| Clevaland[2] | 4 |
| | 2 |
| Cornwall | 3 |
| Cumbria[2] | 3 |
| | 2 |
| Devon | 3 |
| Dorset | 3 |
| Durham | 1 |
| East Sussex | 3 |
| Essex[2] | 3 |
| | 3 |
| Gloucestershire[2] | 3 |

| *County councils in England* | *Code for number of places available*[1] |
|---|---|
| | 2 |
| Hampshire | 3 |
| Isle of Wight | 3 |
| Kent | 3 |
| Lancashire | 2 |
| Leicestershire | 4 |
| Lincolnshire | 3 |
| Northamptonshire | 1 |
| Northumberland | 3 |
| North Yorkshire | 3 |
| Shropshire | 3 |
| Somerset | 3 |
| Staffordshire[2] | 4 |
| | 1 |
| Suffolk | 2 |
| Warwickshire[2] | 3 |
| | 3 |
| West Sussex | 3 |
| Wiltshire | 3 |
| *London boroughs* | |
| Barnet | 3 |
| Brent | 2 |
| Enfield | 4 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 3 |
| Hounslow | 3 |
| Kingston-upon-Thames (Royal) | 2 |
| Merton | 2 |
| Redbridge | 1 |
| *Metropolitan district councils in England* | |
| Barnsley | 3 |
| Birmingham city | 6 |
| Bradford city | 5 |
| Coventry city | 4 |
| Doncaster | 4 |
| Dudley | 4 |
| Gateshead | 4 |
| Halton | 2 |
| Kirklees | 3 |
| Leeds city | 5 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 5 |
| Oldham | 4 |
| Rochdale | 5 |
| Rotherham | 3 |
| St. Helens | 1 |
| Salford city | 1 |
| Sefton | 3 |
| Solihull[2] | 3 |
| | 4 |
| South Tyneside | 2 |
| Stockport | 3 |
| Sunderland | 3 |
| | 2 |
| Tameside | 3 |
| Trafford | 3 |
| Wigan | 5 |
| Wolverhampton | 4 |
| *District councils in England* | |
| Allerdale | 3 |
| Alnwick | 1 |
| Ashfield | 2 |
| Bath city | 2 |
| Barrow-in-Furness | 3 |
| Beverley[2] | 1 |
| | 1 |
| Boothferry | 2 |
| Brentwood | 1 |
| Burnley | 2 |
| Cannock Chase | 2 |
| Castle Morpeth | 2 |
| Charnwood | 2 |
| Chester-le-Street | 2 |
| Chorley | 3 |
| Corby | 2 |
| Derby City | 2 |

| *County councils in England* | *Code for number of places available*[1] |
|---|---|
| Easington | 2 |
| East Hertfordshire | 2 |
| East Lindsey | 3 |
| East Yorkshire | 2 |
| Epsom and Ewell | 2 |
| Glanford | 3 |
| Great Grimsby | 4 |
| Guildford | 2 |
| Halton | 2 |
| Harrogate | 2 |
| Hartlepool | 4 |
| Hastings | 2 |
| Hereford | 3 |
| High Peak | 2 |
| Ipswich | 2 |
| Kettering | 2 |
| Kingston upon Hull[2] | 4 |
| | 3 |
| Lancaster City | 3 |
| Leicester City | 2 |
| Lichfield | 1 |
| Macclesfield | 2 |
| Mansfield | 3 |
| Newark and Sherwood[2] | 2 |
| | 2 |
| Plymouth City | 4 |
| Portsmouth City | 3 |
| Preston | 3 |
| Scarborough | 2 |
| Scunthorpe | 3 |
| Sedgefield[2] | 2 |
| | 2 |
| South Lakeland | 2 |
| Southampton | 2 |
| Vale of White Horse | 1 |
| Wear Valley | 3 |
| West Lancashire | 2 |
| West Lindsey | 2 |
| West Oxfordshire | 2 |
| Weymouth and Portland | 2 |
| *County councils in Wales* | |
| Clwyd[2] | 3 |
| | 3 |
| | 2 |
| | 1 |
| Dyfed | 3 |
| Gwent[2] | 3 |
| | 2 |
| Gwynedd | 3 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 3 |
| Powys | 2 |
| West Glamorgan[2] | 4 |
| | 2 |
| | 2 |
| | 1 |
| *District councils in Wales* | |
| Blaenau Gwent | 3 |
| Cardiff City | 4 |
| Carmarthen[2] | 1 |
| | 1 |
| Ceredigion[2] | 2 |
| | 1 |
| | 1 |
| Cynon Valley | 4 |
| Dinefwr | 2 |
| Islwyn | 2 |
| Llanelli | 3 |
| Llŵ Valley | 2 |
| Monmouth | 2 |
| Neath | 1 |
| Newport | 3 |

| *County councils in England* | *Code for number of places available*[1] |
|---|---|
| Port Talbot | 2 |
| Preseli[2] | 1 |
| | 1 |
| Rhondda | 2 |
| South Pembrokeshire[2] | 1 |
| | 1 |
| Swansea City | 2 |
| Taff-Ely | 2 |
| Torfaen | 3 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 2 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 1 |
| Ynys Môn | 1 |
| *Scotland* | |
| *Regions* | |
| Borders | 2 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 4 |
| Fife | 3 |
| Grampian | 3 |
| Highland | 3 |
| Lothian | 4 |
| *Islands* | |
| Orkney | 1 |
| *Districts* | |
| Angus | 2 |
| Argyll and Bute | 2 |
| Caithness | 2 |
| Clydesdale | 2 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 2 |
| Cumnock and Doun Valley | 3 |
| Dunfermline | 2 |
| East Kilbride | 3 |
| Hamilton | 3 |
| Kirkcaldy | 3 |
| Lochaber | 1 |
| Midlothian | 2 |
| Moray | 2 |
| North East Fife | 1 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 2 |
| Wigtown | 3 |

[1] The code number for the number of places available relates to the following key:

| *Code* | *Number of places available* |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1-100 |
| 2 | 101-250 |
| 3 | 251-500 |
| 4 | 501-1,000 |
| 5 | 1,001-2,000 |
| 6 | 2,001+ |

[2] This indicates that the local authority has more than one contract to operate as a Training Manager for Employment Training. An indication of the number of contracted places available is given.

*Table 2*

*Local authorities participating in employment training as training agents*

ENGLAND

*County Councils*
- Avon
- Bedfordshire
- Cheshire
- Cornwall
- Devon
- Dorset
- Gloucester
- Hertfordshire
- Isle of Wight
- Kent
- Northumberland
- North Yorkshire
- Shropshire
- Somerset
- Surrey
- West Sussex
- Wiltshire

*London Boroughs*
- Enfield
- Harrow
- Hillingdon
- Hounslow
- Kingston upon Thames (Royal)

*Metropolitan District Councils*
- Birmingham City
- Bradford
- Calderdale
- Gateshead
- Kirklees
- Leeds City
- Newcastle
- Solihull
- South Tyneside
- Sunderland
- Trafford

*District Councils*
- Cambridge
- Peterborough
- Portsmouth
- Southampton

WALES

*County Councils*
- Clwyd
- Dyfed
- Gwent
- Gwynedd
- Mid Glamorgan
- Powys
- South Glamorgan
- West Glamorgan

SCOTLAND

*Regions*
- Borders
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Fife
- Grampian

*Islands*
- Orkney

*Districts*
- Wigtown
- Caithness

## Legionella

**Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what powers he ensures that those responsible for installations which might harbour legionella infection comply with the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive regarding cleaning, maintenance and disinfection; how it is monitored; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have enforcement powers under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to require an employer to comply with his duties under sections 2 and 3 of the Act to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of his employees and the health and safety of persons not in his employment who may be affected by his work activity. These duties extend to the risk of legionnaire's disease arising from a work activity.

At pre-emptive inspection visits inspectors remind occupiers of the dangers of legionnaire's disease,

impressing on management their responsibility for preventive action in the effective treatment of likely outlets and draw their attention to HSE published guidance which sets out the precautions to be taken in respect of susceptible water systems.

### School Leavers

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information his Department gathers regarding school leavers *(a)* unemployed or *(b)* waiting for training places; and if he will give the figures for those who left school last summer.

**Mr. Cope:** Apart from youth cohort studies, my Department does not collect information which enables school-leavers to be identified separately from others of the same age.

### YTS

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what, on the latest available figures and for the previous three years, was the level of accidents per 100,000 employees for *(a)* YTS trainees and *(b)* employees of the same age, not on YTS courses.

**Mr. Cope** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* Health and Safety Executive accident figures for employed young people not on YTS relate to the 16 to 19 years age group and are available from 1 April 1986 only. They are not directly comparable with accident figures for YTS trainees; the age groups do not match, and there are differences in occupational mix, coverage, and in the proportion of accidents reported. Certain types of accidents to YTS trainees are reportable to the Training Agency, but are not reportable to the Health and Safety Executive. Accidents reported to the HSE are subject to up to 50 per cent. under-reporting. Independent research, taking these factors into account, has established that there are no real grounds for concluding that major injury incidence rates for YTS trainees are different from those for employed young people. The tables give the available information.

*Incidence rate all accidents per 100,000 trainees*

| *Period* | *Reported YTS accidents* |
|---|---|
| 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986 | 805 |
| 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987 | 693 |
| 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988 | 829 |

*Incidence rate all accidents per 100,000 non-YTS employees aged 16-19*

| *Period* | *Reported accidents to non-YTS employees* |
|---|---|
| 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987 | 502 |
| 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988 | 503 |

### Industrial Accidents

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information on accident rates in the agricultural industry in each of the last 10 years; and if he will provide comparable statistics for the construction industry and for manufacturing industries.

**Mr. Nicholls** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* The available information is given in the table.

Although there are substantial numbers of self-employed people in agriculture and construction, incidence rates are calculated only for injuries to employees because of suspected under-reporting of injuries to the self-employed.

*Injury Incidence Rates, for injuries to employees in the Argriculture, Manufacturing and Construction Industries[1] Great Britain*

| *Year* | *Fatal* | | | *Major[2]* | | | *All reported[3]* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Agriculture* | *Manufacturing* | *Construction* | *Agriculture* | *Manufacturing* | *Construction* | *Agriculture* | *Manufacturing* | *Construction* |
| 1978 | 6·7 | 2·3 | 13·2 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 1,220·9 | 2,625·8 | 2,975·9 |
| 1979 | 9·3 | 2·2 | 12·4 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 1,111·8 | 2,381·5 | 2,714·7 |
| 1980 | 6·7 | 1·9 | 13·8 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 1,179·0 | 1,995·8 | 2,529·5 |
| 1981 | 8·8 | 2·0 | 9·7 | 46·9 | 66·6 | 155·3 | 2,310·0 | 2,550·0 | 4,190·0 |
| 1982 | 7·8 | 2·4 | 9·7 | 42·5 | 70·1 | 188·4 | 2,080·0 | 2,370·0 | 4,070·0 |
| 1983 | 8·6 | 2·2 | 11·6 | 59·6 | 77·2 | 213·0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1984 | 8·8 | 2·7 | 9·8 | 83·5 | 86·6 | 225·0 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1985 | 6·1 | 2·4 | 10·5 | 72·5 | 90·0 | 225·8 | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1986-87[4] | 8·9 | 2·1 | 10·2 | 133·8 | 135·9 | 261·0 | 467·3 | 1,194·6 | 1,940·8 |
| 1987-88p[4] | 5·8 | 1·9 | 10·1 | 156·4 | 132·6 | 259·3 | 588·2 | 1,156·8 | 1,914·3 |

*Sources:*
Injury data: Health and Safety Executive.
Employment data: Department of Employment.
n.a. = not available.
p = provisional.

[1] Reported to Her Majesty's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates and all other relevant enforcing authorities under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR) for 1981-March 1986, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) for 1986-87 onwards. Injuries between 1978 and 1980 are limited to those reported to Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Manufacturing and Construction industries) and to Her Majesty's Agricultural Inspectorate (Agricultural industry). The industries are classified according to the Standard Industrial Classification, 1968 and 1980.

[2] The major injury definition which was created by NADOR and came into effect on 1 January 1981, was widened by RIDDOR—from 1 April 1986. Data from 1986-87, therefore, is not comparable with that for earlier years.

[3] Includes injuries causing an employee, to be absent from work for more than three days, ("over-3-day" injuries). From 1978 to 1980 and for 1986-87 and 1987-88, over 3 day injury data is based on employers' reports to enforcing authorities. Comparisons with date for 1981-82, which are based on Industrial Injury Benefit claims, suggest significant under-reporting. From 1983 to 1985, over-3-day injury data was not collected.

[4] Year commencing 1 April.

## DEFENCE

### Low Flying (East Lothian)

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the speed, height and purpose of the low-level flight by a propeller-driven aircraft two miles south-west of Ormiston, East Lothian at 1.30 pm on Friday 10 February.

**Mr. Neubert:** A Hercules aircraft from RAF Lyneham was authorised to carry out a low-level navigation exercise in the area at heights down to 250 ft and under the normal speed restrictions for the aircraft and type of sortie.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the speed, height and purpose of the low-level flight by a jet aircraft at 12.25 pm, on Friday 10 February over Gullane, East Lothian.

**Mr. Neubert:** Military aircraft are authorised as a matter of routine to carry out low-level flying training in the area mentioned at heights no lower than 250 ft and at speeds normally not exceeding 450 knots.

### Republic of Ireland (Enlistments)

**Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many citizens of the Republic of Ireland enlisted in Her Majesty's forces in each of the past 10 years.

**Mr. Neubert:** The following information is available:

*Royal Navy/Royal Marines*
*(Non-commissioned personnel only)*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1983-84 | 9 |
| 1984-85 | 22 |
| 1985-86 | 9 |
| 1986-87 | 3 |
| 1987-88 | 8 |

*Notes:*

1. Figures show number of personnel recruited directly from the Republic of Ireland. It is not possible to identify Irish citizens who may have been recruited in the United Kingdom.
2. It is not possible to specify if the personnel recruited from the Republic of Ireland have Irish or dual Irish/British nationality.
3. Figures for officers and for non-commissioned personnel prior to 1983-84 and details of classification by nationality could only be obtained by examining individual records at disproportionate cost.

*Army*
*(officers and non-commissioned personnel)*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1978-79 | 93 |
| 1979-80 | 70 |
| 1980-81 | 69 |
| 1981-82 | 20 |
| 1982-83 | 21 |
| 1983-84 | 27 |
| 1984-85 | 59 |
| 1985-86 | 64 |
| 1986-87 | 70 |
| 1987-88 | 76 |

*Note:*

1. The figures cover those recruits with Irish nationality and also include some personnel holding dual Irish/British nationality.

*Royal Air Force*
*(officers and non-commissioned personnel)*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 27 |
| 1980 | 19 |
| 1981 | 10 |
| 1982 | 10 |
| 1983 | 7 |
| 1984 | 10 |
| 1985 | 3 |
| 1986 | 10 |
| 1987 | 8 |
| 1988 | 3 |

*Notes:*

1. The figures cover those recruits with Irish nationality and also include some personnel holding dual Irish/British nationality.
2. The figures are for calendar years; those for the RN/RM and Army are for financial years.

### RAF Gannet (Helicopter Flight)

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose a helicopter from RAF Gannet landed on Arran on 8 February and what civilian passengers were taken on board.

**Mr. Neubert:** A naval helicopter from HMS Gannet landed on Arran on 8 February to take on board three local residents. They were flown over the mountain rescue flying training area in order to foster understanding of the rescue team's training requirements and of the reasons why some noise and disturbance is unavoidable, and to provide reassurance that everything possible is done to keep this disturbance to a minimum.

### NATO (Infrastructure Programme)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there have been any changes in eligibility for funding of civilian facilities under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation infrastructure programme in the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No. The NATO infrastructure programme is established to provide military facilities to fulfil the defined minimum operational requirements of the NATO military authorities.

### US Bases (Policing)

**Mr. Boswell** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements govern the policing of United States bases and proceedings against visiting United States servicemen in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** Under the NATO status of forces agreement the United States armed forces have the right to police any camps, establishments or other premises which they occupy in the United Kingdom by agreement with Her Majesty's Government. To carry out this policing role, United States military police may take all appropriate measures to ensure the maintenance of order and security on such premises, including, where necessary, the carriage of firearms provided that they are authorised to do so by their orders. Outside those premises US military police may be employed only by arrangement with and in liaison with the civil police.

Under the agreement, the visiting force must respect the law of the receiving state; and all personnel, including those carrying out policing duties, are subject to the provisions of United Kingdom law. Section 2 of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 permits the US service authorities and courts within the United Kingdom to exercise over

those subject to their jurisdiction the powers that are exercisable by them under United States law. Where an offence is committed against both United States and United Kingdom law there is therefore concurrent jurisdiction. Section 3 of the Act sets out the arrangements for determining who shall have primary jurisdiction in such cases. Broadly speaking, it provides that the United States authorities have the primary right to bring a member of a visiting force to trial if the alleged offence arose out of and in the course of his duty as a member of that force, or was solely against the property or person of others associated with the visiting force.

It is, however, open to the United States authorities to decide not to proceed with a case under United States law; in that case, section 3(3) restores jurisdiction to the United Kingdom courts.

### Ministry Police

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he is considering the replacement of Ministry of Defence police by private security guards at any Ministry of Defence establishment;

(2) if he is considering a reduction in the number of Ministry of Defence police employed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) on 23 February at column *760*.

### "Iron Hammer"

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received from residents of the Republic of Germany concerning the recent manoeuvre Iron Hammer; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if, following the recent manoeuvre Iron Hammer in Lower Saxony, he will review the operational instructions given to members of the British Army with the intention of reducing the environmental impact of such exercises.

**Mr. Neubert:** Exercise Iron Hammer took place from 1 to 27 November 1988 in Lower Saxony and involved 3rd Armoured Division. Great efforts were made by the exercise controllers to avoid damage to the environment. Movement of tactical vehicles was restricted to take account of poor ground conditions and CinC BAOR had agreed earlier, and very readily, to a request that an area of land which had already seen more than its fair share of exercise activity in 1988 should not be used during Iron Hammer. German local governments expressed their satisfaction with the way in which the exercise was conducted. A newly installed "hot-line" designed to enable public complaints to be received and dealt with promptly proved very effective.

Realistic exercises are essential if troops are to maintain operational effectiveness. Although some damage is inevitable and there are well-established procedures for dealing with claims, our military authorities in Germany are very aware of the need to protect the environment and take their responsibilities in this regard very seriously indeed. Before an exercise is allowed to commence all participants are carefully briefed on damage control and avoidance and are issued with written instructions. Exercise play is kept under the closest possible review by controllers, so that plans can quickly be changed if there is a risk of undue damage. Procedures are reviewed after each exercise with a view to keeping the environmental impact of training to a minimum.

### Dartmouth Regatta

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that the tradition that there is a Royal Navy vessel to do duty as a guard ship at the Dartmouth royal regatta is maintained for 1989; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** We are planning to provide a Royal Navy guard ship for the 1989 Dartmouth royal regatta.

### Crews

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the crew complements for escorts of each of the following classes: *(a)* Leander, *(b)* type 42, *(c)* type 21, *(d)* type 22 and *(e)* type 23;

(2) what are the annual crew costs for a Leander class frigate; and what is his estimate of the cost on the same basis for a type 23 frigate.

**Mr. Neubert:** Typical schemes of complement and crew costs (pay and allowances) of the classes in question are:

| | *Crew numbers* | *Crew costs (£ million)* |
|---|---|---|
| Leander (Batch 3B) | 233 | 3·2 |
| Type 42 (Batch 3) | 251 | 3·6 |
| Type 21 | 178 | 2·5 |
| Type 22 (Batch 3) | 234 | 3·3 |
| Type 23 | 160 | 2·3 |

### Services (Allowances)

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of Defence what is the estimated current total annual cost of travel, subsistence, educational and other allowances for each of the services following the changes made in the allowance system in 1988; what were the tables for the previous year under the former system; and what would the latter figure be on a current basis if indexed.

**Mr. Neubert:** I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as I have the information.

### Warships

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current annual running costs for a frigate or destroyer of each of the classes *(a)* Leander, *(b)* type 42, *(c)* type 21 and *(d)* type 22; and what is his estimate of the costs for a type 23 frigate.

**Mr. Neubert:** The average annual operating costs, at financial year 1987-88 prices, of the following classes of destroyer and frigates are: *(a)* Leander £3·8 million, *(b)* type 42 £7 million, *(c)* type 21 £3·8 million, *(d)* type 22 £4·8 million and *(e)* type 23 £3·6 million. These costs include personnel, fuel, spares and so on, and administrative support services, but exclude new construction, capital equipment, and refit-repair costs.

### Seawolf System

**Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it will be possible to operate the Seawolf air defence system on type 23 frigates if they are not fitted with a computer-assisted command system.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Yes, although there will be some limitations on its use until the system is fitted.

### Frigates

**Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to order the next batch of type 23 frigates.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) on 29 November 1988 at column *217*.

### Surface Escorts

**Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of surface escorts in the Royal Navy in 1987 had the type of anti-missile defences required for Royal Navy frigates deployed in the Gulf.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** For operational security reasons, it is not our general practice to disclose specific capabilities of individual components of the fleet.

### Iran

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arms have been sold to Iran since the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** It has never been the practice to give details of specific arms sales, but the hon. Member can be assured that we continue to adhere scrupulously to the guidelines announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985 at column *454*.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Rating Reform

**Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge, *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax and *(d)* local income tax paid in the proportion of 80-20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroom flat in Sheffield, Hallam.

**Mr. Gummer:** A ward sister earning £13,000, living in a flat in Sheffield worth £25,000 and with a rateable value of £200, would pay a rates bill of £658, a community charge of £285 (disregarding the transitional safety net) and £385 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

### Football Membership Scheme

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the relevant Minister in his Department to reply to the letter dated 9 January from the hon. Member for Newham, South; and if, in the light of its contents, he will correct any information in the letter sent from his Department dated 21 December 1988 to hon. Members concerning the Football Spectators Bill [Lords].

**Mr. Moynihan:** I replied to the hon. Member on 23 February.

### Water Industry

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of *(a)* officials in his Department, their grade and overall estimated cost and *(b)* consultants and their cost engaged upon matters relating to the water industry, including its privatisation, in the years 1979, 1983, 1986, 1988 and 1989.

**Mr. Ridley:** I will write to the hon. Member.

### Listed Buildings

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will restore statutory protection for those previously grade 3 listed buildings of local interest; if he will reinstate the local list for designated conservation areas; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Grade III was a non-statutory category of buildings of mainly local interest which did not qualify for the statutory list and, consequently, never did enjoy statutory protection. The category was abandoned almost 20 years ago with the start of the national resurvey of listed buildings, now nearing completion. Those former grade III buildings which have been reassessed during the national resurvey, which satisfy the current listing criteria as buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and which are thought to be of more than local interest, are now included in the statutory lists.

I assume that by "local list" my hon. Friend is referring to the list of important conservation areas which was included in circular 23/84. English Heritage was to be notified of planning applications which might affect the character or appearance of areas on this list. This arrangement was, however, superseded in 1987 by a requirement to notify English Heritage of any development in any conservation area exceeding a specified size. The purpose of this is to enable English Heritage to concentrate on more significant development proposals affecting conservation areas.

### London Docklands Development Corporation

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs have been lost in the London Docklands development corporation area because of relocation, or closures since 1981.

**Mr. Trippier:** Information on the great majority of firms which move out of the urban development area is not collected. Department of Employment figures show that 2,230 jobs were lost in the 41 firms which closed in the seven years 1981 to 1988 where closures were required to be notified to that Department.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the London Docklands development corporation will receive the payments derived from enhanced land values to pay for the extension of the Docklands light railways.

**Mr. Trippier:** As land disposals are completed.

### Acid Water

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the acid waters review group report.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The second report of the acid waters review group will be published within the next few weeks. Copies of the report will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Water Pollution

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* *(a)* the volume and *(b)* the locations in England at which discharges take place into the aquatic environment of (i) ethylene dichloride, (ii) perchloroethylene and (iii) trichloroethylene.

**Mr. Moynihan:** The information sought is not held centrally. Control of discharges is the responsibility of the regional water authorities.

**Mr. Onslow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements to monitor the effects of low winter rainfall have been agreed with the water industry, with special reference to the levels of abstraction from rivers into which there have regularly been discharges of effluent in breach of discharge consent standards.

**Mr. Howard:** The water industry associations are supplying us with twice-monthly reports on regional rainfall, the state of water resources, measures taken and assessments of the outlook. The Institute of Hydrology with the British Geological Society, and the Meteorological Office, are supplying us with monthly reports. Management of levels of abstraction from rivers which receive effluents is the responsibility of the water authorities within the terms of abstraction licences.

### Cambridgeshire (Population)

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has studied the estimates made by the standing conference of East Anglian local authorities, about the number of new homes that will be required to accommodate the expected increase in population in the administrative county of Cambridgeshire over the period between 1989 and 2011; and what steps he is taking to diminish the pressures on land, traffic and prices in the city of Cambridge by refraining from moving Government offices into the city from Newmarket.

**Mr. Chope:** The estimate of the number of new houses likely to be required in Cambridgeshire between 1986 and 2011 is included in a consultation draft of a regional strategy being prepared by the standing conference of East Anglian local authorities. The standing conference is expected to invite the Secretary of State to publish regional strategic guidance for the region on the basis of their proposed regional strategy.

Policies to deal with the expected growth of Cambridgeshire up to 2001 are already included in the submitted alterations to the approved structure plan. The move of 35 staff to Cambridge from Newmarket will not have a significant impact on the economy of Cambridge.

### Housing (Greater London)

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the total number of dwellings in the Greater London area owned by *(a)* the London residuary body and *(b)* housing associations which are unlawfully occupied.

**Mr. Trippier:** This information is not held centrally.

### Caravan Sites

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East of Thursday 16 February, *Official Report*, column *389*, on caravan sites, if he will provide similar information as at 1 May 1985.

**Mr. Trippier:** The information is as follows:

| *County* | *(a) Number of local authority sites at 1 January 1985* | *(b) Number of caravans on local authority sites*[1] | *(c) Number of caravans on private sites*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bedfordshire | 5 | 81 | 3 |
| Cambridgeshire | 5 | 183 | 146 |
| Essex | 7 | 134 | 45 |
| Hertfordshire | 8 | 137 | 18 |
| Lincolnshire | 4 | 120 | 10 |
| Norfolk | 2 | 49 | 21 |
| Suffolk | 2 | 72 | 71 |

[1] Based on 17 July 1985 count.

Applications for designation under section 12 of the 1968 Act, as amended, as at 1 May 1985 were as follows:

| | *(a) Applications pending* | *(b) Applications granted* |
|---|---|---|
| Bedfordshire | — | South Bedfordshire<br>Luton |
| Cambridgeshire | — | Huntingdon |
| Essex | — | — |
| Hertfordshire | Watford | — |
| Lincolnshire | — | Boston<br>Lincoln CB<br>West Lindsey |
| Norfolk | — | — |
| Suffolk | Babergh<br>Ipswich<br>Mid Suffolk<br>Suffolk Coastal | |

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* local authority and *(b)* authorised private, individual sites under section 6 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 exist in each of the district council areas in Cambridgeshire.

**Mr. Trippier:** Details of sites and numbers of caravans in each of the district council areas in Cambridgeshire as at 1 January 1989 are as follows:

| *District* | *Number of local authority sites* | *Number of caravans on local authority sites* | *Number of caravans on private sites* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cambridge | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| East Cambridge | 3 | 49 | 40 |
| Fenland | 3 | 61 | 17 |
| Huntingdonshire | 1 | 0 | 43 |
| Peterborough | 3 | 126 | 23 |
| South Cambridgeshire | 2 | 30 | 58 |
| | 12 | 266 | 205 |

Information on individual sites licensed by local authorities is not held by the Department.

### Housing Subsidy (Manchester)

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Manchester's share of the national total available for a transitional housing revenue account subsidy in 1990-91 will be based on the rate fund contribution in 1988-89, or the average of contributions over the three years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

**Mr. Trippier:** The consultation paper "A New Financial Regime for Local Authority Housing in

England and Wales" proposed that housing revenue account subsidy for 1990-91 should reflect, among other things, the average rate fund contributions over the three years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89. A number of comments were received on this proposal and these are being considered.

### Insulation

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the conclusions of the Eurisol report, "Pollution Reduction Through Energy Conservation", he will *(a)* make the insulation standards of the proposed new building regulations compulsory, *(b)* provide grants for this work and *(c)* bring existing homes up to these proposed standards.

**Mr. Trippier:** A consultation paper issued last July proposed that the existing thermal insulation requirements in the building regulations should be upgraded. Responses to the consultation paper are being considered. It was also proposed that the form of this part of the regulations should be brought more into line with that of other parts, by requiring reasonable provision to be made for the conservation of fuel and power, and by including guidance on insulation standards in the approved document. Experience has shown that this approach enables effective control to be maintained, but in a clearer and more flexible way. While it would not be appropriate to provide grants towards the cost of complying with building regulations requirements, there are provisions in the Local Government and Housing Bill to enable local authorities to pay grants towards the cost of providing adequate thermal insulation in existing dwellings.

### Toxic Waste

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to stop the Antarctic being used as a dumping ground for toxic waste.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The Government are actively supporting a proposal, in the negotiation of a global convention on the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, to prohibit the export of such waste for disposal in Antarctica.

### Mining (Tinsley Park)

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is going to answer the letter of 13 February sent to him by the hon. Member for Rother Valley on the request for a public inquiry into the proposed open cast coal mine at Tinsley Park.

**Mr. Chope:** Shortly.

### Waste Disposal (Rixton)

**Mr. Heyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received information from Cheshire county council or Colliers Waste Disposals, Rixton, that waste from the Chemstar plant at Stalybridge was dumped at Rixton following an accident there in 1981; when he was told of the materials that were dumped at Rixton; if he will list them; and whether there were any traces of dioxin in the materials that were dumped.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* The Department was informed early in February by Cheshire county council that some 2,500 drums of paint residues and pigments from the drum store of the Chemstar plant had been landfilled at the Colliers waste disposal landfill at Rixton. The records of special wastes for this site indicate that no dioxin contaminated wastes were deposited.

### Hospital Waste (Rixton)

**Mr. Heyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column 282, what was the clinical waste which had been dumped; what information Cheshire county council supplied on who was responsible for the dumping; and what advice was given on the possible prosecution of the person concerned.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is preparing a report on the landfill in which clinical waste was deposited at the Collier landfill, Cheshire. I shall write to the hon. Member when the report is available.

### Docklands

**Ms. Mildred Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount of rate allowance claimed so far in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

**Mr. David Trippier** *[pursuant to his reply, 23 January, col. 458]:* Schedule 32 of the Local Government,Planning and Land Act 1980 provides that my right hon. Friend shall make grants to rating authorities who lose revenue from properties within enterprise zones that are exempt from the payment of rates. To date, the rating authorities affected by the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, have claimed £27,053,715.

## TRANSPORT

### Trains (Doors)

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many wrong door openings have occurred on British Rail trains since 1980; how many in each year resulted in (i) minor injuries, (ii) major injuries and (iii) deaths; and what were the numbers in each case.

**Mr. Portillo:** Details of incidents prior to 1984 are not readily available. The information for the period 1984-88 is in the table.

*British Railways door irregularities resulting from a failure or ending in a collision*

| | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of incidents | 302 | 226 | 218 | 256 | 266 |
| Number of incidents involving injury | 24 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 11 |
| Number of injuries | | | | | |

| | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| fatal | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| serious injury | 1 | — | — | 1 | — |
| minor injury | 41 | 20 | 20 | 23 | 13 |

**Roads and Car Parks**

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for the revision of the underspend on local authority capital spending for 1988-89 on roads and car parks from £42 million in table 8.1 of Cm. 288-11 to £100 million in the equivalent table of Cm. 608.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The £42 million underspend is indicated by comparing the estimated outturn in Cm. 608 with the provision in Cm. 288-II. The estimated outturn in Cm. 608 is based on spending returns from the first quarter of the year only and hence is subject to wide margins of error. The provision in Cm. 288-II was subsequently revised upwards by £36 million during the year, to reflect an additional £36 million of spending power which became available to local authorities because they underspent their net provision in 1987-88.

The £100 million underspend estimate in paragraph 70 of Cm. 608 is a later Department of Transport forecast which takes account of the revised provision.

**Traffic (London)**

**Mr. Warren:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the use of the London area model developed by his Department's transport and road research laboratory as a means of easing traffic congestion in London.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The transport and road research laboratory's experimental London area model (LAM) was designed to assist in the analysis of strategic policy options. The London planning advisory committee (LPAC) commissioned consultants to test four transport options using the model.

The base scenario portrayed in the report by the LPAC's consultants did not represent current Government policies. The conclusion drawn were not a realistic assessment of the likely outcome. The base against which other policies are compared are ill-founded. The options described in the LPAC scenarios have included the impact of selective road improvements, stricter parking controls, selective radial rail improvements and new RER-style railways. None were suitable for testing using LAM.

The sensitivity testing work was commissioned by the LPAC. The Department received a copy of the report in late January. It is for the LPAC to publish the results if they so wish.

The Department commissioned an audit by consultants, the results of which were received last spring. These identified deficiencies with the LAM including its representation of road and rail capacity levels; and inadequate representation of peak demands; and an inability to reproduce travel patterns experienced in recent years—particularly the growth in travel demand which has taken place since travelcards were introduced.

It was decided to withdraw the model from further use. I will be placing a copy of the consultant's audit report in the Library.

The model does not provide measures to ease traffic congestion.

**Road Works (Legislation)**

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if necessary consultations with local authorities have been completed prior to his publication of a Bill to replace the Public Utilities Street Works Act; and what is his policy as to whether that replacement will contain powers for determining priorities for work on busy roads.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The Government response to the Horne report on the review of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 accepted most of the recommendations in that report. Consultations with the local authorities under the auspices of the highway authorities and utilities committee on matters of detail are now substantially complete. Proposals for legislation are being drawn up with the benefit of advice from the street works advisory committee.

As far as work on busy roads is concerned, we have accepted the Horne recommendation that highway authorities should be empowered to designate certain roads as traffic-sensitive and that undertakers proposing to carry out works that will obstruct the carriageway of such roads will have to consult the highway authority in advance. All utilities and highway authorities will also generally be required to establish procedures for co-ordinating major projects in advance.

**Tube Trains (Door Openings)**

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many wrong door openings have been reported on the London Underground each year since 1980; and how many in each case resulted in *(a)* injuries and *(b)* deaths.

**Mr. Portillo:** Details of incidents prior to 1984 are not readily available. Since then three incidents (all in 1987) involving London Underground trains were reported; none gave rise to injury or death.

**Commuter Trains**

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his response is to the recommendations in the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission *(a)* that British Rail should increase by £50 million the bills for running commuter trains and *(b)* that a review should be made on the way in which local train fares are fixed.

**Mr. Portillo:** My right hon. Friend will in due course present to the House British Rail's response to the commission's report along with the Government's observations. Until then it would be premature to comment.

### Haulage Operators (Licences)

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road haulage operators have had their operators' licences revoked while still operating as haulage companies during each of the last five years.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The figures for each year ending 31 March, are:

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 67 |
| 1985 | 90 |
| 1986 | 100 |
| 1987 | 109 |
| 1988 | 80 |

### Road Safety

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will be implementing a scheme for the education of parents and children of the dangers on roads as recommended by the Public Accounts Committee, HC 142; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The Government's response to the PAC report will be by Treasury minute, to be published shortly.

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many child pedestrians in Bolton were injured in road accidents during 1987 and 1988; how many child fatalities occurred during the same period; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We do not yet have complete figures available for 1988.

The number of child pedestrians injured in road accidents in Bolton metropolitan district area was 191 in 1986, and 208 in 1987.

Included in these child pedestrian casualties was one who died in 1986 and four who died in 1987. In 1986 there was one other child killed in a road accident, as a vehicle passenger, and none in 1987.

### Explosives (Detection)

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when a neutron beam detector using an artificial neural system computer programme was installed at Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the Californian-developed SNOOPE system is under evaluation by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has any plans to install the SNOOPE system at all British airports in the near future following evaluation; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if there are any British-made systems technologically similar to the SNOOPE system under consideration for evaluation at United Kingdom airports; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The SNOOPE system is the American thermal neutron activation analysis equipment for detecting explosives mentioned in my reply to the hon. Member on 17 January at column *126*. It is not under evaluation by the Department, though we receive information about it from the United States Federal Aviation Administration. Neither the SNOOPE system nor any other system using the thermal neutron activation technique has been installed at Heathrow. We have told the FAA that we should look favourably at any proposals they might make to us for installing at a United Kingdom airport one of the six production machines they now have on order (for delivery during the second half of 1989).

There is a British project to develop a system using a similar technique. We understand that preliminary trials have been promising. When those concerned with the development are ready for a prototype to be tried out at a civil airport we shall give that very careful consideration.

The Department's position on whether either system should be deployed operationally at United Kingdom airports will depend on the results of the tests.

### Lighthouse Service

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in implementing the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee in its 29 report of Session 1981-82 that the deficit on the lighthouse service in the Republic of Ireland should not continue to fall upon shipping calling at United Kingdom ports; and when he expects the Government of the Republic of Ireland to meet the full cost of their international obligations in respect of navigational aids for shipping.

**Mr. Portillo:** The United Kingdom and Irish Governments reached a financial agreement in 1985 under which an increasing proportion of the expenditure of the Commissioners of Irish Lights deemed to be incurred in the Republic is being met from sources within the Republic. We are in the transitional stage of that agreement but, when it is fully in place in 1989-90, half the deemed expenditure in the Republic will be met from a combination of light dues collected in the Republic and a contribution from the Irish Exchequer. My right hon. Friend has no plans to reopen negotiations on this agreement.

### Condoms (Fishing Vessels)

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he intends to implement the European Community directive requiring British fishing vessels to carry condoms; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Portillo:** No such directive has been adopted nor has any proposal for a draft directive been made by the Commission to the Council of Ministers.

### Leeds/Bradford Airport

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the decision on whether to permit an extension of operating hours at Leeds/Bradford airport; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment expect to announce a decision soon.

### Channel Tunnel

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the impact of the Channel tunnel on air traffic between London, Paris and Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Estimates of the likely effects of the Channel tunnel are available in the Department's recently published forecasts of air traffic. For reasons given in the forecast report, the London-Brussels and London-Paris routes are expected to be heavily affected.

## THE ARTS

### Victoria and Albert Museum

62. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions have been held with representatives of staff at the Victoria and Albert museum about staff restructuring.

**Mr. Luce:** I understand that consultations were held throughout last year with staff about the options for the reorganisation of collections management functions at the Victoria and Albert museum.

70. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions his office has had with the director of the Victoria and Albert museum about staff restructuring.

82. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chairman of the trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum to discuss staff restructuring.

**Mr. Luce:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) earlier today.

79. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the plans of the Victoria and Albert museum to restructure staffing.

**Mr. Luce:** Since the museum's announcement of 27 January I have received a number of letters about the planned reorganisation of departments of the Victoria and Albert museum.

81. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the future of *(a)* research into, and *(b)* conservation of photographic collections at the Victoria and Albert museum.

**Mr. Luce:** Decisions on research into and conservation of the photographic collections of the Victoria and Albert museum are matters for the director and trustees of the museum.

84. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what will be the financial consequences of restructuring staffing at the Victoria and Albert museum.

**Mr. Luce:** The management of the museum's resources is a matter for the director and trustees.

### "Stepping Forward"

63. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Arts Council about the Devlin report entitled "Stepping Forward".

64. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the Devlin report entitled "Stepping Forward".

**Mr. Luce:** The report has been issued for consultation, and I have not discussed it with the chairman. The question of dance funding is a matter for the Arts Council.

### Theatre Companies (Joint and Reciprocal Productions)

65. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to encourage both joint and reciprocal productions between British theatre companies and continental theatre companies in the light of the implementation of the single European market.

**Mr. Luce:** Theatres are free to make their own arrangements, and I hope will think increasingly of European engagements. There is no reason to think that the completion of the single European market will require Government intervention in such cultural exchanges.

### Northern ballet theatre

66. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the board of Northern ballet theatre to discuss the company's future.

**Mr. Luce:** The future of Northern ballet theatre is a matter for the Arts Council.

69. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the level of financial support for the Northern ballet theatre.

**Mr. Luce:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on Monday 13 February at column 49.

73. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has plans to meet the artistic director of the Northern ballet theatre to discuss the company's future.

**Mr. Luce:** I have no plans to do so.

76. **Mr. Waring:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many touring performances were given by the Northern ballet theatre in 1988.

89. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the number of performances undertaken by the Northern ballet theatre last year.

**Mr. Luce:** I am informed that the company gave 162 touring performances in 1988.

78. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the subsidy per seat at performances given by the Northern ballet theatre.

**Mr. Luce:** A total of £4·60 in 1987-88.

### British Theatre Association Library

67. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress has been achieved in preserving the British Theatre Association library.

**Mr. Luce:** Discussions are continuing between the interested parties, and I am keeping in close touch with developments.

### "A Fresh Boost for Culture in the European Community"

68. **Mr. Mackenzie:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to meet the objectives set out in the

European Community document, "A Fresh Boost for Culture in the European Community"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Luce:** This document is a Commission communication only, not a set of objectives, and it has not been endorsed by European Community Ministers of Culture. At their meeting on 27 May 1988 EC Ministers of Culture decided to give priority to Community action in four areas: audiovisual; books; sponsorship; and training. However, no specific programme proposals have yet been put to them by the European Commission.

### Office of Arts and Libraries

71. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the achievements of the Office of Arts and Libraries in the last three years.

**Mr. Luce:** The principal achievements of the Office of Arts and Libraries in the last three years have been:

- The establishment of a three-year programme of funding for the arts.
- The introduction of corporate planning for the national museums and galleries, and other non-departmental bodies, linked to the three-year funding programme.
- National museums and galleries being given greater control over their affairs by the move to grant-in-aid funding, and by their being untied from the Property Services Agency.
- The direction of the funding of the national museums and galleries towards the conservation and display of the collections, and the maintenance of the fabric of their buildings.
- The Government's support for the development strategies designed to give the regions a larger share of arts spending and facilities.
- The development of incentive funding schemes for the performing arts and for public libraries, designed to encourage subsidised bodies to become more self-reliant in their development and growth.
- The continued success of business sponsorship of the arts.
- The new marketing initiatives to encourage arts bodies to market themselves more professionally and to increase access to the arts.
- The substantial progress with the British library St. Pancras project which will bring together most of the library's London-based collections and reading rooms on a single site, and provide much improved facilities.

### Carnegie Trust

72. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he intends to support the Carnegie trust in its efforts to improve facilities for the disabled in arts venues.

**Mr. Luce:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on 20 December 1988 at column *151*.

### Arts Education Establishments

74. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the arts education establishments he has visited in the past year.

**Mr. Luce:** I have visited the following:

- 29 January 1988—Yehudi Menuhin School of Music
- 28 March 1988—opened a research conference at the Central School of Art and Design.
- 6 May 1988—Performing Arts Technology Studies at University of Surrey.
- 30 June 1988—Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds.
- 26 October 1988—Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick.
- 16 November 1988—Royal Ballet School.
- 18 November 1988—Guildford School of Acting and Dance.

### British Libraries (Titles)

75. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many titles are currently listed as being held in British libraries; and what were the figures five and 10 years ago.

**Mr. Luce:** Details of titles held are not kept centrally.

Figures for total bookstock held by public libraries are published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The figures for England for 1987-88 and the fifth and 10th preceding years are:

| | *Million* |
|---|---|
| 1977-78 | 109·0 |
| 1982-83 | 113·1 |
| 1987-88 | 105·5 |

The figure for 1987-88 is distorted because the CIPFA actual statistics show returns from only 98 authorities.

The British Library's holdings (including monographs but excluding serials, manuscripts, microform, music, newspapers) in these years were:

| | *Million* |
|---|---|
| 1977-78 | 11·8 |
| 1982-83 | 11·9 |
| 1987-88 | 13·0 |

### Museums and Heritage Organisations (Volunteers)

77. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what estimate he has made of the contributions of volunteers to the running of museums and heritage organisations.

**Mr. Luce:** I am aware of the excellent contribution made by volunteers to the running of museums and heritage organisations. In 1987 the Museums Association database project found that volunteers were used extensively by all types of museums and galleries.

I hope that this contribution will be enhanced following the research project for the preparation of guidelines on the constructive use and management of volunteers which I announced on 9 February.

### Political Parties (Archives)

80. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Minister for the Arts, what amount of public funds are currently expended by libraries on housing and maintaining the archives of political parties in Britain.

**Mr. Luce:** This information is not held centrally.

### Arts Council

83. **Mr. Soames** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Luce:** I met the chairman on 15 February. We discussed matters of mutual interest and current concern.

### Ballet and Dance

85. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his policy for developing ballet and dance in the north-west.

**Mr. Luce:** The development of ballet and dance is a matter for the Arts Council. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) today.

### Phoenix Arts Centre, Leicester

86. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last visited the Phoenix arts centre in Leicester.

**Mr. Luce:** I visited the Phoenix arts centre on 8 September 1988.

### London Opera

87. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on opera in London.

**Mr. Luce:** I am keen to see the success of opera companies both in and outside of London. The form and extent of provision is a matter for the Arts Council.

### Crafts Council

88. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts, what support he gives to the Crafts Council.

**Mr. Luce:** Funding for the Crafts Council in 1988-89 is £2·25 million. It will rise to £2·55 million in 1991-92, an increase of over 13 per cent.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Leaflets (Translation)

**Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the titles and code numbers of the 10 most issued leaflets published by his Department and indicate which of these leaflets has been issued in translation and in which languages.

**Mr Peter LLoyd:** The details of the 10 most issued leaflets published in 1988-89 are

| *Code Number* | *Title* |
|---|---|
| Ch 11 | One parent benefit |
| D 49 | What to do after a death |
| FB 2 | Which Benefit? |
| FB 8 | Babies and Benefits |
| FB 28 | Sick or Disabled |
| FC 1 | Family Credit |
| NI 17A | A guide to maternity benefits |
| NI 205 | Attendance Allowance |
| NI 211 | Mobility Allowance for people unable or virtually unable to walk |
| SB 1 | Income Support—cash help. |

Leaflet FB 2, re-numbered as FB 22 is available in the following languages:

Bengali
Chinese
Gujarati
Hindi
Punjabi
Urdu

A Turkish translation will be available shortly.

### Elderly People (Disabilities)

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what percentage of *(a)* those aged 75 years and over and *(b)* those aged 60 years and over with disabilities his Department holds addresses.

**Mr Peter Lloyd:** The Department holds addresses for all those aged 75 and over in receipt of retirement pensions and/or income support, with the exception of those who do not have a settled way of life. No record is held of people over 60 with disabilities other than for those receiving specific disability benefits.

### Social Fund

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proportion of their budgets for community care grants from the social fund for the financial year 1988-89 had been spent by each social security office in the north-eastern region by the end of January 1989;

(2) what proportion of the Dewsbury social security office's budget for community care grants from the social fund for the financial year 1988-89 had been spent by the end of January 1989.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Such information is available from the details held in the Library.

### Income Support

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been refused income support on grounds of extreme hardship (i) in Scotland and (ii) in England and Wales since the introduction of the scheme.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** During the period from 12 September 1988 to 17 February 1989 the number of applications for a direction by the Secretary of State under the "severe hardship" provision and the results of those applications were as follows:

| | *Number of applications received* | *Number of directions given* | *Number of directions refused* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scotland | 1,430 | 947 | 483 |
| England and Wales | 3,016 | 1,946 | 1,070 |

*Note:*
Information relates to the number of applications received rather than to the number of individual young people involved. Some individuals have made more than one application.

### Family Credit

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those people claiming family credit are farmworkers or employed in farming.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that this information is not available.

### Single Payments

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the figures for the Lerwick office for

the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 in respect of *(a)* the number of applicants for single payment, *(b)* the number of single payment applications which were refused and *(c)* the amount of money paid out in respect of single payments.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Information on the number of single payment claims awarded, the number refused and the amount paid by each local DSS office for the period April 1986 to April 1988 is in the Library.

### Office Manpower (Lerwick and Kirkwall)

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the level of staffing at the *(a)* Lerwick office and *(b)* Kirkwall office of his Department as at 1 February of each year from 1984 to 1989.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information requested is as follows:

| | *Lerwick ILO* | *Kirkwall LO* |
|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 19 | 9 |
| 1985 | 21 | 10 |
| 1986 | 21 | 11 |
| 1987 | 20 | 11 |
| 1988 | 21 | 11 |
| 1989 | 17·5 | 11 |

*Notes:*
ILO = Integrated local office.
LO = Local office.

### Pensioners (Income)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the categories of statistics which his Department collects on pensioners' income and give in each case the smallest geographical unit covered by each group.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* Statistics on pensioners' income from benefits collected by this Department are published in "Retirement Pension and Widow's Benefit". Further information may be found in "Social Security Statistics 1988". These statistics are collected on a national basis and analysed by country of residence. Both these publications are in the Library. Information on pensioners' total income is obtained from the family expenditure survey, which is collected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Department of Employment. The extent to which information on pensioners' total income can be subdivided geographically depends on the sample sizes involved in answering particular questions.

## HEALTH

### "Health for All" Report

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the 1987 "Health for All" monitoring report submitted to the World Health Organisation in July 1988 has been published.

**Mr. Mellor:** The United Kingdom monitoring report has not been published, but copies are available in the Library.

### Child Abuse

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the professional, scientific and inter-departmental sources, by name or organisation, which are providing advice on child abuse, pursuant to his answer of 14 February.

**Mr. Mellor:** The Department has available a number of professional and scientific advisers from whom advice is sought. In addition the Department holds regular meetings with a research liaison group on child care which contains service advisers from the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, at present Mr. John Chant and Mr. Martin Manby and scientific advisers who are at present Professor Graham of Great Ormond Street hospital, Mr. Mervyn Murch of Bristol university, Professor Dorothy Whitaker of York university and Professor Noel Timms of Leicester university. Other Departments normally include the territorial Departments (Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices), the Home Office, the Department of Education and Science and the Economic and Social Research Council.

### Private Hospitals

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the National Health Service of the inspection of private hospitals twice yearly; whether any fees charged cover the costs of such visits; and where and how the information collected is reported to his Department.

**Mr. Mellor:** Fees for the inspection and registration of private nursing homes and private hospitals are set by the Department at a level which covers the full costs incurred in providing this service. Fees collected in 1987-88, the latest year for which figures are available, amounted to £1·97 million.

Health Authorities are requested to submit annually to the Department memorandum trading accounts.

### "Working for Patients"

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he proposes to issue the working papers for "Working for Patients"; and if he will list the subjects to be covered.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The eight working papers were published on 20 February and copies were placed in the Vote Office on the same day. The papers cover the following topics:

Paper 1. Self-governing hospitals.
Paper 2. Funding and Contracts for Hospital Services.
Paper 3. Practice Budgets for General Medical Practitioners.
Paper 4. Indicative Prescribing Budgets for General Medical Practitioners.
Paper 5. Capital Charges.
Paper 6. Medical Audit.
Paper 7. NHS Consultants: Appointments, Contracts and Distinction Awards.
Paper 8. Implications for Family Practitioner Committees.

### Food Poisoning

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set up an inquiry into the establishment levels of

environmental health officers, the frequency of inspection of food premises and means of limiting the number of cases of food poisoning.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The establishment levels of environmental health officers are a matter for local environmental health authorities and not for central Government.

The committee on the microbial safety of food, whose terms of reference I announced on 21 February, will be able to examine all factors connected with food safety and foodborne illness, including environmental health matters.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he takes to ensure that catering systems concerned with food production for the community ensure the restraint of the growth of food-borne pathogens.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Caterers are legally required to produce food which is safe to eat. Local authorities enforce that requirement by reference to food law and, as appropriate, other guidance and guidelines relevant to good hygienic practice in the producers and sellers premises.

## Locum Services

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much each health authority spent in 1988 on the fees paid to medical employment agencies for providing locum services for their hospitals; and what was the highest, lowest and average hourly rate paid by each health authority.

**Mr. Mellor:** Expenditure information derived from the annual accounts of district health authorities, regional health authorities (RHAs) and special health authorities for London postgraduate teaching hospitals (SHAs) in England for 1987-88 has been placed in the Library.

Information on the hourly rates paid by each health authority is not held centrally.

## Free Prescriptions

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the categories of people entitled to free prescriptions; and if he will make a statement on whether he has any plans to change the system.

**Mr. Mellor:** The following categories of people are entitled to exemption from NHS prescription charges:

*(a)* Children under 16.
*(b)* Young people aged under 19 who are in full-time education.
*(c)* Women aged 60 or over, and men aged 65 or over.
*(d)* People receiving Income Support or Family Credit, and their dependents.
*(e)* People who qualify for exemption from NHS charges on low income ground, and their dependents.
*(f)* Expectant mothers, or women who have had a baby within the last 12 months.
*(g)* Patients with a continuing physical disability which prevents him or her leaving home without the help of another person.
*(h)* Patients who have a permanent fistula which requires a continuous surgical dressing or an appliance.
*(i)* Patients who suffer from epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy.
*(j)* Patients who suffer from one of the following disorders for which specific substition therapy is essential

Diabetes mellitus
Myxodema (hypothroidism
Hypoparathyroidism
Diabetes insipidus or other forms of hypopituitarism
Addison's disease or other forms of hypoadrenalism
Myasthenia gravis.

In addition, war and Ministry of Defence disablement pensioners do not have to pay prescription charges for medication which is prescribed for their accepted disability.

We have no present intentions to make any alterations to the scheme.

## Listeria

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *342*, when his Department was first made aware of the information on the incidence of listeriosis contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield on 20 February, *Official Report*, column *528*.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The information was given at the symposium referred to in my previous reply. My Department's officials attended the symposium.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department's 1980 guidelines on cook-chill food relate to the safe exclusion of listeria monocytogenes from food.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Yes. These 1980 guidelines relate to cook-chill catering. We remain satisfied that food produced in accordance with these guidelines will be safe for the consumer and will protect against danger from listeria monocytogenes.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to his answer of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *528*, how many cases of listeriosis were described by the consultant microbiologist from Plymouth health authority on 9 July 1988;

(2) how many of the patients in Plymouth referred to in his answer of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *528*, developed the symptoms of listeriosis after their admission to hospital.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** These questions are a matter for the consultant microbiologist mentioned. He has confirmed to my officials that there is no evidence to suggest that any cases of listeriosis have arisen from the consumption of meals prepared by the cook-chill catering system used by the Plymouth health authority.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the expert group which produced the 1980 guidelines on cook-chill food were aware of the potential risks of listeria from food.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 February at columns *342-43*.

## Private Medicine

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest information regarding debts owed by the private medicine sector to the National Health Service for the use of installations and facilities of the National Health Service.

**Mr. Mellor:** I regret the detailed information requested is not collected centrally.

### Residential and Nursing Homes

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which agency is responsible for the care of dependent elderly persons asked to leave private residential homes because of their inability to meet increases in fees charged.

**Mr. Mellor:** Under section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948 and directions issued by the Secretary of State, a local authority has a statutory duty to make arrangements to provide residential accommodation for persons ordinarily resident in its area who by reason of age, infirmity or other circumstances are in need of care and attention which is not otherwise available to them.

We would therefore expect the local authority to be consulted where an elderly person was unable to meet an increase in the fee charged by a private or voluntary residential care home.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take action to ensure that proprietors of private residential or nursing homes are not allowed to handle their residents' personal finances.

**Mr. Mellor:** The code of practice for residential care, "Home Life", recommends that those involved in the running of a home should not, except as a last resort, become involved in the handling and management of a resident's financial affairs. It is also the policy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, not to appoint those in charge of a residential care home or nursing home to act for a resident in receipt of social security benefits unless no other course is open.

The Residential Care Homes Regulations governing standards in residential care homes were amended from August last year, so that the registered person is now required to keep a record showing for each individual resident any money or other valuables received on his behalf and how it has been spent or disposed of by the registered person. Where, exceptionally, a registered person is appointed to act on behalf of the resident for the purpose of his income support benefit, arrangements are being made for the local authority to be notified by the Department of Social Security's local offices of such appointment so that the authority's inspector can see that these records are being maintained. They will also be able to report to the local offices any suspected misuse of benefit.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that health authority staff are not permitted to own, manage or have interests in private residential or nursing homes.

**Mr. Mellor:** Individual health authorities already have a clear responsibility to satisfy themselves that their employees' interests do not conflict with those of the authority. I look to the authorities to ensure that such conflicts do not arise.

### Registered Homes Act

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to review the operation of the Registered Homes Act.

**Mr. Mellor:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 23 February 1989.

### Hospital Closures

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider delaying proposed closures of hospitals in order that the hospitals concerned could consider taking advantage of the possibility of the new status proposed in the White Paper, "Working for Patients."

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** No. The White Paper makes it clear that self-governing status should not be sought simply as an alternative to necessary closure. The Health Service must not retain hospitals which are redundant to its needs. Closures are very often made as a result of the development of better alternative services and so should continue to be made.

### Homes and Schools (Registration)

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to legislate for the joint registration of private or voluntary homes and schools by local authority education and social services departments.

**Mr. Mellor:** There are no proposals to change the current arrangements whereby certain private and voluntary residential establishments which provide education are registered as schools. The Department and the Department of Education and Science maintain close liaison when appropriate on these establishments as do Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools and the social services inspectorate.

### Redbridge General Hospital

**Mr. Bendall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further delay there has been in going out to tender on the construction contract for the new general hospital in Redbridge on the Goodmayes site; and if he will take action to expedite this project.

**Mr. Freeman:** I understand that the North East Thames regional health authority is reassessing the financial consequences of this project at present. The decision on when to proceed rests with the regional health authority.

### Cook-Chill Catering

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health why each district health authority in the Yorkshire regional health authority area was asked to comment on the decision to introduce cook-chill catering; what was the purpose of this consultation; and what were the responses received from each authority.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** It is the policy of the Yorkshire regional health authority to consult district health authorities on major proposed changes in policy affecting their services. We do not hold information on the nature of responses centrally and these sensible procedures on the part of the regional health authority are not a matter for me.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the procedures planned for the reheating of cook-chill food in staff canteens in Wakefield hospitals to

ensure that the requirement of the Yorkshire regional health authority's expert group for food to be served within 15 minutes of reheating is complied with.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** It is entirely a matter for the Wakefield health authority, and not for me, to ensure that its safe and satisfactory proposals for the long-overdue introduction of cook-chill catering in its hospitals are complied with in practice. Cook-chill catering is now a normal feature of National Health Service catering throughout the country and has proved to be a safe and satisfactory system of catering so long as my Department's guidelines are heeded.

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health why Mr. Brian Birchall, chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority catering group, advised staff at the Halifax general hospital in February 1988 that a decision on the implementation of cook-chill catering across the Yorkshire region had already been taken.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I do not know anything about any meetings with staff in Halifax and I do not see why I should be expected to know. I do not propose to intervene in a local decision-making process which is entirely a matter for the Yorkshire regional health authority which has my complete confidence in its handling of its sensible decision to introduce cook-chill catering across its region.

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health why plans for the new Halifax hospital development were changed in early 1988 to include cook-chill catering before the Yorkshire regional health authority had made its decision to introduce cook-chill in the region on 24 March 1988, and before formal consultation with Calderdale health authority had taken place.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I assume that the health authorities concerned took this decision in the usual way and I do not regard it as any part of my responsibilities to intervene in or answer for their day-to-day decision making. Cook-chill is now a normal feature of much National Health Service catering throughout the country and has proved to be a safe and satisfactory system of catering so long as my Department's guidelines are heeded.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the potential risk of food poisoning arising from operation of cook-chill installations in breach of his 1980 guidelines.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The guidelines are designed to ensure the production of safe food. Depending on the circumstances, departure from the guidelines may present a risk of food poisoning. Responsibility for the safe operation of cook-chill catering is a matter for local management.

### Water Pollution

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of staff in his Department qualified *(a)* to inspect contamination in drinking water and *(b)* to advise on matters regarding contamination of drinking water.

**Mr. Freeman:** It is the responsibility of the statutory water undertakers to inspect contamination in drinking water.

Advice on the medical aspects of contamination requires an input from several disciplines and depending on the cause of contamination a number of different members of the Department's medical and scientific staff will be qualified to contribute.

Contamination of drinking water might be by micro-organisms, chemicals, or radiation. In providing advice to the Government on such issues the Chief Medical Officer is supported by two divisions (containing medical and scientific staff), can call upon the public health laboratory service and other specialist organisations, and obtain advice from committees of independent experts.

### Tranquillisers and Anti-depressants

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost to the National Health Service of prescriptions of anti-depressants and tranquillisers to women in the 45 to 60 years age group.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** We do not collect this information centrally in the form requested. But in England in 1987 the net ingredient cost of prescriptions for anti-depressants and sedatives and tranquillisers dispensed by community pharmacists was £28·9 million and £14·3 million respectively.

### AIDS

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates have been made about the degree of AIDS infection amongst male and female prostitutes.

**Mr. Mellor:** Throughout the world much research into HIV infection among male and female prostitutes is in progress. Studies so far completed show widely differing results. A number of studies are under way in several major cities in the United Kingdom which should help to provide more information in the future from which to make estimates of the prevalence of HIV in prostitutes.

### Oral Tobacco Products

**Mr. Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken to ban oral tobacco products, including Skoal Bandits, following the announcement made by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 26 February 1988; what representations were made by the United States Government on this matter; and when the report of the committee set up by the Government on carcinogenicity in oral tobacco, oral snuff and Skoal Bandits will be published.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Government are considering the representations we have received on our proposal to ban certain oral tobacco products, and we will make an announcement as soon as possible. Although no formal representations have been received from the United States Government, we are aware of their views.

No specific committee has been set up to look into this matter, but the carcinogenicity of oral tobacco products, has been considered by the expert advisory committee on carcinogenicity on a number of occasions. Advice has been forwarded to Ministers on each occasion, but there are no plans to publish a formal report.

### Viruses

**Ms. Ruddock** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on research findings on the viability of viruses found in faeces.

**Mr. Freeman** *[holding answer 14 February 1989]:* I am not aware of any recent specific projects on this subject. However, it has been established that children recently vaccinated with oral polio vaccine continue for some time to excrete the vaccine in faeces.

Viruses such as rota virus are frequently identified in the faeces of children with viral gastro-enteritis, but the likely yield of such viruses diminishes with time. Faeces containing virus particles are potential sources of infection although the duration of infectivity depends on the dose of virus particles and the environmental conditions.

### Mr. Tony Prendergast

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield, 26 January, *Official Report*, column *714*, what information was available to the regional health authority on Mr. Tony Prendergast's qualifications when it nominated him as one of the two professional assessors on the most recent appointment board for the post of district general manager of the Wakefield health authority.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* This is a matter for the regional health authority.

### Food Inspection

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department ceased to require deferred inspections of food imported into the United Kingdom but not inspected at the point of entry by port health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Roger Freeman** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* The Imported Food Regulations 1984 provide that under certain circumstances, inspection of food imported into the United Kingdom may be deferred to a place other than the port of entry. These regulations are still current. If the hon. Member has any particular case in mind perhaps he would write to me.

## SCOTLAND

### Investment

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of total investment by other European Community country nationals, either natural persons or corporate bodies, in Scotland over the past 10 years.

**Mr. Lang:** The information requested is not available.

### Rating Reform

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will introduce regulations that prevent personal data being disclosed from community charge registers by the community charge registration officer or charging authority *(a)* to any Departments of state under the conditions specified in section 34(5)(a) of the Data Protection Act, if the disclosure is not for a purpose connected with the community charge, *(b)* to the police, immigration and tax officials for the purposes specified in section 28 of the Data Protection Act and *(c)* to the security services for the purposes specified in section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will introduce regulations that prevent personal data being disclosed from community charge registers by the community charge registration officer or charging authority to public utilities; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will introduce regulations that prevent personal data contained within the community charge register being used or disclosed for purposes not connected with the community charge by the community charge registration officer or charging authority; and whether he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** The community charges register is available for inspection to the extent specified and for the purposes set out in section 20 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and in regulation 16 of the Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 1988. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to make any further regulations on this matter.

### Water Pollution

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the volume and *(b)* the locations in Scotland at which discharges take place into the aquatic environment of (i) ethylene dichloride, (ii) perchloroethylene and (iii) trichloroethylene.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** This information is not held centrally. Control of discharges in Scotland is the responsibility of the seven river purification boards on the mainland and the islands councils in their areas.

### Legal Aid

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to simplify the rules governing the availability of civil legal aid for first instance proceedings under the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1986.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am aware of no difficulty which would require such action.

### Road Maintenance

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the level of road maintenance expenditure in each of the last five years within the Shettleston constituency; and what have been the levels of expenditure on the same activity in the Edinburgh, Pentlands constituency over the same period.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Expenditure on road maintenance in the Shettleston and Endinburgh, Pentlands constituencies is a matter for the regional councils concerned. This information is not held centrally.

### Fishing Industry (Grants and Licensing Scheme)

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy for a grants and licensing scheme for the fishing industry.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The United Kingdom Fisheries Departments operate both a licensing system and grants scheme for the fishing industry. These are currently being reviewed in consultation with the industry and a statement will be made in due course.

## Electoral Registration

**Mr Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number of people on the current electoral register published earlier this month and *(b)* the number of people on the electoral register at the last general election; and if he will express the change in percentage terms.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Scottish registers published earlier this month contained 3,932,921 names, compared with 3,994,893 in February 1987, a change of minus 1·55 per cent. There is no central record of the numbers on the register at June 1987.

**Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what he expects the percentage change to be of the number of people on the electoral register in Scotland for each of the next five years.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Forecasts of the numbers on the electoral register are not prepared on a regular basis. Percentage changes over the previous year in the projected population for Scotland aged 17 and over are as follows:

| *Year* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 1990 | 0·00 |
| 1991 | −0·12 |
| 1992 | −0·17 |
| 1993 | −0·19 |
| 1994 | −0·33 |

**Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each Scottish constituency the numerical and percentage change of the number of people on the electoral register between February 1988 and February 1989.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information is set out in the following table.

*Number of electors*

| *Constituency* | *1988 Electoral register* | *1989 Electoral register* | *Numerical change* | *Percentage change* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen North | 62,075 | 60,604 | −1,471 | −2·37 |
| Aberdeen South | 60,323 | 58,947 | −1,376 | −2·28 |
| Angus East | 61,643 | 61,899 | +256 | +0·42 |
| Argyll and Bute | 48,912 | 48,695 | −217 | −0·44 |
| Ayr | 67,063 | 66,545 | −518 | −0·77 |
| Banff and Buchan | 63,054 | 62,830 | −224 | −0·36 |
| Caithness and Sutherland | 30,978 | 31,031 | +53 | +0·17 |
| Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley | 56,708 | 56,338 | −370 | +0·65 |
| Central Fife | 56,440 | 56,183 | −257 | −0·46 |
| Clackmannan | 49,127 | 48,757 | −370 | −0·75 |
| Clydebank and Milngavie | 50,128 | 49,075 | −1,053 | −2·10 |
| Clydesdale | 62,602 | 62,456 | −146 | −0·23 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 46,392 | 46,345 | −47 | −0·10 |
| Cunninghame North | 55,566 | 55,262 | −304 | −0·55 |
| Cunninghame South | 50,414 | 49,931 | −483 | −0·96 |
| Dumbarton | 59,369 | 58,328 | −1,041 | −1·75 |
| Dumfries | 59,972 | 59,962 | −10 | −0·02 |
| Dundee East | 61,221 | 60,394 | −827 | −1·35 |
| Dundee West | 61,445 | 60,246 | −1,199 | −1·95 |
| Dunfermline East | 51,008 | 50,894 | −114 | −0·22 |
| Dunfermline West | 51,384 | 51,413 | +29 | +0·06 |
| East Kilbride | 63,956 | 63,715 | −214 | −0·38 |
| East Lothian | 65,542 | 66,108 | +566 | +0·86 |
| Eastwood | 62,839 | 63,483 | +644 | +1·02 |
| Edinburgh Central | 58,975 | 57,069 | −1,906 | −3·23 |
| Edinburgh East | 48,745 | 47,802 | −943 | −1·93 |
| Edinburgh Leith | 60,031 | 58,984 | −1,047 | −1·74 |
| Edinburgh Pentlands | 58,884 | 58,538 | −346 | −0·59 |
| Edinburgh South | 64,026 | 62,452 | −1,574 | −2·46 |
| Edinburgh West | 62,652 | 61,172 | −1,480 | −2·36 |
| Falkirk East | 52,737 | 52,679 | −58 | −0·11 |
| Falkirk West | 50,606 | 50,506 | −100 | −0·20 |
| Galloway and Upper Nithsdale | 53,621 | 53,481 | −140 | −0·26 |
| Glasgow Cathcart | 48,767 | 47,702 | −1,065 | −2·18 |
| Glasgow Central | 50,867 | 50,535 | −332 | −0·65 |
| Glasgow Garscadden | 46,916 | 44,931 | −1,985 | −4·23 |
| Glasgow Govan | 50,190 | 48,908 | −1,282 | −2·55 |
| Glasgow Hillhead | 57,704 | 56,718 | −986 | −1·71 |
| Glasgow Maryhill | 52,039 | 50,589 | −1,450 | −2·79 |
| Glasgow Pollok | 50,829 | 49,497 | −1,332 | −2·62 |

| Constituency | 1988 Electoral register | 1989 Electoral register | Numerical change | Percentage change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of electors | | | |
| Glasgow Provan | 42,908 | 41,086 | −1,822 | −4·25 |
| Glasgow Rutherglen | 56,929 | 55,695 | −1,234 | −2·17 |
| Glasgow Shettleston | 53,883 | 53,254 | −629 | −1·17 |
| Glasgow Springburn | 50,489 | 48,785 | −1,704 | −3·37 |
| Gordon | 75,228 | 75,537 | +309 | +0·41 |
| Greenock and Port Glasgow | 57,339 | 55,612 | −1,727 | −3·01 |
| Hamilton | 63,167 | 62,688 | −479 | −0·76 |
| Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber | 66,695 | 67,262 | +567 | +0·85 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 63,325 | 62,834 | −491 | −0·78 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 64,398 | 64,432 | +34 | +0·05 |
| Kirkcaldy | 53,823 | 53,626 | −197 | −0·37 |
| Linlithgow | 60,584 | 61,135 | +551 | +0·91 |
| Livingston | 58,008 | 59,533 | +1,525 | +2·63 |
| Midlothian | 61,139 | 61,089 | −50 | −0·08 |
| Monklands East | 50,271 | 49,533 | −738 | −1·47 |
| Monklands West | 51,300 | 50,450 | −850 | −1·66 |
| Moray | 63,206 | 62,840 | −366 | −0·58 |
| Motherwell North | 58,331 | 57,971 | −360 | −0·62 |
| Motherwell South | 52,599 | 51,704 | −895 | −1·70 |
| North East Fife | 52,442 | 52,313 | −129 | −0·25 |
| North Tayside | 54,582 | 54,367 | −215 | −0·39 |
| Orkney and Shetland | 31,180 | 31,115 | −65 | −0·21 |
| Paisley North | 48,973 | 48,213 | −760 | −1·55 |
| Paisley South | 50,403 | 49,595 | −808 | −1·60 |
| Perth and Kinross | 63,957 | 64,505 | +548 | +0·86 |
| Renfrew West and Inverclyde | 57,025 | 57,234 | +209 | +0·37 |
| Ross, Cromarty and Skye | 52,278 | 53,062 | +784 | +1·50 |
| Roxburgh and Berwickshire | 43,631 | 43,484 | −147 | −0·34 |
| Stirling | 58,715 | 58,387 | −328 | −0·56 |
| Strathkelvin and Bearsden | 63,296 | 62,706 | −590 | −0·93 |
| Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale | 38,438 | 38,773 | +335 | +0·87 |
| Western Isles | 23,085 | 23,097 | +12 | +0·05 |
| Total | 3,967,377 | 3,932,921 | −34,456 | −0·87 |

### Pupils (Qualifications)

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of pupils left Scottish schools with no qualifications in 1987-88, nationally and by region.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The latest available information on school leavers' qualifications relates to 1986-87 and was published in SED statistical bulletin No. 11/E2/1988, a copy of which is available in the Library.

### Child Sexual Abuse

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what co-ordination of research into child sexual abuse takes place between his Department and the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Scottish Office makes a substantial contribution to the cost of the society's Overnewton centre in Glasgow, which is carrying out a major project in developing methods of dealing with child victims of sexual abuse within the context of their families and joint treatment of perpetrators. We are also providing grant support to the society to undertake a project designed to improve public awareness of child abuse, both physical and sexual, and the need to take measures to combat it.

As part of our new strategy for social work research we recently sent to interested research contractors a project specification on child sexual abuse. I am arranging to send a copy to the society.

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times officials of his Department have given evidence to inquiries involving child sexual abuse since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** None.

### AIDS

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to protect prison officers from being infected with AIDS or the HIV virus.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Guidance was issued to prison officers in April 1986 advising them of the sensible hygiene precautions which should be taken, for instance when there is a spillage of blood or other bodily fluids. This guidance has since been reinforced as an integral part of prison officers' induction and on the job, operational training. This emphasis on training, to ensure that prison officers are aware of both the facts of the situation and the measures and precautions they should take, will continue.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners in Scottish gaols are known to be *(a)* suffering from AIDS or *(b)* HIV positive; and what are the comparable figures for the last five years for which information is available.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The most recent survey, conducted on 20 October 1988, showed that 67 inmates in Scottish penal establishments were known to be HIV positive, and five were suffering from AIDS or AIDS related complex. There was a previous survey at Easter 1988 when the figures were 71 and four respectively. No figures are available before that date.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to prevent the spread of AIDS in Scottish prisons; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Nationally, we have established an extensive education programme, involving both national campaigns as well as videos, leaflets and general talks specifically addressed. A variety of local initiatives are also being planned by individual establishments, with the co-operation of health boards and voluntary bodies.

We are taking a number of additional measures to minimise the opportunity for risky behaviour. An increasing proportion of the prison population is being housed in single cells. The gradual reduction of the prison population, partly as a result of measures to provide alternatives to custody, is also of assistance here.

**Mr Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities there are in Scottish prisons for the treatment of prisoners who are known to be suffering from AIDS or to be HIV positive.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Prisoners who have been confirmed as HIV positive but are asymptomatic have access to advice, counselling and treatment from the prison medical staff. Health boards and voluntary organisations also provide specialist advice, counselling and testing facilities. When the health of an inmate with HIV/AIDS begins to deteriorate, the prison medical officer will decide on the appropriate form of treatment and whether to place the inmate in the prison hospital. Inmates who need specialist medical facilities unavailable in a prison hospital can be transferred to a hospital outside.

### Private Medicine (NHS Debts)

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information regarding private medicine sector debts to the National Health Service in Scotland for the use of facilities and installations of the National Health Service.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The information, as sought, is not held centrally. At 31 March 1988, £92,706 was due to the National Health Service in Scotland for treatment given to private in-patients.

### Rape

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of rape reported to procurators fiscal by the police, were marked for no further proceedings in 1988; and if any of these were so marked because of shortage of staff.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** In 1988, 69 of the cases of alleged rape reported to procurators fiscal by the police were marked "no further proceedings". None was so marked because of shortage of staff.

### Water Supplies (Improvement Works)

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times since June 1988 inspectors from the Scottish Development Department have reviewed improvement works for water supplies in each one of the Scottish regions.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The provision of public water supplies is the responsibility of the appropriate regional council. Nevertheless, the Scotish Development Department has frequent contact with the councils on drinking water quality and capital expenditure plans. In addition, the regional councils' programmes for the improvement of water supplies were reviewed comprehensively by the Department between October 1988 and January 1989. Certain improvement work in Grampian, Lothian and Strathclyde was further reviewed last week.

### Public Local Inquiry, Glasgow

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the report of the public local inquiry held in Glasgow on 6 June 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I received the report of the local inquiry on 21 August 1988. Having considered the report carefully, I am satisfied that the City of Glasgow district council has failed to do what is required of it by the provisions of section 1(1A)(b) of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 (as added by paragraph 1(a) of schedule 1 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1986) and the provisions of section 75(1)(b) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

It is my view that the council entered into, and induced or sought to induce its tenants to enter into, agreements purporting to restrict the tenants' statutory rights to purchase their homes, by sending a letter to certain of their tenants requiring, as a condition of any works of improvement being carried out on, or on behalf of the council to, the houses which they tenanted, that the tenants sign or execute a document undertaking not to exercise their right to buy their homes within a specified period after completion of the improvement works; and that if they did so they would repay to the council a proportion of the costs of any improvement works carried out to their houses.

Accordingly, I have now made an order under section 211 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 requiring Glasgow district council to remedy its default by

4 April 1989. The order requires the council to take steps to identify all tenants who have at any time between 7 January 1987 and 28 April 1988 been sent a letter by the council as above; to write to those tenants so identified who had not signed the declaration informing them that they are no longer required to do so; to write to those tenants who had signed the declaration advising that they are no longer bound by their undertaking; and to repay to the tenants concerned those payments which they may have made to the council in pursuance of such a declaration.

Copies of the inquiry report and of the default order have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Trunk Roads (Inquiries)

**Mr. Anson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those trunk road schemes in Scotland on which he anticipates public inquiries being held during the current year with, where known, the likely date of the inquiry.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* For the M74 Maryville to West of Fullarton road scheme, a public local inquiry will begin on 13 March; for the A96 Bucksburn diversion, an inquiry is expected to be held in the summer, possibly beginning late June; and for the M8 Newbridge to Edinburgh scheme, it is possible that the inquiry adjourned in November 1988 will reconvene around November of this year.

For four other schemes—A68 Dalkeith bypass, A91 Auchtermuchty bypass, A828 Creagan Bridge, and A830 Lochan Doilead to Kinsadel—an inquiry towards the end of 1989 is a possibility, although I hope that inquiries will not be necessary.

## ENERGY

### British Coal

4. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce a reconstruction of British Coal's balance sheet and to write off its debt.

**Mr. Parkinson:** I continue to keep the British Coal Corporation's balance sheet and financial structure under review.

35. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

39. **Mr. Ilsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he expects to discuss.

47. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

49. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

42. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal regarding future financial provision.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I meet the chairman of the British Coal Corporation at regular intervals to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

## ENERGY

### Gas Consumers (Code of Rights)

1. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the Director General of Gas Supply to discuss the code of rights for the domestic gas consumers.

**Mr. Parkinson:** My right hon. Friend and I have met the Director General of Gas Supply on a number of occasions. He recently announced agreement with British Gas on new methods of debt collection with a view to reducing the number of disconnections.

### Scottish Coalmining Industry

11. **Dr. Mawhinney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the future of the Scottish coalmining industry.

**Mr. Parkinson:** I meet the chairman regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry. I would also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas).

### Fluidised Bed Technology

17. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his best recent estimate of the impact of fluidised bed technology in economic and environmental terms.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Fluidised bed technology provides an economic method of meeting the emission regulations in small coal-fired power generators. The topping cycle technology proposed by British Coal appears particularly interesting.

### Private Electricity Generators

18. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the Electrical Power Engineers Association's recent statement on single union deals for future private electricity generators.

**Mr. Parkinson:** Like the hon. Gentleman, I have noted with interest the EPEA's recent statement. However, as he will be aware, any agreements between the Electrical Power Engineers Association and future private electricity generators will be a matter for the parties concerned.

### Nuclear Power Stations (Decommissioning)

19. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he proposes to undertake to assess the cost of decommissioning nuclear power stations.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Operators of nuclear power stations are responsible for their decommissioning, and have all necessary expertise to assess the costs of doing this.

### Grimethorpe (Fluidised Bed Project)

20. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive firm proposals from British Coal for funding the next stage of the experimental pressurised fluidised bed project at Grimethorpe.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Meetings are taking place with British Coal to clarify its proposals for a further programme of work at Grimethorpe, and my Department is studying carefully the additional information provided.

### Fuel Prices

21. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has concerning the impact of fuel prices on the employment and living standards of people in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on what use he makes of this information.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Fuel prices for industrial and domestic customers have fallen by 24 and 18 per cent. respectively in real terms since 1983. This has raised living standards, reduced industrialists' real costs, improved their competitiveness and improved employment prospects in rural as well as other areas.

### Norwegian Offshore Oil and Gas Sector

22. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last visited the Norwegian offshore oil and gas sector.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** I last visited Norway in August 1988 when I attended the offshore northern seas exhibition in Stavanger.

### Offshore Safety

23. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received on offshore safety.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** My right hon. Friend and I recently met representatives of the bereaved and survivors from the Piper Alpha accident who raised a number of concerns about offshore safety. I also continue to receive written representations from a wide range of sources about the offshore safety regime and other questions concerning safety.

30. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he proposes to take to improve safety in the offshore oil and gas industry.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** Safety standards remain under continuous review and I have already informed Parliament that if the Piper Alpha public inquiry can recommend improvements to the present safety regime these will be accepted.

### Director General Designate of Electricity Supply

24. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the appointment of the Director General designate of Electricity Supply.

**Mr. Parkinson:** We intend to identify the director-designate in time for him or her to participate in the process of establishing the Office of Electricity Regulation.

### Electricity Prices

25. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received regarding the level of electricity prices.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I have received a number of representations.

36. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the increase in electricity prices in 1988; and what estimate he has of any further increase on the current year.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The increase in electricity prices in 1988 was 8·6 per cent. The electricity industry will be announcing next month the increase to take effect from 1 April 1989.

### Coal (Pricing Policy)

26. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss future pricing policy of coal to the privatised electricity companies; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry. The Government have made clear their view that while the privatised generating companies are likely to wish to buy a significant proportion of their coal requirements on a contractual basis, the size of that proportion, the price or prices at which coal is sold on contract, and the length of the contracts are all matters for commercial negotiation. British Coal's agreed underlying objective continues to be to earn a satisfactory return on capital while competing in the market place.

### Director General of Gas Supply

27. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Director General of Gas Supply; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** I meet the Director General of Gas Supply regularly and we discuss a range of issues of mutual interest.

48. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the Director General of Gas Supply, to discuss the implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** I have no plans to meet the Director General of Gas Supply.

### Redundant Mineworkers

28. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what meetings he has planned to discuss the effect of the restart scheme upon redundant and early retired mineworkers.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) earlier today.

36. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations have been made to him regarding the effect of the restart scheme upon redundant and early retired mineworkers.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others.

### Nuclear Reactors (Radiation)

29. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of exposure to radiation of the United Kingdom population is received from nuclear reactors.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I understand from the National Radiological Protection Board that the United Kingdom nuclear industry accounts for less than 0·1 per cent. of the average United Kingdom population exposure to ionising radiation. Natural radiation accounts for about 87 per cent. of the average exposure and medical diagnosis and treatment about 12 per cent.

### Electricity (Hydrogeneration)

31. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the long-term prospects for hydrogeneration of electricity.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Most of the possible locations for hydro electricity in the United Kingdom are situated in Scotland. The Department has commissioned a study from Salford university on the potential of small scale hydro energy in the United Kingdom. A final report will be published in due course.

### Electricity Privatisation

32. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the total cost of publicity, advertising and public relations for the electricity industry and its privatisation up to the date of the sell-off.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Expenditure by the industry is a matter for the industry. Total costs will depend on many factors which have not yet been decided, such as marketing strategies in respect of the various successor companies, and cannot therefore be accurately forecast at this stage.

**Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to publish information on proposed tariff structures, reviews and methods of payment in advance of the proposed privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** We are taking provision in the Electricity Bill to allow existing tariffs to continue immediately after the vesting of the area boards in their successor companies. Subsequent decisions on tariff structures and reviews will be made by these successor companies, the public electricity suppliers (PESs) subject to the relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. Clause 17 of the Electricity Bill deals with how tariffs should be framed and published; while the draft PES licence, published on 10 January 1989, contains provisions for price regulation and review.

Under condition 15 of the draft PES licence, suppliers will have to prepare, within three months of the licence coming into force, a code of practice on the payment of bills. These codes of practice will be prepared following consultation with the consumers' committee and will be submitted to the Director General of Electricity Supply for approval.

### Electricity Boards

33. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area boards to discuss the future of the electricity supply industry.

54. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity boards; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I meet the area board chairmen regularly to discuss various matters of mutual interest.

### Energy Management Systems

34. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many pilot energy management systems, supported by grants under the monitoring and targeting schemes, are now in operation; and what are the estimated savings to date resulting from the operation of such systems.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** At the end of 1988, and in line with programme targets, there were 600 sites operating monitoring and targeting (M&T) systems developed under the M&T programme. Current savings are put at £100 million per annum.

### Electricity Generation (Ilfracombe and Lynton)

37. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will visit the wind generator at Ilfracombe and the hydro-electric plant at Lynton.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no immediate plans to visit the installations. The wind generator at Ilfracombe was inaugurated by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy in 1985. The current Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Baroness Hooper, visited an updated version of the machine last year when she opened the Central Electricity Generating Board's wind energy demonstration centre at Carmarthen bay. My Department is taking note of the performance of the hydro-electric plant at Lynton which is, we understand, functioning satisfactorily.

### Alternative Energy

38. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much energy was produced by alternative energy sources in 1979; and what is the latest figure.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** In 1979 and at present, most of the energy produced from alternative energy sources comes from the hydro-electric sources. In 1979 this was equivalent to around 1·8 per cent. of total electricity requirements in that year. In 1987 the percentage contribution from hydro-electric sources was just over 1 per cent. of total electricity requirements. Other alternative sources of energy such as the use of waste materials, wood, and wind power contributed only a very small proportion of our energy requirements in 1979. Today, wind produces around 3GW hours per annum of electricity, and biofuels (use of waste materials and wood), around 800,000 tonnes of coal equivalent per annum. The use of biofuels includes the generation of electricity from landfill gas and waste incineration.

If our renewables research and development programmes are successful and if they are proved economically

viable and environmentally acceptable we might expect alternative sources of energy to be exploited on a more significant scale post 2000.

43. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much has been expended by his Department on research and development in alternative energy sources in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The table gives my Department's expenditure on alternative energy sources for the last three financial years. Provision for 1988-89 is £16·2 million and that for 1989-90 is £17·9 million.

| | £ million 1985-86 | £ million 1986-87 | £ million 1987-88 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wind | 5·4 | 3·7 | 4·0 |
| Wave | 0·4 | 0·1 | 0·2 |
| Geothermal Aquifers | 0·3 | 0·1 | 0·0 |
| Geothermal hot dry rocks | 3·5 | 3·5 | 3·6 |
| Solar | 0·7 | 0·9 | 1·1 |
| Biomass | 0·8 | 1·3 | 2·2 |
| Tide | 0·1 | 0·1 | 1·4 |
| Hydro/general studies | — | — | 0·3 |
| ETSU management | 2·0 | 2·3 | 2·3 |
| | 13·2 | 12·0 | 15·1 |
| External contributions | 2·1 | 3·1 | 3·9 |
| Total cost of the Department's programme | 15·3 | 15·1 | 19·0 |

*Note:*

*(a)* Expenditure under biofuels includes expenditure on "waste as a fuel" projects under the Energy Efficiency Office Demonstration Scheme.

*(b)* Up to 1986-87 total for R&D also included expenditure on low head hydro and general studies. These are separately identified for 1987-88.

*(c)* Where available external contributions include industry, generating boards and the European Commission.

### Spending Plans

40. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding his Department's future spending plans outlined in the Government's expenditure plans 1989-92, Cm 606.

**Mr. Parkinson:** I have received no representations about Cm 606 concerning the Department's future spending plans.

45. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement concerning his Department's future spending plans outlined in the Goverment's expenditure plans 1989-92, Cm 606.

**Mr. Parkinson:** No.

### Fast Reactors

41. **Mr. Mackenzie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the agreements implementing the European integrated programme of research on fast reactors.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I am arranging for summaries of these agreements, which were signed on 16, February, to be placed in the Library of the House.

### British Coal National Engineering Workshops

44. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met, and if he has had any discussions with the chairman of British Coal about the future of British Coal national engineering workshops.

**Mr Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal frequently to discuss a wide range of subjects affecting the coal industry.

### British Nuclear Fuels plc

46. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels; and what matters they discussed.

**Mr Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend last met Mr. Harding on 23 January when he discussed a range of matters concerning British Nuclear Fuels plc.

### Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

50. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the form and level of the non-fossil fuel obligation.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The order setting the obligation will not be made until shortly before vesting.

### Electricity Generation (Coal)

51. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal to discuss the likely market for coal for electricity generation in the next few years.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

### Mining Subsidence

52. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on mining subsidence damage claims over the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I have received a large number of representations from Members of Parliament, interested bodies and members of the public.

### British Gas

53. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox).

### Fuel Poverty

55. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from groups concerned with fuel poverty regarding his Department's future spending plans as outlined in the Government's expenditure plans 1989-92, Cm. 606.

**Mr. Parkinson:** None.

### Offshore Workers

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to introduce a system of compulsory carrying by all categories of offshore workers of a logbook showing the bearer's qualifications, skill level, training achieved and medical record; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** No. It is for an employer to ensure that his employees are adequately qualified and trained for the duties they are required to undertake. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a duty on an employer to provide the necessary instruction, training and supervision to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of his employees.

### Electricity Generation

**Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what grant aid is available from the European Community to private generators for the development, promotion and setting up of biomass plants for the production of electricity.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Financial support is available from the European Community for demonstration projects in many areas of energy technology including the generation of electricity from biomass. Support of up to 40 per cent. of total project costs may be given. Projects must be novel and economic and must show energy benefits over current technology. The Commission has recently issued a call for proposals and applications must be in the hands of the Commission by noon on 14 April 1989.

Research and development on certain aspects of biomass production, harvesting, conversion and marketing, including fuel production in integrated systems may be supported under Joule, the community's non-nuclear energy R and D programme. Support of up to 50 per cent. may be given. The Commission has also recently issued a call for proposals under this programme and proposals must be submitted before the end of April 1989.

My Department and the energy technology support unit at Harwell give advice and assistance to potential applicants for grants under these programmes. I am arranging for information packages relating to these two programmes to be sent to the hon. Member and to be deposited in the Library of the House.

Investment support for energy projects located in Northern Ireland may also be given under the Community's Valoren programme. Further information about this programme is available from the Department of Economic Development for Northern Ireland.

### Electricity Companies (Land)

**Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to give privatised electricity supply and generation companies powers to acquire land and rights over land at other than existing use value.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** None. Compensation for compulsory purchase by the privatised electricity companies will continue to be assessed under the existing code.

### Electricity Demand

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has made in the reduction in demand for electricity and its impact on future investment programmes in the light of the Eurisol report "Pollution Reduction Through Energy Conservation."

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** None. The Department does not make estimates of electricity demand. This is a matter for the industry.

### Limestone/Gypsum Processes

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the principal factors for his decision to fit FGD plants which employ limestone/gypsum processes in preference to regenerative plants at coal-fire power stations; if he will list the sites where the limestone/gypsum will be quarried and mined; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

### Gas Prices

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what controls he has over the price of gas charged to domestic consumers.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** Gas tariff prices are a matter for British Gas plc within the limits set out in the price formula. The Director General of Gas Supply is responsible for monitoring compliance with the price formula.

### Spent Magnox Fuel

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total volume of spent commercial Magnox fuel awaiting reprocessing at Sellafield; how long it will take to complete the full reprocessing of this spent fuel if it is carried out at the average present level of throughput; and what proportion of the Magnox fuel awaiting reprocessing arises from spent fuel imported from Italy and Japan.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The stock of spent commercial Magnox fuel awaiting reprocessing at Sellafield amounts to just over a year's reprocessing throughput. About 10 per cent. of the fuel reprocessed in any year is from overseas.

### Wave Energy

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the correspondence of January 1984 between the manager of his Department's wave programme, Mr. Peter Davies and Professor Stephen Salter, relating to the circulation of papers to the wave energy steering committee.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** No. The results of the wave programme from that period have already been published and are available in the Library of the House.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government have implemented Sir Richard Southwood's recommendation about research and development into bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

**Mr. MacGregor:** A research consultative committee has been established under the chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell of the Medical Research Council. It will advise my Department and the Department of Health on research work in progress or proposed in relation to bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, on any additional work required and the priorities for future relevant research.

The other members are Dr. W. A. Watson, director of the central veterinary laboratory MAFF, Professor J. Bourne, director of the Institute of Animal Health, Dr. R. J. Will consultant neurologist at the Western general hospital, Edinburgh, Dr. R. Kimberlin ex-director of the neuro-pathogenesis unit, Edinburgh. Dr. Katherine Levy of the Medical Research Council will act as observer.

**Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the report of the Southwood working party on bovine spongiform encephalopathy will be published; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The Secretary of State for Health and I are very grateful to Sir Richard Southwood and his colleagues for all their work and for their report on BSE which was presented to us on 9 February and is published today. We appointed the working party in April last year to examine and advise on the implications of BSE in relation to both animal health and any possible human health risks. Before receiving any recommendations from the working party, I had already banned from 18 July last year the feeding to ruminants of ruminant-derived protein feed immediately this was identified as being the probable source of the problem; and other important parts of the report have already been acted upon.

The report concludes that the risk of transmission of BSE to humans appears remote and it is therefore most unlikely that BSE will have any implications for human health. It points out that the related disease scrapie in sheep has been present in the United Kingdom for over 200 years and there has been no evidence of transmission to man. The report also concludes that, from present evidence, it is likely that cattle will prove to be a "dead end host" for the disease agent.

However the working party points out that, if its assessment proves incorrect, the implications would be serious. The working party believes that the disease has developed because of feeding practices associated with modern agriculture. It suggests that, in the context of the adjustment of the agricultural policy of the EC in coming years, consideration should be given to changes in present methods. I have discussed this point with Sir Richard Southwood who has said that his working party is not recommending a ban on all use of meat and bone meal in animal feeds, but is concerned that if they continue to be used they should be effectively sterilised.

The working party has greatly welcomed the speed with which the Government acted to ban the use of the animal feed rations in question and also to implement its interim recommendations. These measures include the compulsory slaughter of cattle suspected of having BSE and the removal from the food chain of their milk and carcases. The working party believes that the risks as at present perceived would not justify special labelling requirements for products containing either bovine brains or spleen. The report suggests, however, that manufacturers of baby foods should avoid the use of bovine thymus and offal.

Sir Richard Southwood has confirmed that the term "offal" as it is used in the report (as defined in the regulations quoted) refers to brain, spinal cord, spleen and intestines (tripe). The chief medical officer is satisfied that none of these, nor thymus, are used in the manufacture of baby food and advises that mothers ought not to feed these materials to infants of, say, under 18 months. As a precautionary measure, I am however taking steps to ensure through secondary legislation that it will be illegal for anyone to sell baby food containing such products in future. With regard to other meats which people sometimes refer to as offal—such as kidney, liver and heart—the chief medical officer advises that there is no need for concern. These are extremely nutritious foods which are beneficial.

The Government also accepted an earlier recommendation to establish a consultative committee on research. This will be under the chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell of the Medical Research Council. This committee will advise my Department and the Department of Health on research work in progress or proposed in relation to BSE and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, on any additional work required, and on the priorities for future research. Terms of reference and full membership are now agreed as reported also today to Parliament.

Although the risk of transmission to humans is very remote, there are several further actions the Government propose to take as a matter of extreme prudence in response to the other recommendations in the report. These add up to a comprehensive response to all the working party recommendations. The measures are as follows:

We accept the importance the report attaches to the success of the study to determine whether cattle-to-cattle transmission can take place; and we are taking expert advice on the most effective way of continuing this study.

The Committee on the Safety of Medicines and the Veterinary Products Committee have considered the comments of the working party on the implications of BSE for the manufacture of pharmaceutical products from bovine material; and agree that any risks of transmission of BSE through medicinal products to man appear remote; as a precautionary measure, however, they have advised that additional guidance should be issued to medicine manufacturers on good manufacturing practice.

The Health and Safety Executive will be considering what further action is necessary to ensure that the existing guidance to occupational groups involved with cattle is followed: this guidance outlines hygiene procedures which are considered to be appropriate for BSE.

Although the report makes it clear that there is no evidence of any link between Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans and BSE in cattle (or with scrapie in sheep, which has been present in the United Kingdom for over 200 years), the chief medical officer is ensuring mechanisms are in place to detect any change in the pattern of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

A thorough research programme is under way into the epidemiological background to the disease, and into transmissibility and genetic and microbiological aspects; research expenditure in 1988-89 is likely to amount to almost £1 million; we shall continue encouraging and funding further research in this area, taking into account recommendations made by the Tyrrell committee.

As far as the working party's recommendations on animal feed are concerned we have already acted to ban

the feeding of ruminant-derived material to ruminants; further action will be taken as necessary in the light of research work already under way on the heat-resistance of the agent and of any further research which may be recommended by the Tyrrell committee.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether his Department has made any forecast of the likely eradication of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in British cattle;

(2) what estimates his Department has made about the future incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* There is no evidence that BSE is spreading from animal to animal but that all cases are attributable to a common source. Although our knowledge of the epidemiology of this newly identified disease is still developing any estimates must be tentative, the future incidence in Great Britain seems likely to remain at current levels until 1993. Thereafter, if cattle-to-cattle transmission does not occur, the incidence is expected to decline to a low level by 1996 and subsequently to disappear.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he first received a draft or interim report from the Southwood working party;

(2) if he has requested any amendment or modification to any draft or interim report submitted to him by the Southwood working party;

(3) how many interim reports he has received from Sir Richard Southwood's working party on bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will place them in the Library;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *359*, if he will publish immediately the report of the Southwood working party.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* No modification or amendment was requested in relation to the interim recommendations which were contained in two letters. The first, received on 22 June last year, recommended the slaughter and disposal of cattle suspected of having BSE. The compulsory slaughter policy was introduced on 8 August with carcasses being burned or buried. It also recommended the setting up of a consultative committee on research, details of which I announced today.

The second letter was received on 15 November recommending an indefinite extension to the feed ban and the prohibition on the use of milk from suspect cattle for human or animal consumption. Legislative measures came into force on 30 December to prohibit the use of milk and extend the feed ban. Full details are contained in the Southwood report, which is the committee's own, and which is published, unamended, in full today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will introduce a scheme to either reward or ban the sale for purposes other than for slaughter of animals from cattle herds in which bovine spongiform encephalopathy infection has been confirmed;

(2) if he will introduce a scheme for the random testing for bovine spongiform encephalopathy of cattle slaughtered for human consumption.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *(holding reply 24 February 1989):* There are no plans to introduce such schemes.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy confirmed in each of his Department's veterinary investigation centres.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *(holding reply 24 February 1989):* Before BSE became a notifiable disease on 21 June last year, histopathological examinations of brains from suspected animals were carried out at the Ministry's central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge, and at other Ministry establishments. Since 21 June last year, diagnoses have been carried out at nine veterinary investigation centres. The number of cases of BSE confirmed by each centre is as follows:

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Cambridge | 230 |
| Carmarthen | 213 |
| Newcastle | 64 |
| Polwhele | 404 |
| Reading | 188 |
| Shrewsbury | 453 |
| Starcross | 244 |
| Thirsk | 357 |
| Wye | 66 |

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the distribution of the total number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to date, by county, in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding reply 24 February 1989]:* Up to 17 February, 2,888 cases of BSE had been confirmed in the following counties and regions of Great Britain:

| *County* | *Confirmed cases* |
|---|---|
| Avon | 29 |
| Bedfordshire | 7 |
| Berkshire | 37 |
| Borders | 2 |
| Buckinghamshire | 20 |
| Cambridgeshire | 12 |
| Central | 3 |
| Cheshire | 42 |
| Cleveland | 1 |
| Clwyd | 16 |
| Cornwall | 316 |
| Cumbria | 51 |
| Derbyshire | 28 |
| Devonshire | 394 |
| Dorset | 191 |
| Dumfries | 17 |
| Durham | 4 |
| Dyfed | 91 |
| Essex | 3 |
| Glamorgan Mid | 7 |
| Glamorgan South | 11 |
| Glamorgan West | 2 |
| Gloucestershire | 133 |
| Grampian | 14 |
| Gwent | 29 |
| Gwynedd | 10 |
| Hampshire | 126 |
| Hereford and Worcestershire | 66 |
| Hertfordshire | 9 |
| Highland | 4 |
| Humberside | 8 |
| Isle of Wight | 12 |
| Kent | 80 |
| Lancashire | 51 |
| Leicestershire | 56 |

| County | Confirmed cases |
|---|---|
| Lincolnshire | 36 |
| Lothian | 2 |
| Manchester | 1 |
| Merseyside | 1 |
| Norfolk | 33 |
| Northamptonshire | 15 |
| Northumberland | 16 |
| Nottinghamshire | 12 |
| Orkney | 2 |
| Oxfordshire | 50 |
| Powys | 17 |
| Salop | 72 |
| Shetland | 1 |
| Somerset | 205 |
| Staffordshire | 47 |
| Strathclyde | 11 |
| Suffolk | 36 |
| Surrey | 49 |
| Sussex East | 30 |
| Sussex West | 78 |
| Tayside | 8 |
| Warwickshire | 20 |
| Wiltshire | 164 |
| West Midlands | 3 |
| Yorkshire North | 83 |
| Yorkshire South | 3 |
| Yorkshire West | 11 |

## Salmonella

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many laying flocks of chickens have been tested for salmonella in each week since 5 December 1988;

(2) how many breeding flocks of hens have been tested for salmonella in each week since 5 December 1988.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Codes of practice for the control of salmonellae in commercial laying and breeding flocks, copies of which are available in the Library of the House, set out procedures for the bacteriological monitoring of birds by flock owners.

Testing of samples may be carried out either by public or by private bacteriology laboratories. Samples from the following number of flocks were submitted to my Department's veterinary investigation service for testing:

| Week beginning | Layers | Breeders | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19 December 1988 | 50 | 0 | 50 |
| 26 December 1988 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| 2 January 1989 | 25 | 0 | 25 |
| 9 January 1989 | 30 | 2 | 32 |
| 16 January 1989 | 26 | 5 | 31 |
| 23 January 1989 | 39 | 5 | 44 |
| 30 January 1989 | 32 | 4 | 36 |
| 6 February 1989 | 35 | 5 | 40 |
| 13 February 1989 | 17 | 1 | 18 |
| 20 February 1989 | 21 | 0 | 21 |

I have no information on the number of samples submitted to other laboratories.

**Sir Elden Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the principal strains of salmonella which can be passed on by carriers or in excreta, indicating in each case which types of animals or birds are most likely to be infected by this particular strain; and what studies he is undertaking in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Health of the risks to health that can arise from these types of infection, as distinct from the salmonella strains identified in poultry and eggs.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** There are over 2,000 serotypes of salmonella which can be carried by animals or birds or in excreta. I am arranging for tables giving details of isolations in food animals recorded in Great Britain to be placed in the Library of the House.

A list of current research projects on salmonella which are wholly or partly funded by my Department will also be placed in the Library. Human health research projects are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

## Rabies

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will be amending the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974 prior to or during 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** It will be necessary to extend the provisions of the 1974 order to cover animals imported through the Channel tunnel but I have no other plans for any changes. The Government support the objective of eradicating rabies from the Community as a whole, but our stringent rabies controls, including quarantine, will remain in force for as long as necessary to maintain our freedom from this disease.

## Staff Losses

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has of staff losses as a result of closures at *(a)* experimental horticultural stations and *(b)* experimental husbandry farms, as a result of the Barnes review.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The impact of this review on the research and development service will depend on the extent to which the industry takes up the funding of near market research. Consultations with the industry are still under way.

## Food Laboratories

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps is he now taking to improve the facilities and working conditions of the laboratories for food research in Bristol, Reading and Norwich.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for the Agricultural and Food Research Council. I understand that, in line with the intentions first outlined in its corporate plan for 1984-88, the director of the Institute of Food Research is producing long-term plans for the restructuring of the institute on to two sites. These plans will include provison for improved facilities and working conditions.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of scientists and researchers working in food laboratories funded by his Department, for each year since 1976.

**Mr. Ryder:** During the current financial year, the Ministry has committed £16·5 million in respect of 402

external investigations with a variety of contractors, most of which are at laboratories. At the Ministry's own food science laboratories, 56 staff are engaged in food research and a further 41 normally engaged in non-laboratory work carry out varying degrees of monitoring on the externally commissioned projects. It is not possible to ascertain the total number of scientists involved in the external contracts without disproportionate cost.

The total number of scientific and research staff employed in the Department's food science laboratories from 1976 to date is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1976 | 71 |
| 1977 | 69 |
| 1978 | 72 |
| 1979 | 68 |
| 1980 | 77 |
| 1981 | 81 |
| 1982 | 80 |
| 1983 | 71 |
| 1984 | 77 |
| 1985 | 73 |
| 1986 | 88 |
| 1987 | 94 |
| 1988 | 99 |

### Listeria

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research and studies carried out by his Department on listeria contamination in food since 1985.

**Mr. Ryder:** I refer the hon. Member to the answers on this subject which I gave to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 22 December at columns 445-450 and the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 9 February at columns 780-781.

### Grain Shipments

**Sir Richard Body:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any shipment of grain from France has been rejected at a United Kingdom port in the last 12 months.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am not aware that any shipment of grain from France has been rejected at a United Kingdom port in the past 12 months.

### Fishing Offences

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by offence and fine *(a)* the European Community nationals in British courts and *(b)* the British nationals in European Community courts found guilty of fishing offences in the latest year for which comparable figures are available.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Following are details of offences and fines in respect of European Community nationals found guilty of fishing offences in British courts during 1988. Comparable information in respect of offences by British nationals in European Community courts is not available.

| *Nationality* | *Offence* | *Fine* £ |
|---|---|---|
| Danish | Illegal gear | [1] [2] 3,500 |
| Danish | Excess by-catch | 1,500 |
| Danish | Excess by-catch | [1] 3,400 |
| Danish | Excess by-catch | [1] 4,575 |
| Danish | Excess by-catch | [1] [2] 9,050 |
| Danish | Fishing for stock when quota exhausted | [1] [2] 6,379 |
| Danish | 1. Fishing for stock when quota exhausted<br>2. Log book offence<br>3. Undersize net | [1] [2] 31,860 |
| Danish | 1. Fishing for stock when quota exhausted<br>2. Log book offence<br>3. Undersize net | [1] [3] 31,860 |
| Irish | Undersize fish | 200 |
| Irish | 1. Log book offence<br>2. Illegal net attachment | 1,150 |
| Irish | 1. Undersize fish<br>2. Log book offence | 1,250 |
| Belgian | Undersize nets | 1,600 |
| Belgian | Undersize fish | [1] 2,800 |
| Belgian | Log book offence | 2,200 |
| Belgian | Log book offence<br>Illegal net attachment | 1,238 |
| Belgian | Fishing inside six miles | [1] 6,200 |
| Belgian | Fishing inside six miles | [1] 7,200 |
| Belgian | Illegal attachments | 3,400 |
| Belgian | 1. Undersize net<br>2. Fishing inside 12 miles | [1] 11,300 |
| Belgian | 1. Undersize net<br>2. Fishing inside 12 miles | 4,500 |
| Belgian | Undersize nets | 4,600 |
| Dutch | Illegal net attachment | 3,200 |
| Dutch | 1. Undersize nets<br>2. Log book offence | 4,050 |
| Dutch | Log book offence | 3,100 |
| Dutch | Undersize net | [1] [2] 865 |
| Dutch | Illegal attachments | [1] 8,500 |
| Dutch | Log book offence | 2,450 |
| Dutch | Log book offence | 1,650 |
| Dutch | Log book offences | 4,250 |
| Dutch | Undersize net | 4,460 |
| Dutch | Illegal net attachments | [1] 4,000 |
| Dutch | 1. Illegal attachments<br>2. Non facility of a boarding | [1] [3] 18,960 |
| Dutch | Illegal attachments to nets | [1] [3] 12,830 |
| French | Undersize net | 3,000 |
| French | Illegal net attachment | 3,755 |
| French | Undersize net | [2] 600 |
| French | Log book offence | 2,000 |
| French | Log book offence | 450 |
| French | Log book offence | 1,260 |
| French | Log book offence | 2,200 |
| French | 1. Undersize net<br>2. Illegal attachments | 3,350 |
| French | Log book offence | 2,200 |
| French | Log book offence | 1,200 |
| French | 1. Log book offence<br>2. Undersize net | [1] 3,450 |
| French | Log book offence | 2,200 |
| German | 1. Retention of non-licensed species<br>2. Log book offence | 3,550 |
| Spanish | 1. Undersize fish<br>2. Illegal net attachment<br>3. Log book offence | [3] 10,100 |
| Spanish | 1. Log book offence<br>2. Unlicensed species | 4,850 |
| Spanish | 1. Undersize fish<br>2. Log book offence | 1,750 |
| Spanish | 1. Unlicensed fishing<br>2. Log book offence | [1] [3] 6,650 |
| Spanish | Log book offence | 2,800 |
| Spanish | 1. Log book offence<br>2. Undersize fish | [1] 3,300 |
| Spanish | Log book offence | 1,000 |
| Spanish | 1. Retaining fish without licence | [1] 2,750 |

| Nationality | Offence | Fine £ |
|---|---|---|
| | 2. Log book offence | |
| Spanish | 1. Unlicensed fishing | [1]6,100 |
| | 2. Log book offence | |

[1] Includes value of fish.
[2] Gear confiscated.

### Lowestoft Fish Market

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to visit the fishing market at Lowestoft.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has no plans, but I hope to visit Lowestoft this summer.

### Fisheries (Grants and Licensing)

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had since 11 February about a grants and licensing scheme for fisheries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I had an opportunity to discuss both vessel licensing and the size of the fleet at a meeting with representatives of the fishing industry on 15 February. At that time, I made it clear that no options for reducing the size of our fishing fleet had been ruled out, and that these options included a decommissioning scheme; but, before we would be prepared to consider such a scheme, we would need to be satisfied that it would provide value for taxpayers' money and that there were no better alternatives.

### Fishing Industry

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many meetings he has had with representatives of the United Kingdom fishing industry in the past 12 months; and what was discussed.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has had two extensive meetings with representatives of the fishing industry. Since I took on responsibility for fishing matters seven months ago, I have made eight visits to fishing areas, meeting a wide range of representatives during the course of the visits, and I have had four meetings in London. Many issues of local and national importance to the fishing industry have been fully aired on these occasions. Further we discuss issues in the margins of meetings of the EC Fisheries Ministers Council of which there were five in 1988.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to deal with the adverse structural difficulties of the fishing industry following his Department's consultation review in 1988.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding reply 24 February 1989]:* The comments received on our consultation paper raised a number of extra issues which we are considering further in consultation with industry organisations.

### Woodlands

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all woodlands in Sussex either sold or proposed for sale by the Forestry Commission since the passage of the Forestry Act 1981; if he will state, for each such woodland *(a)* the acreage, *(b)* the map reference, and *(c)* the species composition by percentage; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ryder:** The information is given in the following tables:

| Name | Area (hectares) | Grid reference | Species[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Woodlands sold in East Sussex* | | | |
| Blossom Wood | 1·2 | TQ 866 217 | C |
| Funnells Wood (part) | 3·4 | TQ 440 264 | C |
| Haywards Heath Package: | | | |
| Beechy Wood | 8·0 | TQ 412 258 | B |
| Brickyard | 14·0 | TQ 405 245 | B |
| Circle Wood | 8·0 | TQ 404 250 | B |
| Coneyborough | 8·0 | TQ 398 246 | B |
| Cpt. 255 | 0·5 | TQ 412 249 | B |
| Dane Wood (part) | 6·8 | TQ 407 270 | C |
| Hatches Wood | 8·0 | TQ 432 251 | C |
| Kings Wood | 9·0 | TQ 392 253 | B |
| Knell Wood | 6·0 | TQ 392 257 | B |
| Mill Rough | 5·0 | TQ 417 256 | B |
| Pound and Furzefield | 14·0 | TQ 405 253 | B |
| Rigg Wood | 8·0 | TQ 428 250 | C |
| Round Wood | 6·0 | TQ 394 249 | C |
| Shepherds Wood | 1·0 | TQ 408 242 | C |
| Spring and Verralls | 25·0 | TQ 440 250 | C |
| Wapsbourne Wood | 76·0 | TQ 395 240 | B |
| Lucks Wood | 12·0 | TQ 625 336 | B |
| Newlands Wood and Long Shaw | 6·0 | TQ 626 296 | C |
| Sheffield Park Woodlands: | | | |
| Dane Wood (part) | 0·2 | TQ 407 270 | C |
| Little Rotherfield | 6·0 | TQ 403 227 | B |
| Rotherfield and Great Wet Wood | 18·5 | TQ 410 225 | C |
| The Plantation | 5·0 | TQ 393 223 | C |
| Smiths Charities: | | | |
| Bacon Hollow etc. | 21·0 | TQ 637 167 | B |
| Causeway Wood | 14·0 | TQ 606 172 | C |
| Church Wood | 10·5 | TQ 606 178 | C |
| Little Iwood etc. | 29·0 | TQ 628 173 | B |
| Snape Wood (part) | 2·7 | TQ 628 305 | B |
| Whartons Wood | 7·0 | TQ 461 177 | C |
| *Woodlands proposed for sale in East Sussex* | | | |
| Batts Wood | 64·5 | TQ 635 275 | C |
| *Woodlands sold in West Sussex* | | | |
| Arundel Estate | 462·0 | TQ 055 075 | B |
| Brick Kiln Copse | 11·0 | SU 783 222 | B |
| Brinsbury Estate (part) | 18·0 | TQ 057 215 | B |
| Harting Combe | 15·0 | SU 805 260 | C |
| Kingspark Plaist (land at) | 0·1 | SU 996 313 | B |
| Kingspark Wood (land at) | 1·1 | SU 990 310 | B |
| Littlewood Common (land at) | 0·7 | SU 874 152 | B |
| Marden (fenced-in piece) | 12·0 | SU 799 165 | C |
| Markwells (West) | 43·4 | SU 750 138 | C |
| Markwells (East) and High Copse | 39·6 | SU 755 136 | C |
| Newells Rough and Lodgesale | 54·0 | TQ 202 262 | C |
| Sheepwash Copse—Elsted | 6·0 | SU 804 195 | C |
| Southwater | 142·5 | TQ 143 256 | B |
| Tilgate (land at) | 0·3 | TQ 266 343 | B |
| Tullecombe (land at) | 0·8 | SU 804 255 | B |
| Walderton Down (land at) | 0·3 | SU 792 104 | B |
| Wildham (land at) | 1·2 | SU 811 129 | B |
| Woodshill | 38·0 | TQ 093 204 | C |

| Name | Area (hectares) | Grid reference | Species[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Woolavington Down | 38·0 | SU 930 164 | B |
| *Woodlands proposed for sale in West Sussex* | | | |
| Drovers Estate | 44·0 | SU 865 155 | B |
| Elsted Manor Estate (part) | 43·0 | SU 805 180 | B |
| Hedgelands Copse | 11·0 | TQ 002 293 | C |
| Old Copse | 23·0 | TQ 220 295 | C |
| Owlbeech Wood | 21·9 | TQ 205 315 | C |
| Sheephovel and Northland Wood | 16·0 | TQ 201 292 | B |
| Sparrwood and Swear Hanger | 13·3 | SU 995 298 | B |
| Wephurst Wood | 38·0 | TQ 028 298 | C |

[1] The species composition is not available in any more detail than B for mainly broadleaves and C for mainly conifers.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all woodlands in Surrey either sold or proposed for sale by the Forestry Commission since the Forestry Act 1931 and give, in respect of each woodland *(a)* its acerage, *(b)* its map reference and *(c)* its species composition, by percentage.

**Mr. Ryder** *[holding answer 15 February 1989]:* The information is given in the following table:

| Name | Area (hectares) | Grid reference | Species[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Woodlands sold in Surrey* | | | |
| Abinger and Poynters Estate: | | | |
| Chatley Wood | 18·7 | TQ 088 589 | C |
| Bramble Wood (part) | 3·6 | TQ 099 584 | B |
| Bramble Wood (part) | 1·0 | TQ 099 583 | B |
| Brickfield (part) | 1·9 | TQ 099 580 | B |
| Brickfield (part) | 3·1 | TQ 101 581 | B |
| Barrow Green | 2·6 | TQ 375 530 | B |
| Barrow Green Court | 36·5 | TQ 378 534 | B |
| Birch Wood | 39·0 | TQ 355 565 | B |
| Bunce Farm Woods | 16·0 | TQ 213 464 | C |
| Canterbury Copse (part) | 1·3 | SU 990 340 | B |
| Collick Moor Farm | 3·0 | TQ 145 455 | B |
| Crocknorth Cottage (land at) | 0·5 | TQ 105 506 | B |
| Ford Manor Estate: | | | |
| Bidbury Wood | 2·0 | TQ 421 410 | C |
| Burnpit Wood | 5·5 | TQ 414 412 | C |
| Cowden Birches | 3·0 | TQ 417 410 | B |
| Old Furzefield | 6·0 | TQ 432 412 | B |
| Old Plantation | 27·5 | TQ 425 423 | C |
| Great Church Wood | 5·0 | TQ 370 540 | B |
| High Chart, Titsey | 75·0 | TQ 433 523 | C |
| Ledgers Park— Holt Wood | 26·0 | TQ 377 593 | C |
| Lower Canfold Wood | 23·0 | TQ 082 393 | C |
| Quince Cottage (land at) | 0·2 | SU 982 351 | B |
| Scammels Grove | 15·0 | TQ 187 463 | C |
| Sydney Wood (part) | 2·0 | TQ 020 330 | C |
| Whitmoor Pond and Poor Jack | 30·0 | SU 993 545 | B |
| Winterfold—Hurt Wood | 129·0 | TQ 069 435 | C |
| *Woodlands proposed for sale in Surrey* | | | |
| None. | | | |

[1] The species composition is not available in any more detail than B for mainly broadleaves and C for mainly conifers.

## Agriculture Census

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the Economic and Social Research Council data archive of the rural areas database has been prevented by his Department from making figures from the agricultural census available for the purpose of research and analysis.

**Mr. Ryder:** Since 1985, agricultural census data for each year since 1975 have been deposited for research in a scholarly context with the rural areas database of the Economic and Social Research Council's data archive. These data have been regularly used for research and analysis. A new contract will shortly be signed with the Economic and Social Research Council which will allow non-academic use of these data.

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will provide a breakdown according to the latest available annual agricultural census results of farm holdings in England and Wales separately, and both together, and numbers of workers according to size, measured in BSU, and main farm type size groups, to show separately those with whole-time hired male workers, whole-time hired workers, whole-time family workers, male whole-time family workers, total regular hired workers, total regular family workers, whole-time male workers, whole-time female workers, total whole-time workers, total part-time workers, total part-time hired workers, part-time male workers, part-time hired male workers, total part-time family workers, male part-time family workers, total regular workers, salaried managers, total seasonal or casual workers, and those with no workers at all and the distribution of farm holdings and standard gross margin by BSU and main farm type size groups.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** This detailed information is extensive and can be prepared in the requested form only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will provide a detailed outline of the scope of the statistical analyses carried out on the June agricultural census data each year; and what are the individual titles to each of the tables.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Results of the June agricultural census are published in statistical information notices, in "Agricultural Statistics UK", in "Agriculture in the UK", in various other publications of the Government statistical service, and in the farm structure survey publications of the European Community. Other tabular analyses are available for purchase.

Aggregates of all census items are published at national, regional, county and parish levels, and for less favoured areas. Analyses of farm holdings showing frequencies by size are published in respect of all major items. Other analyses are prepared on request. The following titles are available for direct purchase from the Ministry:

Agricultural returns—England and Wales, regions and counties for all areas and separately for less favoured areas, disadvantaged land and seriously disadvantaged land. Each item, crops, grass, tenure, labour livestock, horticulture small fruit, bulbs and flowers, hardy nursery stock and glasshouse and protected crops.

Distribution of holdings and crop and grass area by crops and grass size groups (county and regions).

Distribution of holdings and total area by total area size groups (county and region).

Number of holdings and total area by form of tenure (county and region).

Frequency distribution tables showing holdings and items by item size group at national, regional and county level.

Wheat, barley, oats, total cereals, total potatoes, sugar beet and oilseed rape.

Total vegetables, total hardy nursery stock, total commercial orchards, total flowers and bulbs.

Total dairy cows, beef cows, total cattle and calves, total breeding pigs, other pigs over 20 kg, total pigs, breeding ewes, total sheep and lambs, hens producing eggs for eating, breeding fowls, broilers, geese.

Full-time hired workers, full time family and hired workers, regular full-time and part-time workers.

Heated glasshouse area, unheated glasshouse area, total glasshouse area, heated tomatoes, unheated tomatoes, chrysanthemums.

## Belgian Trawlers

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when information has been passed by spotter planes working in conjunction with fisheries protection vessels, that Belgian trawlers were fishing in forbidden or restricted areas; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** In 1988, two Belgian beam trawlers were observed by United Kingdom surveillance aircraft illegally fishing within the six mile limit. In both cases the vessels were prosecuted and financial penalties were imposed by the courts.

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times Belgian trawlers were boarded in area VII during the calandar year 1988 by fisheries protection vessels; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** In 1988, 135 Belgian fishing vessels were boarded in area VII by United Kingdom fisheries protection vessels.

## Scrapie

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence his Department has about the incidence of scrapie in goats.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* In the last five years, veterinary investigation centres in England and Wales have diagnosed 16 cases of scrapie from samples of goat brain tissue submitted for laboratory analysis.

## Salmonella

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the report prepared by his Department on the salmonella control programme in Sweden with particular reference to poultry.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Officials in my Department report to their senior officers when they return from official visits abroad. Such a visit was made to Sweden last year. The document requested is no more than a record for use within my Department and does not constitute a report by the Department. It would, therefore, be inappropriate to place it in the Library.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 28 February 1989*

## WALES

### Cervical Cytology

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest available figures of the failure of take-up of cervical cytology appointments for each health authority in Wales.

**Mr. Grist:** The information is not available at this stage. However, the relevant computer package is now in place on all family practitioner committee computers and the Welsh Office will be monitoring the position as soon as meaningful data are available.

### Civil Servants (Political Activity)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff within his Department in each of the following categories: *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, are local authority councillors.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The figures are *(a)* none, *(b)* three and *(c)* one.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff within his Department in each of the years 1979 to 1988 in the categories *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, have *(a)* successfully and *(b)* unsuccessfully appealed to the Civil Service appeal tribunal against a refusal of permission to take part in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The totals are In 1987 one member of staff in the intermediate group unsuccessfully appealed to the Civil Service appeal tribunal. There have been no other cases.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff within his Department fall within each of the categories: *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The totals are *(a)* 313·5, *(b)* 1,596 and *(c)* 256·5.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff within his Department in the category intermediate, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** Six.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff within his Department in the category politically restricted, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local political activity.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** None.

### Departmental Staff (Voluntary Public Service)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy with regard to *(a)* paid and *(b)* unpaid leave for staff to undertake voluntary public service.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** My Department follows the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code and each application is considered sympathetically on its merits.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Prison Officers

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the removal allowances granted to prison officers in the last year before their abolition.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Since May 1984 newly joined prison officers have not qualified for payment of removal allowances on taking up their first appointment after initial training. The cost of removal allowances paid to new entrant prison officers in the last year before abolition was £2·3 million. Removal allowances are still paid to established prison officers in accordance with the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code when they are transferred at public expense.

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many early resignations there have been from the prison service by area in the latest available year; and what reasons were given for such resignations.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** During 1988 a total of 319 staff of all grades resigned from the prison service before minimum retirement age. The figures for each region were:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Midland | 46 |
| North | 81 |
| South-East | 144 |
| South-West | 48 |

Information about reasons for resignation is not available.

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average annual number of hours worked by prison officers prior to the introduction of Fresh Start; and what is the figure for prison officers working under Fresh Start at the latest available date.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Before the introduction of Fresh Start, prison officers worked on average 56 hours per week. The equivalent figure for 1988-89 is 46·6 hours. From 1 April this year no prison officer will work more than an average of 45 hours per week and this will reduce progressively in subsequent years so that from 1 April 1992 all officers will work an average 39-hour week.

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects increases in prison officer staffing levels to reach a level equivalent to half the capacity represented by the reduction in annual working hours of prison officers to be achieved.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The undertaking under the framework agreement to replace with additional staff half of the hours lost as a result of the transition to a shorter working week is already being implemented. We are making additonal new recruits available annually before each decrease in hours. This process will continue until the end of the framework period on 1 April 1992.

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many newly trained prison officers applied for a posting *(a)* in London and were posted elsewhere and *(b)* outside London and were posted in London in the latest available year.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Of the 2,743 officers who joined the prison service in the year ending 31 January 1989, 441 were posted to London, having expressed a preference to be posted to another part of the country. All those who expressed a preference for a London posting were posted there.

### Prisons (Lay Visitors)

**Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the provision for compensation for lay visitors injured in the course of their duties;

(2) whether nationwide insurance cover is provided by his Department for prison lay visitors.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 17 January at column *138*.

**Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison lay visitors have been registered in the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years; and how many for each year have been injured in the course of their duties.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Appointments of lay visitors to police stations are made by the appropriate police authority. No central register is kept.

We are not aware that any lay visitor to police stations in the Metropolitan police division has been injured in the course of his or her duties. Information about lay visitors outside the metropolitan area is a matter for the police authority concerned.

### South Yorkshire Police

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire as to what, by territorial division and sub-division for the South Yorkshire police, the present establishment manning levels are; what is the actual figure; what are the comparable national figures; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Information on South Yorkshire is set out. Comparable information about other police forces is not held centrally.

*South Yorkshire Police (as at 22 February 1989)*

| *Force* | *Establishment* | *Actual strength* |
|---|---|---|
| | 2,951 | 2,903 |
| *A Division* | 510 | 504 |
| Divisional HQ | 48 | 57 |
| A1 Sub Division | 169 | 166 |
| A2 Sub Division | 137 | 131 |
| A3 Sub Division | 156 | 150 |
| *B Division* | 402 | 392 |
| Divisional HQ | 44 | 44 |
| B1 Sub Division | 177 | 170 |
| B2 Sub Division | 181 | 178 |
| *C Division* | 402 | 391 |
| Divisional HQ | 40 | 45 |
| C1 Sub Division | 150 | 144 |
| C2 Sub Division | 105 | 102 |
| C3 Sub Division | 107 | 100 |
| *D Division* | 472 | 454 |
| Divisional HQ | 42 | 44 |
| D1 Sub Division | 274 | 259 |
| D2 Sub Division | 156 | 151 |
| *E Division* | 311 | 305 |
| Divisional HQ | 34 | 35 |
| E1 Sub Division | 140 | 137 |
| E2 Sub Division | 137 | 133 |
| *F Division* | 315 | 297 |
| Divisional HQ | 40 | 40 |
| F1 Sub Division | 142 | 131 |
| F2 Sub Division | 133 | 126 |

### Complaints Against the Police

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year and by police force the number of complaints that the Police Complaints Authority has received since its inception in April 1985; how many have been substantiated; how many prosecutions have been instituted; what was the result; if found proved, what was the sentence; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The numbers of complaints against each police force dealt with by the Police Complaints Authority are contained in the authority's annual reports for 1985 (Cmnd 307), 1986 (Cmnd 295) and 1987 (HC 465). Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. The report for 1988 will be published later this year. The reports also contain other details of the authority's casework, including analyses by category of the disciplinary outcome of all complaints, the reasons for the authority's decisions that no disciplinary charges should be preferred and for 1987 the total number of criminal charges brought.

Totals of the numbers of all complaints which were substantiated and the type of proceedings that resulted are published annually in the reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

### Football-related Offences (London)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many exclusion orders have *(a)* been sought and *(b)* been granted against persons convicted of football-related offences in the Metropolitan police area in the last five years for which information is available;

(2) what is the current policy of the Metropolitan police Commissioner towards seeking exclusion orders against persons convicted of football-related offences in the Metropolitan police area; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Since 1 August 1987, when the exclusion order provisions of the Public Order Act 1986 came into force, the Metropolitan police have recorded 254 exclusion orders made against persons convicted of a football-related offence in the Metropolitan police district. The decision to make an exclusion order is a matter for the courts, who may exercise their power if they are satisfied that the making of an order will help to prevent violence or disorder at, or in connection with, prescribed football matches.

## DEFENCE

### NATO (Anniversary)

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has planned any local celebrations for the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in areas where there is a prominent military presence.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Ministry of Defence and NATO are sponsoring a NATO briefing tour and a touring exhibition to mark the 40th anniversary of NATO. They will visit 21 locations throughout the United Kingdom between April and September. There is a prominent military presence in most of the localities covered.

### RAF Upper Heyford

**Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the report on noise levels to the east of RAF Upper Heyford to be complete; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** The report is being prepared but it cannot be finalised until further noise measurements to assess the effect of an alternative take-off pattern have been completed. A short period of settled weather with winds from an easterly direction would allow completion of this exercise.

**Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the study into the possible realignment of the runway at RAF Upper Heyford or other ways of reducing aircraft noise to be complete; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** I hope to be in a position to publish the results of the study shortly after Easter.

### Royal Fleet Auxiliary

**Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on his proposals to change the status of Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir John Stanley) announced on 18 April 1985 at column 251 that we were considering a change in the status of FRA vessels which would have meant their ceasing to be registered as British merchant ships for the purpose of the Merchant Shipping Acts, and operating instead as Government-owned vessels on non-commercial service.

We gave an undertaking that full consultation would follow that announcement and during that process it became clear that this proposal could have had unwelcome implications for the legal rights of RFA personnel. We have therefore decided to prepare instead a new Order in Council to replace the 1911 Order in Council which now governs all RFA vessels. The new Order in Council will enable RFA vessels to be designed and operated in a way which will meet military requirements, and to remain as British-registered vessels.

### Air Combat Manoeuvering

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what agreements or understandings he has reached with British Aerospace to make use of its proposed air combat manoeuvering facility in the North Sea.

**Mr. Neubert:** None.

### International Military Services

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if International Military Services still maintains its office in Tehran.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on 13 January 1988 at column *200*. The position is unchanged.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Pensioners

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reproduce the figures 7, 8, 10 and 11 of his Department's note on the relationship between local taxes and income and the distributional impact of the community charge, published on 15 December 1988, to show the impact on pensioner couples.

**Mr. Gummer:** The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures show that 55 per cent. of married pensioner couples stand to pay less with the introduction of the community charge.

### Improvement Grants (Bolton)

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding has been provided by Bolton council for improvement grants for owner-occupied homes over each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Trippier:** Bolton metropolitan borough council has reported the following information:

*Renovations: Grants paid to owner occupied dwellings*
*Bolton*

| Year | Conversion and improvement | | Intermediate | | Repairs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of dwellings | Amount[2] (£ thousand) | Number of dwellings | Amount[2] (£ thousand) | Number of dwellings | Amount[2] (£ thousand) |
| 1984 | 573 | 4,174 | 298 | 1,041 | 128 | 405 |
| 1985 | 550 | 4,517 | 213 | 615 | 144 | 497 |
| 1986[1] | 429 | 3,016 | 140 | 348 | 79 | 256 |
| 1987 | 510 | 2,984 | 271 | 663 | 111 | 384 |
| 1988[1] | 356 | 2,073 | 246 | 498 | 83 | 294 |

[1] Figures cover nine months since returns for the June quarters of 1986 and 1988 have not been received.
[2] Up to and including the March quarter 1986 includes amounts paid to landlords (including housing associations). Of all amounts reported paid to owner-occupiers and landlords since March 1986 owner-occupiers accounted for 88 per cent. of conversion and improvement grants, 94 per cent. of intermediate grants, and 99 per cent. of repairs grants.

### Heveningham Hall

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the latest position on the ownership of and the intended developments at Heveningham hall.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Heveningham hall is owned by ID Investment Development AG, which purchased it in 1981. Gulfpark Property Management Ltd, which manage the hall on the behalf of the owners, have stated publicly that rebuilding of the fire-damaged east wing will start this spring.

### Housing

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, *Official Report*, 20 December 1988, column *191*, how many foam slag houses in each of the areas listed in that answer are owner-occupied, council houses and alternatively owned.

**Mr. Trippier:** North East Derbyshire district council has now identified 196 poured concrete houses using foam slag aggregate: 178 are council-owned, and 18 owner-occupied. Ownership details for the Scottish properties are not readily available.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has plans to include foam slag houses within the categories covered by the Housing Defects Act.

**Mr. Trippier:** We have no evidence justifying designation of foam slag properties under the housing defects legislation.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, *Official Report*, 20 December, column *191*, on foam slag and no-fines houses, he anticipates that the Building Research Establishment will be able to publish its forthcoming technical guidance.

**Mr. Trippier:** The Building Research Establishment hopes to publish its report on Wimpey no-fines houses this summer. It expects to issue technical leaflets on the other, less common, no-fines types at intervals over the next year.

### Severn-Trent Water Authority

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the performance targets set for the chairman of the Severn-Trent water authority in 1987-88; and if he will specify the annual bonus received by the chairman in each of the last four years.

**Mr. Moynihan:** Information about Government controls on the Severn-Trent water authority, including performance aims and achievement against them, is set out in the authority's report and accounts for 1987-88 on pages 60 and 61. A copy is available in the Library.

Water authority chairmen and executive board members were first eligible for performance bonuses in respect of 1986-87. The chairman of the Severn-Trent water authority received a bonus of 7·5 per cent. of his annual salary for that year and 9 per cent. for 1987-88.

### Industrial Pollution Control

**Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received to his consultation document on a new system of industrial pollution control for industry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** We have received responses from 91 organisations and individuals. A list of these has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Respondents gave a broad welcome to our proposals. In particular, there was a widespread acceptance of the idea that processes subject to control should be operated according to the best available technology not entailing excessive cost; and of our proposal that the new system should adopt a consent-based approach for authorising discharges, but with a residual duty remaining with the operator to carry out all other functions not specified in the consent in accordance with best practice.

A clear majority of respondents to the Department's separate consultation document on the inputs of dangerous substances to water also agreed with our proposal that the responsibility for authorising the discharge of substances from prescribed processes to water should rest with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution acting in consultation with the proposed National Rivers Authority. The Department therefore proposes to proceed on this basis. We shall make a further announcement about the results of this consultation exercise shortly.

Our proposals, which will mark a significant advance in industrial pollution control in this country, have been welcomed in this way, and will be introduced into legislation at the earliest opportunity.

### Insulation

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why loft and roof insulation are not included in statutory building regulations; and if he has plans to add them to present requirements.

**Mr. Trippier** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The Building Regulations 1985 include a requirement for the insulation of the roof or loft. A consultation paper issued last July porposed that the existing thermal insulation requirements (including those for the roof) should be upgraded. Responses to the consultation are being considered. It was also proposed that the form of this part of the regulations should be brought more into line with that of other parts, by requiring reasonable provision to be made for the conservation of fuel and power, and by including guidance on insulation standards in the approved document. Experience has shown that this approach enables effective control to be maintained, but in a clearer and more flexible way

### Rating Reform

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he plans to issue to community charges registration officers on how to register *(a)* submariners spending alternate periods of four weeks at sea and four weeks on shore, *(b)* members of the armed forces on four months tours of duty in Northern Ireland, *(c)* Gurkhas, *(d)* Royal Navy personnel on sea-going vessels and *(e)* members of the armed forces attached to foreign forces and serving abroad with them.

**Mr Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* My Department is consulting the local authority associations, and we shall issue guidance shortly.

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment is he has any proposals to seek to exempt from community charge residents of *(a)* homes for elderly persons run by the Abbeyfield Society or *(b)* other homes run by other organisations including local authorities and charities of the same type of accommodation and level of care as Abbeyfield.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* I intend to amend the definition of a residential care home in paragraph 9(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (using the power conferred by paragraph 9(6)) to include any home run by the Abbeyfield society. This will bring the definition of a residential care home, for community charge purposes, more closely into line with the definition used for income support purposes.

People receiving care or treatment in a home run by any organisation will be exempt from personal community charge liability, if they have their sole or main residence in the home, and if the home falls within the description in the 1988 Act of a residential care home, a nursing home, a mental nursing home or a hostel providing a high level of care.

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions he proposes to give to valuation and community charge tribunals concerning the provision of material in ethnic minority languages and translation facilities.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The Government are making available to local authorities translations of the notes to the community charge canvass form in five important minority languages. These explain the right to appeal. Most members of valuation and community charge tribunals will have been members of local valuation panels, and will have experience of appeals from people whose first language is not English. Anyone appealing to a tribunal may be accompanied by a friend or representative, who may speak on their behalf.

### Water Pollution

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why there has been a delay in the publication of the first report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on river water quality containing data collected in 1987; when he expects the report to be published; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The first annual report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution covering the period 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988 is due for publication before Easter. The issue of the Department's annual digest of environmental protection and water statistics published on 24 February contains information on river water quality based on data collected in 1987.

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide details of the financial target percentages and external financing limits for each water authority for the year 1989-90.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The external financial limits for water authorities in England (DOE services) are given in the table, on a full-year basis. They will be adjusted to take account of the privatisation of the water authorities, due to take place in the year. It is not the intention to set financial targets by statutory instrument for the year 1989-90 because the water authorities will have been privatised before it is over.

*External finance limits for water authorities in England 1989-90 DoE services only*

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| Anglian | 29 |
| Northumbrian | 12 |
| North-West | 50 |
| Severn-Trent | 24 |
| Southern | 28 |
| South-West | 3 |
| Thames | −65 |
| Wessex | 12 |
| Yorkshire | 25 |

### Civil Servants (Political Activity)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff within his Department fall within each of the categories *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code.

**Mr. Ridley:** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The numbers are as follows:

| | *DOE (Central)* | *Property Services Agency* |
|---|---|---|
| Politically restricted | 1,385 | 974 |
| Intermediate | 5,000 | 13,650 |
| Politically free | 1,285 | 8,600 |

Part-time and casual staff are included in these figures.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff within his Department in each of the years 1979 to 1988 in the categories *(a)* politically restricted and *(b)* intermediate, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, have (i) successfully and (ii) unsuccessfully, appealed to the Civil Service appeal tribunal against a refusal of permission to take part in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* One officer in the politically restricted category of staff appealed in 1986 to the Civil Service appeal board against the Department's refusal to permit him to stand for election to a local authority. The board upheld the Department's decision. No other appeals have been made.

### Departmental Staff (Voluntary Public Service)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy with regard to *(a)* paid and *(b)* unpaid leave for staff to undertake voluntary public service.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* My Department's policy on these matters accords with paragraphs 870-873 of the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, a copy of which is available in the Library.

### Peak Park Planning Board

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many people have been appointed by Derbyshire county council to serve on the Peak Park planning board; and how many of them live in the board's area.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[pursuant to her reply, 22 February 1989, c. 702]:* Eight members of the board are appointed by Derbyshire county council. At present one of these lives within the national park

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been paid by his Department to the Peak Park planning board over the last six years.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[pursuant to her reply, 22 February 1989, c. 702]:* A total of £10,834,400 in national parks supplementary grant has been allocated in respect of the board's net expenditure over the period 1983-84—1988-89.

### Water Supply (Nitrates)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which water abstraction plants for domestic use in the Anglian water region are complying with EEC limits on the nitrate levels in water supply; which are not; and on what dates each of the plants which are not complying will comply with the limits.

**Mr. Moynihan:** With the exception of the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Isleham | Congham |
| Bircham | Wareham Bridge |
| Fring | Drove Lane (Clayhill) |
| Sedgeford | Barrow |
| Beachamwell | Ulceby |
| Gayton | Otby/Bully Hills |
| Marham | Aswarby |
| Moulton | Binbrook |
| Bedford | Haborough |
| Little London | Bowthorpe |
| Branston Booths | Lyng Forge |
| Thorpe | Harpley |

all remaining water treatment plants in the Anglian water authority region comply with the nitrate standard in the EC drinking water directive.

Programmes of improvement have been submitted to my Department and, depending on the progress of the development work now in hand, all plants should comply with the directive standard by 1995.

### Cryptosporidia

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to tackle the outbreak of cryptosporidia contamination in the Thames water authority's Farmoor reservoir; if he will initiate a full inquiry into the causes of this outbreak; what action will be taken to prevent a recurrence of this outbreak; how far the levels of cryptosporidia contamination exceeded normal safety standards; and when this contamination was first discovered.

**Mr. Howard:** A possible link between a diarrhoeal illness called cryptosporidiosis in the Oxford and Swindon areas and the water supply from Thames water authority's Farmoor treatment works was first identified a little over a week ago.

On finding cryptosporidia organisms in the treatment works and the distribution system on 20 February, Thames Water, in conjunction with local health authorities, immediately advised the public to take certain precautionary steps including boiling water for one minute before use by young children and immuno-compromised people. The water authority took urgent steps to remove the organisms from the water and tests over the last few days indicate that there has been a substantial improvement in the water leaving the works. Thames Water cannot yet be certain that there are none of these organisms left in the water and it is, therefore, maintaining the advice to boil water for the time being.

I understand that Thames Water also proposes to undertake an independently led review at learning lessons from the experience.

I am entirely satisfied that Thames Water has behaved in a very responsible manner throughout this incident and is taking all the necessary steps.

Until 1985 there had been no confirmed connection anywhere in the world between cryptosporidiosis and water supplies. However, it is extremely difficult to detect the organism and complex new analytical techniques are only now being developed. Thames Water is in the forefront of these developments. For both these reasons, there is no routine sampling for this organism in water supplies.

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the response of the Thames water authority to the possible threat to the public water supply in the Swindon area from the organism cryptosporidia;

(2) what information he has on routine testing by water authorities for the organism cryptosporidia in the public water supply; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has on the incidence of the organism cryptosporidia, in the public water supply; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moynihan:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given today by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith).

## TRANSPORT

### Railways (Electrification)

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold talks with the chairman of British Rail about the closure of the longsight overhead line department and the alternative provision of emergency electrification problems in the new region.

**Mr. Portillo:** No, I see no reason to do so. These are management matters for the British Railways board.

### London Underground (Automatic Ticket Barriers)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *707*, what information he has as to the total expected cost of the automatic ticket barriers programme on London Underground.

**Mr. Portillo:** LRT estimates that the total cost of installing automatic ticket barriers at 63 stations will be £22·2 million at current prices.

### Accidents

**Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1980 the number of *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* serious injuries on Britain's roads and railways, respectively.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The information requested is given in the table; 1987 is the most recent year for which complete data are available.

*Fatal and serious casualties on roads and railways: GB 1980-87*

| | *Road accidents* | | *Rail accidents*[1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Killed* | *Seriously injured* | *Killed* | *Seriously injured* |
| 1980 | 6,010 | 79,390 | 69 | 807 |
| 1981 | 5,846 | 78,259 | 76 | 319 |
| 1982 | 5,934 | 79,739 | 57 | 251 |
| 1983 | 5,445 | 70,623 | 69 | 264 |
| 1984 | 5,599 | 73,059 | 76 | 259 |
| 1985 | 5,165 | 70,980 | 74 | 322 |
| 1986 | 5,382 | 68,752 | 72 | 372 |
| 1987 | 5,125 | 64,293 | 104 | 434 |

[1] All accidents, comprising train accidents, movement accidents, and non-movement accidents. Casualties comprise passengers, railway staff and other persons.

### Road Signs

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to include in the relevant regulations, for use within the highway, speed-activated signs.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Speed-activated signs may already be authorised by the Secretary of State for appropriate locations. Further experience and research is required before such signs are generally prescribed in the Traffic Signs (Speed Limit) Regulations for use by local highway authorities.

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in installing speed-activated signs on roads for which he has responsibility in Leicestershire.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** There are no current plans to install speed-activated signs on trunk roads in Leicestershire.

### A427 (Leicestershire)

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will designate the A427 in Leicestershire a trunk road.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** No. The proposed M1-A1 Link, a new trunk road, will serve the movement of longer distance traffic in that area. Work on that scheme is expected to start later this year.

### Rural Transport Facilities

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the rate of grant for rural bus services in 1989-90.

**Mr. Portillo:** Rural bus grant will be paid at the rate of 1p per eligible bus mile.

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to encourage the provision of transport facilities in rural areas not well served by public transport.

**Mr. Portillo:** The Rural Development Commission is provided with £1 million a year from the Department of Transport to encourage new transport facilities in rural areas inadequately served by public transport. To date 194 grants, totalling £1·8 million, have been made. Funds are still available to support worthwhile projects.

To assist that process the Rural Development Commission and the National Advisory Unit have jointly produced a new booklet to promote new approaches to the transport needs of rural communities. The booklet describes the scope for encouraging more flexible commercial services as well as self-help options, such as community buses and social car schemes as well as other solutions. The booklet points the way to sources of advice and financial incentives available. It should prove a valuable guide to the development of transport facilities for rural communities. A copy of the booklet entitled "Promoting Transport for Rural Communities" has been placed in the Library.

### Traffic Commissioners

**Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the annual reports of the Traffic Commissioners for 1987-88 will be published.

**Mr. Portillo:** The reports will be published on 28 February and I am placing copies in the Library.

### Severn Bridge

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the shortlisted tenderers for the provision of a second crossing of the river Severn.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** Yes. We received preliminary proposals from eight private sector consortia in response to the invitation published in the Official Journal of the European Communities on 7 December 1988 for proposals for the provision of a second crossing over the River Severn. This initial selection process was aimed to avoid abortive tendering costs being incurred by the construction industry.

We are grateful to all those who responded.

The shortlist of consortia selected as full tenderers is Costain/Amec/Wimpey; John Laing/GTM Entrepose; Tarmac/HBM/Fairfield Mabey; and Trafalgar House/Balfour Beatty.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Sanitary Towels

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce guidelines to ensure manufacturers remove the words "fully flushable" from packets of sanitary towels pending further research on the problem of blocked drains and contamination at sea.

**Mr. Forth** I have no plans to do so. I understand that the industry has its own rigorous flushability test code and that it continues to work closely with the Water Research Council to ensure that any non-degraded waste material is effectively screened by water and sewage authorities.

### Post Offices

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the main post offices and *(b)* the sub-post offices in the areas of Colchester borough and Maldon district which have opened or closed since 1979.

**Mr. Forth** The Post Office has supplied the following information. There has been no change since 1979 in the provision of main post offices in the Colchester Borough and Maldon district. During the same period one sub-office has been opened, at Fiveways (Colchester); and four sub-offices have been closed, at Lee road, Greenstead road, St. Botolph's (all in Colchester borough) and Mill road (Maldon district).

### Money Lenders

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends to remove the £30 limit on agreements on the licensing of money lenders.

**Mr. Forth** As part of the review of the consumer credit licensing system, it is proposed that the exemption from licensing of traders lending money for sums not exceeding £30 shall be removed.

### Product Standards

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster *(a)* how many British Standard Institute technical committees exist to advise on drawing up product standards and *(b)* how many of these committees have a representative of a consumer organisation, defined as a member of an organisation belonging to the consumers in the European community group sitting as one of their members.

**Mr. Forth:** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* The British Standards Institution informs me that BSI has 3,160 technical committees and sub-committees, of which about 1,200 are active at any one time, and the great bulk of which have work programmes which include product standards. Of these, about one quarter are concerned with consumer products. The consumer policy committee of BSI, which brings together most United Kingdom members of the consumers in the European Community group and others, is represented on 305 BSI technical committees and sub-committees.

### Trade Deficit (International Comparisons)

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the European countries which have a larger trade deficit than the United Kingdom are oil producers.

**Mr. Alan Clark** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* With the exception of Norway no other western European country produces significant quantities of oil. The United Kingdom trade deficit is larger than that of Norway.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Health and Safety

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Lord President of Council if he will seek to initiate a review of all offices occupied by right hon. and hon. Members and their staff, to establish whether guidelines laid down under health and safety legislation in respect of space per person are being exceeded.

**Mr. Wakeham:** I refer the hon. Lady to the Services Committee's second report of Session 1986-87: "New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2)", HC378, and its first report of Session 1987-88: "New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2): The Next Steps", HC561. Those reports, which were recently considered by the House, recommend certain standards of accommodation for Members and their staff.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Ethiopia

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if, in view of reported atrocities by the Ethiopian armed forces against civilians in Eritrea and Tigray, he will seek to procure the termination of support for the present Ethiopian regime through the Lomé conventions;

(2) whether he will consult his European partners in the Twelve as to the propriety of continuing Lomé aid to Ethiopia in the light of its activities in the north of that country;

(3) if he will take steps to reduce by £25·3 million the United Kingdom component of long-term aid to Ethiopia under Lomé III until the Ethiopian regime ceases its operations against civilians.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 27 February at column *1*.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Rugby

Q60. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Rugby.

**The Prime Minister:** I have at present no plans to do so.

### Storm Damage (Clear-up)

Q93. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest estimate of the cost of clearing up operations after the storm of 13 February; and if she will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** It is too soon to assess the extent and cost of damage and restoration work arising from the recent storms. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has sought detailed reports directly from those authorities affected in order to make an assessment of the situation as soon as possible.

### Consumer Protection

Q98. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will appoint a Minister for the Protection of Consumers.

**The Prime Minister:** I have no plans to do so.

### 10 Downing Street (Chief Press Officer)

Q116. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the regrading of the post of chief press officer at Number 10 Downing street; and what staff inspection procedures were conducted prior to this regrading.

**The Prime Minister:** This post has not been regraded.

### Modern Language Teaching

Q118. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans, in view of the increasing needs of the single European market, to seek to increase the emphasis being placed by schools and colleges upon the teaching of modern European languages.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government attach importance to improving the nation's skills in modern foreign languages. Our policies aim to make all levels of the education system more responsive to national needs and consumer demand.

### ILEA (Abolition)

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether she has any plans to meet representatives of the borough of Wandsworth to discuss funding for 1990-91, following the abolition of the Inner London education authority;

(2) whether she has received any representations from the borough of Wandsworth about the level of funding following the abolition of the Inner London education authority in 1990; and if she will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** No.

### Engagements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 February.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

## THE ARTS

### Business Sponsorship

**Mr. McLennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the breakdown of awards to arts organisations under the business sponsorship incentive scheme by regional arts association areas, Wales and Scotland for each year since its inception.

**Mr. Luce:** A regional breakdown from October 1984 to 1987-88, in descending order of awards under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, is as follows:

*Scheme started 1 October 1984*

| *Region* | *Awards* | *BSIS* | *Sponsorship* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1984-85* | | | |
| London | 14 | 217,800 | 888,232 |
| National | 11 | 113,433 | 353,791 |
| Northern | 5 | 22,310 | 66,925 |
| Yorkshire | 4 | 63,350 | 215,050 |
| South West | 4 | 41,332 | 128,994 |
| Scotland | 4 | 38,706 | 196,114 |
| Southern | 3 | 48,417 | 245,250 |
| West Midlands | 3 | 42,501 | 127,500 |
| Wales | 3 | 32,500 | 112,500 |
| North West | 2 | 45,000 | 160,000 |
| Eastern | 2 | 11,751 | 35,250 |
| East Midlands | 1 | 15,000 | 45,000 |
| Merseyside | 1 | 3,000 | 9,000 |
| International | — | — | — |
| Lincolnshire and Humberside | — | — | — |
| South East | — | — | — |
| Total | 57 | 695,100 | 2,583,606 |
| *1985-86* | | | |
| London | 39 | 363,039 | 1,184,000 |
| Scotland | 19 | 124,620 | 285,450 |
| Southern | 18 | 85,101 | 188,522 |
| South West | 17 | 73,027 | 172,726 |
| Eastern | 16 | 64,152 | 175,850 |
| National | 13 | 136,379 | 324,930 |
| West Midlands | 10 | 65,402 | 130,980 |
| North West | 8 | 75,684 | 90,900 |
| Wales | 8 | 54,335 | 122,500 |
| Northern | 7 | 24,500 | 43,300 |
| East Midlands | 7 | 14,434 | 21,100 |
| South East | 6 | 58,500 | 167,070 |
| Merseyside | 4 | 52,750 | 80,250 |
| Lincolnshire and Humberside | 2 | 14,000 | 14,000 |
| Yorkshire | 2 | 7,000 | 7,000 |
| International | 1 | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| Total | 177 | 1,217,923 | 3,012,578 |
| *1986-87* | | | |

| Region | Awards | BSIS | Sponsorship |
|---|---|---|---|
| London | 44 | 435,176 | 1,537,007 |
| Southern | 25 | 161,408 | 256,322 |
| National | 22 | 270,887 | 522,592 |
| Scotland | 21 | 122,214 | 430,974 |
| Yorkshire | 15 | 88,833 | 130,500 |
| West Midlands | 14 | 64,967 | 88,900 |
| Wales | 12 | 81,917 | 155,417 |
| South West | 12 | 69,717 | 79,050 |
| Northern | 12 | 59,440 | 77,440 |
| Eastern | 12 | 74,785 | 86,415 |
| North West | 8 | 25,384 | 42,050 |
| South East | 8 | 58,500 | 58,500 |
| East Midlands | 6 | 8,600 | 10,600 |
| Lincolnshire and Humberside | 6 | 10,234 | 19,700 |
| Merseyside | 3 | 12,500 | 12,500 |
| International | 1 | 8,500 | 8,500 |
| Total | 223 | 1,553,062 | 3,516,467 |
| *1987-88* | | | |
| London | 36 | 354,329 | 779,097 |
| Scotland | 26 | [1]193,352 | [1]348,438 |
| Southern | 19 | 131,386 | 168,550 |
| South East | 15 | 115,385 | 232,650 |
| National | 15 | 156,665 | 359,992 |
| Wales | 14 | 82,334 | 142,700 |
| West Midlands | 13 | 56,584 | 68,550 |
| South West | 12 | 84,250 | 188,375 |
| Eastern | 10 | 62,500 | 116,850 |
| Yorkshire | 10 | 56,267 | 142,050 |
| North West | 9 | 36,584 | 112,250 |
| Northern | 7 | 38,535 | 64,501 |
| East Midlands | 5 | 12,760 | 12,760 |
| Lincolnshire and Humberside | 5 | 9,834 | 14,500 |
| International | 3 | 35,000 | 90,000 |
| Merseyside | 2 | 7,250 | 17,750 |
| Total | 201 | 1,433,015 | 2,859,013 |

[1] Since the Written Answer on 6 February at column *544*, the figures have been slightly re-adjusted in the light of further information.

### Tate Galleries

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will estimate the annual central Government subsidy per visitor in the latest available year to *(a)* the Tate at Millbank and *(b)* the Tate in the North.

**Mr. Luce:** It is not possible to make direct comparisons in the form requested since the Tate gallery Liverpool has only been open since 28 May 1988.

Grant-in-aid allocations for the Tate and visitor numbers are as follows:

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 6,497,000 |
| 1988-89 | 10,551,000 |

| | Visitor numbers |
|---|---|
| 1987 | 1,742,000 |
| 1988 | [1]2,091,000 |
| From 28 May 1988 | [2]491,000 |

[1] Including Tate, Liverpool.
[2] Liverpool only.

Grain-in-aid per visitor over the two year period is approximately £4·45.

## CIVIL SERVICE

### Civil Servants (Political Activity)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many staff within the Civil Service in the category intermediate, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* A review in 1987 showed that about 97,000 people in the intermediate category were in posts whose occupants are given standing permission to take part in local or national political activities.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many staff within the Civil Service fall within each of the categories *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The information is not held centrally.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many staff within the Civil Service in each of the years 1979 to 1988 in the categories *(a)* politically restricted and *(b)* intermediate, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, have (i) successfully and (ii) unsuccessfully appealed to the Civil Service appeal tribunal against a refusal of permission to take part in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The Civil Service appeal board has heard three appeals against a refusal of permission to take part in local or national political activity. In each case, the Department's decision was upheld. One appeal, from a member of the restricted category, was heard in 1986 and the other two, both in the intermediate category, in 1987.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many staff within the Civil Service in each of the categories *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, are local authority councillors.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* This information is not held centrally.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Conventional Arms Talks (Vienna)

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the commencement of conventional arms talks in Vienna.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Negotiations on conventional forces in Europe and on confidence and security building measures will begin in Vienna on 6 March. My right hon. and learned Friend and other Foreign Ministers of CSCE participating countries will attend their opening. NATO Ministers first called for such talks in May 1986. An outline of NATO's objectives in these negotiations is set out in the 8 December statement from the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

### Israeli-occupied Territories

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United States State Department on its report regarding human rights abuses in the Israeli occupied territories.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** None. The State Department report is in line with our own assessment.

### Iraq (Chemical Weapons)

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, during his recent visit to Iraq, he gained assurances from the Iraqi Government that they will, in future refrain from using chemical weapons.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on 20 February 1989 at columns *472-3*.

### European Single Market

**Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to hold meetings with European Economic Community Ministers with regard to the establishment of the single market in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The Foreign Secretary and I regularly meet with Ministers from other member states at Foreign Affairs Councils the next one of which will be 20-21 March. However, single market issues are normally dealt with in the Internal Market Council which is attended by DTI Ministers. The next IMCs will be on 13 March and 6-7 April.

### Ethiopia

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent information he has received on alleged atrocities being perpetrated by Ethiopian armed forces against the civilian population in the north.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We have recently received oral and written reports from the Relief Society of Tigray (UK). We are studying these carefully.

**Mr. Amery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, having regard to the 45th session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, he will, under item 12 of the agenda, seek to raise the issue of the repeated violations of the Ethiopian regime against the human rights of the peoples of Eritrea and Tigray.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We shall refer under item 12 of the agenda of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to our concern about reports of violations of human rights in Eritrea and Tigray.

### Iranian Arms Procurement Office

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Iranian arms procurement office in Victoria street has re-opened; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Iranian military procurement office has not re-opened.

### Iran (Arms Supply)

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the status of the supply of arms to Iran since the end of the Iran-Iraq war; and what it is at present.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** There has been no change in our policy on arms sales to Iran as set out in the answer by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Trade and Industry on 18 January at column *241*.

### Argentina (Arms Sales)

**Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on recent arms sales from the United States of America to Argentina; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The United States transaction referred to in press reports was arranged a long time ago. Although we were aware of it, we have no reason to believe that it will increase the threat to the Falkland Islands, or that it reflects any change in United States policy.

Since the lifting of its human-rights-linked arms embargo in 1983, the United States has supplied Argentina with routine equipment and spares. The United States Government are aware of our concerns.

## SCOTLAND

### Universities

91. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to change the statutory powers and functions of the rectors in the ancient Scottish universities.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I refer to the answer that I gave to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) on 15 February 1989 at column *223*.

### Devolution

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in formulating his policy on devolution, he consulted experts on the way in which devolved powers operate in Spain, Germany and the United States of America.

**Mr. Rifkind:** No.

### Homelessness

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homeless 16 and 17-year-old males and females there are in Scotland; what is his estimate of the projected number there are likely to be as a result of the 1988 changes in income support; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information sought is not collected centrally.

### Rating Reform

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his best estimate of the number of poll tax

registration forms incorrectly filled in in each of the local authority areas of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** The processing of community charges inquiry forms is a matter for individual community charges registration officers and the information requested is not held centrally.

## Strathclyde (Jobs)

**Dr. Godman:** To as the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *783-4*, how many of the planned jobs in Strathclyde were realised in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Greenock and Port Glasgow.

**Mr. Lang:** Figures on employment levels, realised are not available in the form requested. Many of the projects announced in more recent years are not yet complete, as a result of which, full employment levels will not have yet been reached.

## YTS

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish for 1988 and to date for Greenock and Port Glasgow *(a)* the number of filled places in YTS by training occupational classification and *(b)* the number of contracted places in YTS by training occupational classification.

**Mr. Lang:** The information is not available in the exact form requested. Figures for Inverclyde district for the current financial year from April 1988 to January 1989 are given in tables 1 and 2.

*Table 1*
*YTS Filled Places*

| *Training Occupational Classifications* | *1988* | | | | | | | | | *1989* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *April* | *May* | *June* | *July* | *August* | *September* | *October* | *November* | *December* | *January* |
| Administrative and Clerical | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clerical | 98 | 109 | 118 | 127 | 120 | 119 | 116 | 115 | 108 | 109 |
| Typists, Keyboard Operators | 28 | 27 | 51 | 49 | 45 | 63 | 58 | 53 | 52 | 54 |
| Computing | 40 | 38 | 30 | 24 | 22 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 17 | 19 |
| General | 18 | 17 | 21 | 22 | 25 | 23 | 28 | 28 | 27 | 30 |
| Creative, and Educational and Recreational Service | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 18 | 17 | 16 | 19 | 30 |
| Health, Community and Personal Service | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hairdressers | 152 | 147 | 143 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 150 | 145 | 140 | 162 |
| Other H, C and P Service | 9 | 9 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| General | 19 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 22 | 28 | 25 | 27 | 26 | 31 |
| Selling and Storage | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retail Selling | 141 | 131 | 133 | 145 | 156 | 146 | 156 | 152 | 154 | 166 |
| Stores and Warehouse Workers | 54 | 57 | 61 | 54 | 64 | 63 | 64 | 63 | 60 | 56 |
| Other Selling and Storage | — | — | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Catering and Food Preparation and Processing | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chefs, Cooks | 2 | — | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Other C and FP and P | 12 | 18 | 30 | 27 | 30 | 28 | 31 | 32 | 30 | 36 |
| General | 16 | 15 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 14 | 19 | 19 | 21 |
| Transport Operating | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Construction and Civil Engineering | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bench Joiners | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Plumbers | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| General | 84 | 72 | 99 | 96 | 98 | 102 | 100 | 109 | 105 | 127 |
| Electrical and Electronic Engineering | | | | | | | | | | |
| Electrical/Electronic Maintenance Fitters | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 47 | 32 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 33 |
| Other Electrical/Electronic Engineering | 23 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 28 | 28 | 27 | 27 | 30 | 29 |
| General | 7 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Mechanical Engineering and Metal Production and Processing | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other Mechanical Engineering and Metal Production/Processing | 11 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 |
| General | 59 | 51 | 60 | 59 | 55 | 63 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 47 |
| Motor Vehicle Repair and Maintenance | | | | | | | | | | |
| Motor Vehicle Mechanics | 84 | 82 | 63 | 57 | 65 | 72 | 72 | 71 | 74 | 78 |
| Motor Vehicle Body Repairs | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| General | 50 | 46 | 54 | 51 | 49 | 48 | 48 | 45 | 42 | 45 |
| Printing | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Clothing and Textiles Manufacturing | — | — | — | — | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Classification not known | 84 | 80 | 85 | 79 | 77 | 69 | 67 | 62 | 60 | 58 |

| Training Occupational Classifications | 1988 April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | 1989 January |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 940 | 902 | 969 | 936 | 981 | 1,000 | 999 | 988 | 968 | 1,063 |

*Note:*
Some filled places figures exceed agreed place numbers. This is because managing agents have the flexibility to increase provision within certain limits.

*Table 2*
*YTS Agreed Places*

| Training Occupational Classifications | 1988 April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | 1989 January |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Administrative and Clerical | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clerical | 161 | 149 | 149 | 144 | 144 | 144 | 144 | 144 | 144 | 144 |
| Typists, Keyboard Operators | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| Computing | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| General | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| Creative, and Educational and Recreational Service | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Health, Community and Personal Service | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hairdressers | 225 | 173 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 |
| Other H, C and P Service | 29 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| General | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 36 |
| Selling and Storage | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retail Selling | 188 | 272 | 270 | 239 | 239 | 239 | 239 | 239 | 239 | 239 |
| Stores and Warehouse Workers | 63 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 62 |
| Other Selling and Storage | — | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Catering and Food Preparation and Processing | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chefs, Cooks | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Other C and FP and P | 114 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| General | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Transport Operating | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Construction and Civil Engineering | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bench Joiners | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Plumbers | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| General | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 |
| Electrical and Electronic Engineering | | | | | | | | | | |
| Electrical/Electronic Maintenance Fitters | 37 | 37 | 37 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 |
| Other Electrical/Electronic Engineering | 33 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| General | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| Mechanical Engineering and Metal Production and Processing | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other Mechanical Engineering and Metal Production/Processing | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| General | 117 | 117 | 117 | 117 | 135 | 135 | 135 | 135 | 135 | 135 |
| Motor Vehicle Repair and Maintenance | | | | | | | | | | |
| Motor Vehicle Mechanics | 63 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 64 |
| Motor Vehicle Body Repairs | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| General | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 |
| Printing | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Clothing and Textiles Manufacturing | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Total | 1,445 | 1,382 | 1,376 | 1,336 | 1,358 | 1,358 | 1,358 | 1,358 | 1,358 | 1,358 |

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the average weekly take-home pay for YTS leavers in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and what steps he is currently taking to review these pay rates.

**Mr. Lang:** The Government do not collect such information. However, the centre for educational sociology at Edinburgh university gathered some information in autumn 1987 on average rates of pay offered to young people after they left YTS as part of the Scottish young people's survey. Details were as follows:

| | Gross weekly earnings | Sample numbers |
|---|---|---|
| Strathclyde | £86·02 | 392 |
| Scotland | £88·01 | 801 |

The survey sample size precludes the provision of meaningful figures for Greenock and Port Glasgow.

When a young person leaves YTS for a job the pay received is entirely a matter for the employer.

### Forestry

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the sale of Loch Hourn plantation, Highland region, by the Forestry Commission was carried out in compliance with the guidelines on Forestry Commission disposals set out in the written answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly on 23 January, *Official Report*, column *405*.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Yes.

### Heritage

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria must be satisfied before he will take sites of historic or archaeological importance into his guardianship.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Sites to be taken into the guardianship of the Secretary of State are normally those sites of eminent national importance, in historical or archaeological terms, whose maintenance and management cannot satisfactorily be undertaken by any other party.

### Civil Servants (Political Activity)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff within his Department in each of the following categories: *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, are local authority councillors.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The answer is:

*(a)* none
*(b)* three
*(c)* none.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff within his Department in each of the years 1979 to 1988 in the categories *(a)* politically restricted and *(b)* intermediate, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, have (i) successfully and (ii) unsuccessfully appealed to the Civil Service appeal tribunal against a refusal of permission to take part in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Rifkind:** None.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff within his Department in the category politically restricted, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local political activity.

**Mr. Rifkind:** None.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff within his Department fall within each of the categories: *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The numbers of Scottish Office staff falling into the three categories are *(a)* restricted—846, *(b)* intermediate—4,826·5 and *(c)* free—1,048·5.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff within his Department in the category intermediate, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, have permission to engage in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Scottish Office records date from 1972. Since then 42 members of staff in the intermediate category have received permission to engage in local or national political activity.

### Departmental Staff (Voluntary Public Service)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy with regard to *(a)* paid and *(b)* unpaid leave for staff to undertake voluntary public service.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Staff are granted *(a)* paid and *(b)* unpaid leave in accordance with the Civil Service pay and conditions code. Each case is considered sympathetically and on its own merits.

### Education Policy

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regard he has paid to the opinion of the organised teaching professions in shaping his policies on schools and education in Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* I am always prepared to take account of the views of teachers' organisations when formulating policies for education in Scotland.

I have been particularly pleased to see the EIS ending its opposition to school boards.

### Self-governing Schools

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each of the teachers' organisations consulted by him whilst preparing his paper on "Self-Governing Schools: Extending the Choice for Scottish Parents".

**Mr. Rifkind** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The teaching unions have all been invited to comment on the paper on "Self-Governing Schools"—to date three have responded.

### Labour Statistics

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a breakdown of the unemployment statistics for Greenock and Port Glasgow by district electoral division, or on another convenient basis.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* On 12 January 1989 (the latest date for which information is available) the number of unemployed claimants in each electoral ward of the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency was as shown in the table.

| Ward name | Unemployed claimants |
|---|---|
| Bellville | 426 |
| Blairmore | 352 |
| Bow | 468 |
| Broomhill | 275 |
| Clune Brae | 483 |
| Gateside | 281 |
| Gibshill | 637 |
| Greenock East Central | 671 |
| Greenock South | 367 |
| Greenock West Central | 251 |
| Greenock West End | 180 |
| Larkfield | 425 |
| Port Glasgow East | 574 |
| Port Glasgow South | 485 |
| Port Glasgow West | 305 |
| Upper Larkfield | 439 |
| Constituency Total | 6,619 |

This information is available in the Library.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Relocation

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department has taken to evaluate the Fylde coast as a suitable place for relocated Civil Service jobs.

**Mr. Brooke:** Departments for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible have in hand the serious and substantial reviews of relocation opportunities referred to in the answer I gave on 9 February 1989 at columns *751-2* to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran). Like those being conducted by other Departments, these reviews are directed towards finding sites offering easier labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Decisions will be announced once the essential process of assessment, consultation and decision for each review have been completed.

### Official Secrets Bill

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much it would have cost to have reprinted the Official Secrets Bill following completion of the Committee stage.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The cost to Her Majesty's Stationery Office for printing the Official Secrets Bill after its Committee stage would have been £2,374.

### Civil Servants (Voluntary Work)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the overall policy of the Civil Service with regard to *(a)* paid and *(b)* unpaid leave for staff to undertake voluntary public service.

**Mr. Brooke** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* Paid leave may be granted for a variety of voluntary public service activities which have statutory support, including local government work, magisterial duties and school governor business. Annual limits, ranging from three days to 24 days, apply to each activity and an individual may be granted a maximum of 24 days paid special leave in any one year.

Unpaid leave is granted at the discretion of the employing Department. It may be allowed in addition to paid leave for work with statutory bodies or given to staff engaged in activities on behalf of non-statutory "voluntary aid" bodies.

## HEALTH

### Renal Dialysis

**Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the National Health Service hospitals, by region, which provide renal dialysis, the number of dialysis machines at each hospital, and the number of in-patients and out-patients treated per annum at each unit.

**Mr. Freeman:** Renal units in England which report to the European Dialysis and Transplant Association registry (EDTA) are listed by regional health authority:

*Northern*
Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle
South Cleveland Hospital, Middlesbrough
Sunderland Royal Infirmary

*Yorkshire*
Hull Royal Infirmary
St. James's University Hospital, Leeds
The General Infirmary at Leeds

*Trent*
Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
Nottingham City Hospital
Leicester General Hospital
Derby City Hospital

*East Anglian*
Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge
Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Norwich

*North West Thames*
Charing Cross Hospital, London
St. Mary's Hospital, London

*North East Thames*
The Royal Free Hospital, London
St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London
The London Hospital (Whitechapel)
St. Paul's Hospital, London
Westcliff Hospital, Westcliff-on-Sea

*South East Thames*
Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Canterbury
St. Thomas' Hospital, London
Guy's Hospital, London
King's College Hospital, London
Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton

*South West Thames*
St. Helier Hospital, Carshalton

*Wessex*
St. Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth

*Oxford*
Churchill Hospital, Oxford
Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading

*South Western*
Southmead Hospital, Bristol
Derriford Hospital, Plymouth
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford), Exeter
Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Gloucester

*West Midlands*
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham
East Birmingham Hospital
North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary, Stoke-on-Trent

Wordsley Hospital, Stourbridge
Walsgrave General Hospital, Coventry
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Shrewsbury
New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton

*Mersey*
Royal Liverpool Hospital
Sefton General Hospital, Liverpool
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital (Alder Hey)

*North Western*
Manchester Royal Infirmary
Royal Manchester Children's Hospital
University Hospital of South Manchester (Withington Hospital), Manchester
Hope Hospital, Salford
Royal Preston Hospital

*Special Health Authority*
(Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's)
Hammersmith Hospital, London

The list does not provide an accurate guide to the facilities available to the residents of particular regions, since there is significant movement of patients across regional boundaries. Furthermore, the list includes only those centres which report data directly to the EDTA registry; some units, particularly those which are satellites of main renal centres, are therefore omitted. Military hospitals are also excluded.

Information on the number of dialysis machines is not collected centrally. The EDTA does not disclose activity statistics relating to individual units, but information on the number of patients receiving different forms of dialysis by region is given in my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 30 January at columns *42-44*.

### Listeria

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has that unpasteurised milk or cheese is more likely than pasteurised to give rise to listeriosis.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I have no such evidence. The chief medical officer's recent advice to pregnant women and other vulnerable groups to avoid certain types of soft cheese drew no distinction between those made from pasteurised or unpasteurised milk.

### Food Storage

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health below what specific temperature the chief medical officer advises that food stored in a refrigerator should be kept.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The chief medical officer has not issued any such specific advice.

### Medical Audit Schemes

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what pilot studies he has initiated into medical audit schemes; what hospitals were involved; what private hospitals have been subject to medical audit; and which of the relevant Royal Colleges have recommended any such schemes.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Effective systems of medical audit are already established in a number of hospitals and the benefits are widely recognised within the profession. The royal colleges are committed to the principle of medical audit and in many cases have played a major role in developing audit methods and promoting their use.

### Plastic Surgery

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he proposes to provide funds for a third consultant post in plastic surgery in Leicester.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I announced in "Working for Patients" that we intend to fund centrally 100 additional consultant posts over the next three years. We will soon be inviting bids from health authorities for these posts. Whether individual bids succeed will depend on their meeting the criteria of the scheme. It is also open to health authorities themselves to fund new consultant posts as part of their normal service planning.

### Electoral Registration Statistics

**Mr. Harry [illegible]es:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will [illegible] in the *Official Report* the total number of people in each parliamentary constituency in England and Wales listed on *(a)* the electoral registers for 1988-89 and *(b)* the electoral registers for 1989-90.

**Mr. Freeman:** The total numbers of people listed on the electoral register for 1988-89 in each parliamentary constituency have been published by the OPCS in table 1.4 of "Electoral Statistics: 1988" (Series EL No. 15), a copy of which is in the Library. Similar figures for 1989-90 are still being collected from local electoral registration Officers. They will be included in "Electoral Statistics: 1989" (Series EL No. 16) which is scheduled for publication at the end of May.

### Locum Doctors

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the cost by year, for the last five years, to the Trent regional health authority, by area health authority, for employing locum doctors; what has been the national average over the same period; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Figures derived from the annual accounts of the district health authorities comprising the Trent region are shown in the table.

Equivalent expenditure in England represents an approximate annual average per authority (district health authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals) as follows:

| | *£ thousand (cash)* |
|---|---|
| 1983-84 | 35 |
| 1984-85 | 51 |
| 1985-86 | 81 |
| 1986-87 | 131 |
| 1987-88 | 215 |

However, these averages include data for the four Thames regions which tend to spend more in this category than other regions.

In November 1988, health authorities were advised of the maximum rate they should pay to agencies supplying locum doctors for work in hospitals from 12 December 1988. We have no evidence that the advice has led to any significant reduction in the number of available agency locums; and we are currently considering the outcome of widespread consultation on guidance to be issued to health authorities on their employment.

*Expenditure on Non-NHS Staff (Agency, Etc)—Medical*

*£ cash*

| *Trent Region District Health Authorities* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Derbyshire | — | — | — | 10,340 | 4,149 |
| Southern Derbyshire | 14,829 | — | — | — | 330,215 |
| Leicestershire | 660 | — | — | — | 2,043 |
| North Lincolnshire | — | — | — | 2,706 | 19,903 |
| South Lincolnshire | — | 230 | 53,968 | 128,774 | 461,371 |
| Bassetlaw | — | — | — | — | — |
| Central Nottinghamshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| Nottingham | — | — | — | 11,361 | 6,130 |
| Barnsley | 168 | 358 | 262 | 42,685 | 23,990 |
| Doncaster | — | 6,079 | 49,060 | 204,049 | 164,169 |
| Rotherham | 1,261 | — | — | — | 28,748 |
| Sheffield | 12,765 | 477,968 | 606,789 | 653,210 | 855,549 |
| Total | 29,683 | 484,635 | 710,079 | 1,053,125 | 1,896,257 |

*Note:*
The figures relate to the health authorities' provision of hospital and community health services and exclude the costs of directly employed NHS medical staff engaged on locum duties.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Polytechnics (Science and Engineering)

15. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of places in science and engineering in polytechnics remain unfilled in the current year.

**Mr. Jackson:** Information on the number of places available in polytechnics is not held centrally either in total or by subject.

### School Leavers (Qualifications)

16. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given Her Majesty's inspectorate in the light of the number of school leavers with insufficient basic educational qualifications.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The Government look to Her Majesty's inspectorate for independent advice on all educational matters. We look forward to studying its forthcoming review of the lower attaining pupils' programme, which we established in 1982. Provisional statistics indicate that, following the introduction of GCSE, the proportion of school leavers with qualifications in English, maths and French has increased significantly, as has the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five or more results at grade C or above.

### Food Research

17. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his responsibilities for food research.

**Mr. Jackson:** The Department is responsible, through the science budget, for funding research by the research councils. This includes work relevant to food undertaken by the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Medical Research Council.

### Grant-maintained Schools

18. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in respect of his letter of guidance to local authorities about the conduct of ballots for grant-maintained schools.

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in respect of his letter of guidance concerning the conduct of ballots for grant-maintained schools.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Parents, governors and others continue to make known to my right hon. Friend their concerns about the conduct of ballots on grant-maintained status.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have applied to him for grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have applied to him for grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications he has now received from schools wishing to opt out of local education authority control.

52. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have so far applied for grant-maintained status.

67. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have now applied for grant-maintained status; and when he expects to decide on those applications.

**Mr. John L. Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the number of schools seeking to opt out under the Education Reform Act.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend recently approved proposals for grant-maintained status published by Skegness grammar school and Audenshaw high school, and has today approved the proposal from St. James's School, Bolton. A further 11 schools have published such proposals, and 16 more have been required to do so by a positive vote of parents in a secret, postal ballot. My right hon. Friend will determine such proposals as quickly as the statutory procedures and his consideration of all the relevant factors permit. The Department understands that ballots are at present required to be held in respect of a further 13 schools. A large number of parents and governors continue to contact the Department about making applications for grant-maintained status.

38. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many ballots have taken place for schools to adopt grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement on the conduct of these ballots.

48. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have balloted on changing to grant-maintained status.

88. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest ballots of parents for grant-maintained school status.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Parents have voted in ballots on grant-maintained status at 49 schools. My right hon. Friend is determined to ensure that all such ballots, and the preliminaries to them, are properly conducted. The Department wrote recently on this matter to the chief education officers of all local education authorities in England. I have sent a copy of that letter to all hon. and right hon. Members in England and Wales, and a copy has been placed in the Library of both Houses.

42. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of local education authorities in disseminating correct information about grant-maintained status when changes of schools to such status are being contemplated.

63. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the conduct of ballots for schools considering opting out.

68. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on intimidation in the context of schools deciding to apply for grant-maintained status.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The Department's letter to local education authorities of 13 February sets out my right hon. Friend's views on these matters. It makes clear his concern about suggestions that some local education authorities may have been seeking to hinder or deter parents, governors and staff from considering a possible application for grant-maintained status, or from carrying out the statutory duties associated with such an application. It reminds local education authorities of their duties and responsibilities and of the need to ensure that any information they provide is accurate and represents a proper use of public funds.

50. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has had representations from the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust with regard to funding; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust with regard to funding; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I refer hon. Members to the replies my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on Friday, 17 February at columns *416-417*.

### National Curriculum

19. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding the national curriculum.

86. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he is making in introducing the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** We have received over 200 written comments from bodies representing various educational and other interests on the draft orders for mathematics and science published before Christmas. We shall take these into account in preparing final orders, which I expect to lay before the House early next month and which will start to come into effect in the autumn.

### Nursery Education

20. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase support for nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths).

### Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals

21. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met members of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals; and what was discussed.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend often meets representatives of the CVCP to discuss a variety of issues.

### Disabled People

22. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to monitor the implementation of sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Butcher:** The primary responsibility for the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 falls to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. His social services inspectorate is undertaking a study of the implementation of the Act, including sections 5 and 6. Our two Departments will discuss the outcome of this study in due course.

### University Research (Dual Funding)

23. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether it is his intention to maintain the principle of dual funding of research in all universities.

**Mr. Jackson:** We have no plans to depart from the principle of the present dual support approach to publicly funded research in universities. My right hon. Friend has advised the Universities Funding Council, which takes over university funding responsibilities, from the present University Grants Committee on 1 April 1989 that, within that framework, there needs to be greater concentration and selectivity of research; that funding for research should be more clearly distinguished from funding for teaching; and that the council should consider how judgments on the quality and quantity of research should influence its funding decisions.

### Education (Basildon)

24. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent correspondence he has received on education in Basildon.

**Mr. Butcher:** Apart from the recent letter from my hon. Friend, my right hon. Friend has received no recent correspondence on the organisation of education in Basildon.

### St. Francis Xavier School, Woolton

25. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from parents and others on the future of St. Francis Xavier school, Woolton.

59. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the future of St. Francis Xavier school, Woolton, Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Angela Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend has received four letters about the actions of the governing body of St. Francis Xavier School following their receipt of a request from parents that a ballot should be held on whether the school should seek grant-maintained status.

### Student Loans

26. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with financial institutions concerning the Government's White Paper on student loans; and if he will make a statement.

31. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with financial institutions concerning the Government's White Paper on student loans; and if he will make a statement.

64. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with financial institutions concerning the Government's White Paper on student loans; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend met leaders of the clearing bank and building society sectors on two occasions before the publication of the White Paper. He and officials have been engaged in a series of discussions with a variety of financial institutions since then, and those discussions are continuing in a constructive spirit.

### Food Safety

27. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his responsibilities for research into food safety.

**Mr. Jackson:** The Department is responsible, through the science budget, for funding research by the research councils. This includes work relevant to food safety undertaken by the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Medical Research Council.

72. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to direct that the research councils increase research into the cleanliness and safety of foods for human consumption in the light of current public concern.

**Mr. Jackson:** No: the total resources available for science are distributed taking into account the needs of individual institutions and programmes, but that distribution is not determined by my Department. It is for councils to determine their expenditure on particular areas of research. However the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does commission a considerable volume of research with the Agricultural and Food Research Council, a significant proportion of which is related specifically to food safety.

### Capital Allocations

28. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities received a capital allocation for 1989-90 less than the figure shown as committed expenditure in their bid.

**Mr. Butcher:** A total of 48 local education authorities received a prescribed capital allocation for expenditure for 1989-90, less than the figure shown as committed expenditure in their plans.

All local authorities were informed in December 1987 that committed expenditure arising from building works started in 1988-89 or earlier would be covered only up to the level of their provisional indications for 1989-90 and 1990-91. They were advised to contain their commitments within these figures except insofar as any excess could be financed from other sources—such as virement or capital receipts.

### Women Teachers

29. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to encourage more women into science and maths teaching.

**Mr. Butcher:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

### Further Education

30. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the statistical projections with regard to those remaining in full-time education after 16 years which are contained in the public expenditure White Paper.

**Mr. Butcher:** The relevant statistical projections contained in the public expenditure White Paper are:

*Thousands*

| | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secondary school pupils over school leaving age | 278 | 261 | 245 | 235 |
| Full-time and sandwich students (full-equivalents) in maintained further education colleges | 327 | 320 | 309 | 300 |

Since the public expenditure White Paper was written, provisional information has shown that the proportion of 16-year-olds staying on in full-time education has risen from 46 per cent. to 49 per cent. between 1987 and 1988. Future projections will take account of this and other information as it becomes available.

### Teachers

32. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in agreeing new collective bargaining arrangements for the teaching profession.

40. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to introduce legislation relating to changes in negotiating procedures in respect of teachers' pay and conditions of service.

46. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he is going to announce his plans for the restoration of negotiating machinery for teachers' pay and conditions.

66. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he is going to announce his plans for the restoration of negotiating machinery for teachers' pay and conditions.

85. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he is going to announce his plans for the restoration of negotiating machinery for teachers' pay and conditions.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I refer the hon. Members to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 31 January at column *159*.

75. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 16 February at columns *323-26*.

### University Grants Committee

34. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet representatives of the University Grants Committee; and what matters will be discussed.

44. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the University Grants Committee; and what subjects were discussed.

**Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will arrange to meet the University Grants Committee to discuss the proposed closure of the school of veterinary medicine at Glasgow university.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend frequently meets in the course of usual business the chairman of the University Grants Committee and the chairman and chief executive-designate of the Universities Funding Council to discuss a variety of issues relating to university funding and subject provision.

### Scottish Universities

35. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet representatives of the principals of Scottish universities.

**Mr. Jackson:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 31 January at column *164*.

### Student Unions

37. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in response to his consultative paper on student unions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** No consultative paper has been issued. My Department is still analysing responses to its questionnaire about student unions. On the basis of the information obtained the Government will reach conclusions on the best action to take and will then consult all those concerned about those conclusions.

### Physics and Chemistry

41. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teaching of physics and chemistry in universities.

**Mr. Jackson:** I refer to the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 31 January at column *162*.

### A-Levels

43. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of all 16-year-olds commenced studying A-levels in *(a)* September 1988 and *(b)* September 1978.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The proportion of 16-year-olds in England studying A levels was 25 per cent. in 1987-88 and 20 per cent. in 1979-80. Information by age prior to 1979-80 is not available, and information for 1988-89 is not yet available.

### School Governors

45. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from appointing nominees from one political party for all places as school governors; and what representations he has received concerning local authorities which have done this.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The Government have received various representations on this matter and has consistently stated that those authorities which nominate only majority party supporters as school governors are not behaving as their electorates would expect. We hope that they can be persuaded to adopt a fairer approach. We are not convinced that this is an appropriate matter for legislation.

### Universities (Financing)

47. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the financial problems facing the universities; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend has received many representations about all aspects of university policy, including university funding.

### School Sports

49. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the level of participation of school children in team sports *(a)* currently and *(b)* 30 years ago.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** This information is not available centrally.

### Science Budget

54. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of his science budget is spent in Wales, Scotland and England, respectively.

**Mr. Jackson:** In 1987-88, the latest year for which figures are available, 3 per cent. of the science budget was spent in Wales, 9 per cent. in Scotland and 71 per cent. in England.

76. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what increases in real terms are proposed in the science budget in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

79. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what increases in real terms are proposed in the science budget in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

**Mr. Jackson:** The announced allocations for the science budget for 1990-91 and 1991-92 allow for real terms increases of 8·8 per cent. and 7·9 per cent. respectively over the revised allocation for 1988-89.

### Teacher Supply

55. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to ensure adequate teacher supply; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Butcher:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave on 31 January to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) at column *157*.

### Surplus School Places

56. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for assisting local authorities in reducing surplus places in schools; and if he will make a statement.

74. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for assisting local authorities in reducing surplus places in schools; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Butcher:** Local education authorities are aware of the high cost of under-used capacity at schools with a substantial proportion of surplus places. They recognise therefore that it is very much in their own interests to continue to come forward with proposals to rationalise their school provision where appropriate. The Government's public expenditure plans assume that authorities collectively will achieve the national targets for the removal of surplus places.

### City Technology Colleges

57. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made on his plans for city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

61. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made on his plans for city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Butcher:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier this afternoon to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Hughes).

81. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the City Technology Trust with regard to funding; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Butcher:** The City Technology College Trust was established, with charitable status in April 1987. In August 1987 the chairman, Mr. Cyril Taylor made a request for grant-aid towards work that was being undertaken.

Agreement was given in March 1988 for a grant of up to a maximum of £200,000, or 2/3 of the trust's total relevant expenditure, during the four years from 1987-88 to 1990-91. Grant is payable towards the trust's activities in finding sites for CTCs and providing advice and support to CTC projects. A request has recently been received concerning the extension of funding for a further two years.

### Student Finance

58. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many letters he has received during the last six months on the subject of student finance.

**Mr. Jackson:** Since 1 September, about 4,000.

### O-Levels

60. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will *(a)* make it his policy to encourage exam boards to make the O-level exam available in competition with the GCSE and *(b)* continue to allow education authorities, schools and parents to opt for either exam; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Section 5 of the Education Reform Act provides for the statutory approval of qualifications and syllabuses for children of compulsory school age in maintained schools. My right hon. Friend has asked the School Examinations and Assessment Council to advise what qualifications—GCSE and other—should be approved. He will consider that advice, which he expects to receive by May, in the context of his intention that GCSE and equivalent qualifications should constitute the principal method of assessment of pupils' attainment at age 16.

### Wandsworth

62. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he is having with the London borough of Wandsworth about its plans for running the education services in the borough; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The Department is in regular contact with Wandsworth, as with other inner London boroughs, on a range of issues relating to their preparations for the transfer of education responsibility. These issues include the boroughs' development plans, the future of specific services, detailed arrangements for the transfer of functions and property and staffing matters.

## Teachers of the Deaf

65. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he plans to make any change in the local education authority training grants scheme so as to encourage an enhanced take-up of places for in-service training to become a specialist teacher of deaf children.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Training to become a qualified teacher of deaf children will again be a national priority area under the scheme in 1989-90 and grant-aided allocations to support our target number of 110 trainees were announced to authorities last autumn. My right hon. Friend will shortly consider detailed arrangements for the scheme in 1990-91.

## Inner London Education Authority

69. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made by London boroughs in preparing for taking over the responsibilities currently undertaken by the Inner London education authority.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The inner London councils are required, under section 165 of the Education Reform Act, to publish a development plan for education in their area. Ten have already done so, and the remaining three have confirmed that they will do so later this week. All the councils have consulted locally about their proposed plans and have also reached joint agreement on a range of important issues of common concern. They continue to discuss arrangements for certain services currently provided on a cross-borough basis. The Government are making available £25 million specific grant for the councils in 1989-90 to support continued planning and preparation; all are making senior appointments to their education departments and are preparing to take on further staff to work on transfer arrangements. The Government look to the inner London councils to maintain and indeed increase this momentum in the coming months.

## Secondary School Pupils

70. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest figure for spending per secondary pupil in inner London and the comparable figures for the rest of London and for the former metropolitan authorities.

**Mr. Butcher:** The average net institutional expenditure per pupil in maintained secondary schools in 1986-87, the latest year for which information about actual spending is available, is given in the table:

*Average net institutional expenditure[1] per secondary pupil[2]*

| | *£ per pupil 1986-87 cash terms* |
|---|---|
| ILEA | 2,350 |
| Outer London boroughs | 1,550 |
| Metropolitan districts | 1,355 |

[1] Net institutional expenditure includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.

[2] The figures are based on LEA expenditure returns to DOE and pupil number returns to DES.

## Medical Research

71. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the implications for medical research financed by the Medical Research Council of new proposals for the funding of the hospital service.

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he has made to protect medical research supported by the Medical Research Council with co-operation in clinical aspects by the National Health Service, in the light of the Government's new proposals for the funding of hospital services.

**Mr. Jackson:** The White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555) makes it clear that the Government are firmly committed to maintaining the quality of medical education and research. In the light of the proposals in the White Paper, the Government will be considering how best to ensure that costs associated with research in the National Health Service are met, and that appropriate arrangements exist between the MRC and the Health Service for the effective prosecution of research.

73. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on future Government support for clinical medical research.

**Mr. Jackson:** The main agency through which the Government support medical research, including clinical medical research, is the Medical Research Council. My right hon. Friend announced on 7 February 1989 that the council's grant-in-aid for 1989-90 will be £176 million. This is an increase in real terms of 12 per cent. on the 1988-89 figure of £150 million. The council's cash planning figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are £181 million and £185 million respectively; these will be subject to review in the usual way in the public expenditure survey. The allocation of the council's funds between clinical and other research is a matter for the council, but I understand that it is planning to increase its emphasis on clinical research. Some support of clinical research is also provided through UGC block grants to universities and medical schools, and through regional health authorities' spending.

## LEAs (Charging)

77. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the circular on charging by local education authorities, following the enactment of the Education Reform Act 1988.

**Mr. Butcher:** The circular on charges for school activities describes provisions in the Education Reform Act 1988 which come into force on 1 April. My right hon. Friend will be monitoring the implementation of these provisions.

### School Buildings

78. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make extra capital allocations to inner London boroughs to programme improvements to school buildings; and in the case of Tower Hamlets, if he will provide immediate resources to allow further expansion of the inner London education authority's school building programme.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend has announced the education block capital allocation for the inner London education authority for 1989-90. In making this allocation he took account of expected changes in pupil population, including those in Tower Hamlets. From 1 April 1990, the Government propose new arrangements for local authority capital expenditure; the Local Government and Housing Bill, currently before the House, sets out these arrangements.

### Village Schools

80. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further steps he plans to take to encourage small village schools.

**Mr. Butcher:** Responsibility for educational provision in maintained schools in rural as well as in other areas rests with local education authorities. My right hon. Friend is continuing to support through education support grant some £1·5 million expenditure per annum on pilot projects in a number of LEAs with a view to improving the quality and range of the curriculum in small rural primary schools. My right hon. Friend is also proposing to support a research project by the university of Leicester to evaluate the pilot projects with a view to making recommendations on practices which could successfully be replicated in other LEAs.

### Children in Care

82. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that children who have been in the care of several local authorities are not disbarred from access to discretionary local authority grants.

**Mr. Jackson** This is a matter for individual local education authorities.

### Teacher Supply

83. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teacher supply in London and the south-east.

87. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teacher supply in London and the south-east.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** We recognise that there are problems of teacher supply in London and in the south-east more widely. Much can be done locally through good recruitment and deployment measures. Our current action programme to combat teacher shortages focuses on regions with recruitment difficulties.

### Primary School Teachers (London)

84. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, what specific initiatives he intends to fund, beyond that which the local authorities are undertaking, to overcome the shortage of primary education teachers in London.

**Mr. Butcher:** There is no shortage of primary teachers nationally, though we recognise that there are problems in London and the south-east. Officers of the DES and the teaching as a career unit discuss recruitment measures with local education authorities. Our publicity and advertising continues to emphasise the demand for primary school staff in London.

### Local Authority Expenditure (Examinations)

**Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of local education authority expenditure per capita, together with their position of relative examination success, for the past five years for which figures are available.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information gives the average cost per secondary school pupil for the financial year 1986-87; and the three-year average, over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87, of the proportion of school leavers who attained five or more higher grades at O-level/CSE. The latter figures are drawn from a 10 per cent. sample of pupils at each school. Sampling error is a major consideration where information in respect of individual local education authorities is concerned. While presentation of the figures in the form of a three-year average may help to mitigate the effects of sampling error, information presented over five individual years, as requested, would be subject to excessive fluctuation for valid year to year comparisons.

*Secondary schools in England*

| *Local education authorities* | *Expenditure per pupil (£) in the financial year 1986-87* | *Examination results: average over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Percentage of school leavers attaining 5+ higher grades at O-level/CSE* | *Ranking* |
| Barking | 1,470 | 9·9 | 96 |
| Barnet | 1,510 | 41·0 | 1 |
| Bexley | 1,370 | 26·6 | 24 |

| *Local education authorities* | *Expenditure per pupil (£) in the financial year 1986-87* | *Examination results: average over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Percentage of school leavers attaining 5+ higher grades at O-level/CSE* | *Ranking* |
| Brent | 1,805 | 19·1 | 74 |
| Bromley | 1,420 | 30·5 | 10 |
| Croydon | 1,535 | 22·9 | 52 |
| Ealing | 1,650 | 19·6 | 68 |
| Enfield | 1,380 | 23·7 | 45 |
| Haringey | n.a. | 17·3 | 83 |
| Harrow | 1,600 | 37·8 | 2 |
| Havering | 1,510 | 23·9 | 44 |
| Hillingdon | 1,520 | 21·2 | 62 |
| Hounslow | 1,505 | 21·5 | 61 |
| Kingston-upon-Thames | 1,530 | 34·8 | 3 |
| Merton | 1,325 | 24·9 | 37 |
| Newham | n.a. | 12·4 | 93 |
| Redbridge | 1,465 | 25·6 | 32 |
| Richmond-upon-Thames | 1,330 | 26·5 | 25 |
| Sutton | 1,300 | 34·4 | 4 |
| Waltham Forest | 1,915 | 11·0 | 94 |
| Birmingham | 1,345 | 16·9 | 85 |
| Coventry | 1,485 | 19·9 | 67 |
| Dudley | 1,350 | 21·5 | 59 |
| Sandwell | 1,410 | 13·4 | 92 |
| Solihull | 1,280 | 29·4 | 11 |
| Walsall | 1,430 | 19·1 | 73 |
| Wolverhampton | 1,395 | 15·4 | 89 |
| Knowsley | 1,515 | 10·6 | 95 |
| Liverpool | 1,445 | 17·0 | 84 |
| St. Helens | 1,340 | 23·6 | 46 |
| Sefton | 1,275 | 27·0 | 22 |
| Wirral | 1,280 | 23·5 | 48 |
| Bolton | 1,230 | 24·9 | 36 |
| Bury | 1,340 | 28·4 | 15 |
| Manchester | 1,660 | 17·3 | 82 |
| Oldham | 1,255 | 16·1 | 87 |
| Rochdale | 1,460 | 20·2 | 64 |
| Salford | 1,385 | 18·9 | 76 |
| Stockport | 1,270 | 24·3 | 41 |
| Tameside | 1,325 | 23·5 | 47 |
| Trafford | 1,315 | 31·7 | 7 |
| Wigan | 1,460 | 27·2 | 19 |
| Barnsley | 1,325 | 15·7 | 88 |
| Doncaster | 1,325 | 19·2 | 72 |
| Rotherham | 1,230 | 17·4 | 81 |
| Sheffield | 1,490 | 18·9 | 75 |
| Bradford | 1,235 | 16·7 | 86 |
| Calderdale | 1,330 | 19·3 | 70 |
| Kirklees | 1,250 | 24·1 | 43 |
| Leeds | 1,230 | 21·5 | 58 |
| Wakefield | 1,290 | 15·4 | 90 |
| Gateshead | 1,360 | 18·8 | 77 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 1,530 | 17·7 | 80 |
| North Tyneside | 1,455 | 21·9 | 57 |
| South Tyneside | 1,430 | 18·1 | 79 |
| Sunderland | 1,305 | 19·3 | 71 |
| ILEA | 2,345 | 15·4 | 91 |
| Avon | 1,310 | 24·7 | 38 |
| Bedfordshire | 1,250 | 25·9 | 29 |
| Berkshire | 1,280 | 27·5 | 18 |
| Buckinghamshire | 1,320 | 31·6 | 8 |
| Cambridgeshire | 1,205 | 24·4 | 40 |
| Cheshire | 1,235 | 26·6 | 23 |
| Cleveland | 1,355 | 27·5 | 17 |
| Cornwall | 1,175 | 25·5 | 33 |
| Cumbria | 1,315 | 24·2 | 42 |
| Derbyshire | 1,305 | 21·5 | 60 |
| Devon | 1,225 | 23·4 | 49 |
| Dorset | 1,190 | 28·4 | 16 |
| Durham | 1,225 | 20·0 | 66 |
| East Sussex | 1,235 | 25·7 | 31 |
| Essex | 1,255 | 25·1 | 35 |
| Gloucestershire | 1,260 | 28·6 | 14 |

| Local education authorities | Expenditure per pupil (£) in the financial year 1986-87 | Examination results: average over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Percentage of school leavers attaining 5+ higher grades at O-level/CSE | Ranking |
| Hampshire | 1,220 | 26·0 | 28 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 1,180 | 25·7 | 30 |
| Hertfordshire | 1,350 | 28·9 | 13 |
| Humberside | 1,270 | 21·1 | 63 |
| Isle of Wight | 1,150 | 18·3 | 78 |
| Kent | 1,145 | 27·1 | 20 |
| Lancashire | 1,255 | 24·7 | 39 |
| Leicestershire | 1,390 | 22·9 | 51 |
| Lincolnshire | 1,185 | 25·3 | 34 |
| Norfolk | 1,230 | 21·9 | 56 |
| North Yorkshire | 1,240 | 31·4 | 9 |
| Northamptonshire | 1,250 | 20·0 | 65 |
| Northumberland | 1,230 | 29·0 | 12 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1,365 | 19·6 | 69 |
| Oxfordshire | 1,350 | 26·5 | 26 |
| Shropshire | 1,285 | 27·0 | 21 |
| Somerset | 1,195 | 22·2 | 53 |
| Staffordshire | 1,255 | 23·4 | 50 |
| Suffolk | 1,165 | 22·0 | 55 |
| Surrey | 1,260 | 34·4 | 5 |
| Warwickshire | 1,220 | 26·2 | 27 |
| West Sussex | 1,220 | 32·1 | 6 |
| Wiltshire | 1,230 | 22·1 | 54 |

## Rating Reform

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the safety nets to be introduced for the inner London boroughs, to coincide with the introduction of the community charge and the abolition of the Inner London education authority, will be based on the actual level of spending by the Inner London education authority, or the Government's assessment of educational needs in individual boroughs; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Proposals have been put to the local authority associations about the basis for the national safety net adjustments to revenue support grant which will apply from 1 April 1990. The proposals do not envisage that the safety net spending assumption will be based on local authorities' needs assessments but the two options put forward do assume that safety nets will be based on a measure of spending in 1989-90 uprated for inflation. One option is to base the safety net spending assumption on the 1989-90 RSG settlement spending assumption; the other option is to base the safety net spending assumption on the actual domestic rate poundage levied in 1989-90.

## Inner London Education Authority

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he has received any representations from the borough of Wandsworth about the funding of the transitional arrangements in 1989-90 for the abolition of the Inner London education authority; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has received any representations from the borough of Wandsworth about the levels of funding for education following the abolition of the Inner London education authority in 1990; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has any plans to meet representatives from the borough of Wandsworth to discuss funding for education following the abolition of the Inner London education authority in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Wandsworth's director of education wrote to the Department on 20 January, welcoming the specific grant for preparatory costs which was announced before Christmas. There has been correspondence between the borough and the Department on matters relating to capital expenditure from April 1990. No other specific representations have been received from Wandsworth, although my right hon. Friend and I have had a number of meetings with representatives of the inner London boroughs, including Wandsworth, at which the financing of education in inner London from April 1990 has been among the subjects discussed. A further such meeting is likely to take place soon.

## Education (Wandsworth)

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates have been made by the London borough of Wandsworth of the cost of running education services in the borough in 1990-91; and what sum his Department has estimated for such provision.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Estimates made by the London borough of Wandworth are a matter for that borough. The Department is discussing with the inner London boroughs generally the basis of the revised needs assessments for education from 1 April 1990 and an appropriate disaggregation of ILEA spending. The cost of running education after transfer will depend on the policies adopted by each borough and the efficiency with which they are delivered.

### Greenhouse Effect

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the last six months concerning United Kingdom research into the greenhouse effect.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend has received eight representations on matters which raise issues relevant to United Kingdom research into the greenhouse effect.

### Full-time Education

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the level of those aged 16 years staying on in full-time education.

**Mr. Jackson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 10 February at cols. *846-850*. The Government are committed to encouraging young people to pursue both full and part-time courses of education and training beyond the age of 16.

### Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Annual Report)

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when Her Majesty's inspectorate's latest annual report will be published.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** Her Majesty's inspectorate's annual report covering the academic year 1987-88 has been published today. Copies are available in the Vote Office. The report draws on evidence from the inspection and other activity of Her Majesty's inspectorate and on the reports published by Her Majesty's inspectorate throughout the academic year. As I announced in October 1987, this is a new-style annual Her Majesty's inspectorate report which takes the place of previous reports which were based on inspections carried out in just one term.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Spending Power

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, on a similar basis to his answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *575-80*, he will publish figures showing the average total weekly benefit payable to disabled claimants in *(a)* Durham and *(b)* England, before and after the social security reforms of April were completely phased in.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The Department's published "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", a copy of which is in the Library, shows the estimated effects of the reformed benefit system on, among others, the sick and disabled. Tables 9A and 9B show in both cash and structural terms the estimated average change in disposable income of the sick and disabled.

### Supplementary Benefit

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have lost transitional protection at the most recent date.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that the information is not available.

### Income Support (Water Rates)

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much income support was paid out by his Department as a part of water rates for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that the information requested is not available.

### Income Support

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the average time an unemployed claimant has to wait for income support once he or she has registered for benefit.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Income support is normally paid fortnightly in arrears in line with unemployment benefit. I regret that no information is available on the average time that elapses between registration and the first payment of benefit.

### Residential and Nursing Homes

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to index-link the allowance per resident in private residential homes and private nursing homes.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The maximum amounts payable under income support to people in independent residential care and nursing homes are reviewed annually as part of the general uprating of social security benefits. Increases are made selectively to take account of the charges levied by different types of home. There are no plans to link the maximum amounts directly to a particular index.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from associations or organisations representing private residential homes or private nursing homes concerning the allowance per resident.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We have received representations from the Registered Nursing Homes Association, the Independent Hospitals Association, and the National Confederation of Registered Residential Care Homes Associations.

### Benefit (Take-up)

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Greenock and Port Glasgow were in receipt of *(a)* attendance allowance at (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate, *(b)* invalid care allowance, *(c)* mobility allowance, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* severe disablement allowance, *(f)* industrial disablement pension, *(g)* war disablement pension, *(h)* retirement pension, *(i)* income support and *(j)* supplementary benefit at the latest date for which figures are available; what those dates are; and if he will give comparable figures for five years and 10 years ago.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that information is not available in the precise form requested. Nor are details

available of the number of people in Greenock and Port Glasgow receiving *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* invalid care allowance, *(c)* mobility allowance, *(f)* industrial disablement pension, *(g)* war disablement pension or *(h)* retirement pension.

The following table gives the information available on the dates listed:

| | *Greenock* | *Port Glasgow* |
|---|---|---|
| *(d) Invalidity benefit*[1] | | |
| As at 31 January 1989 | 4,463 | 2,008 |
| As at 15 January 1985 | 3,481 | 1,446 |
| *(e) Severe disablement allowance* | | |
| As at 31 January 1989 | 393 | 256 |
| As at 15 January 1985 | 311 | 211 |
| *(i) Income support* | | |
| As at 30 November 1988 | 11,423 | 4,708 |
| *(j) Supplementary benefit* | | |
| As at 18 November 1987 | 12,338 | 5,369 |
| As at 6 December 1983 | 9,720 | 4,128 |
| As at 27 November 1979 | 6,317 | 2,814 |

[1] Includes an unknown number of sickness benefit claimants as separate records of sickness/invalidity benefit claimants are not kept.
*Source:* 100 per cent. count of cases in action.
*Note:* With the exception of supplementary benefit, comparable figures for five years and 10 years ago are no longer held.

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the take-up rate of benefits since the introduction of the income support scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) on 8 February at column *713*.

## Housing Benefit

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people would gain and what would be the average gain as a result of raising the level of savings under which housing benefit is payable to £10,000 on the assumption that *(a)* the rules for other benefits are unaltered, *(b)* the interest actually received on savings and not an arbitrarily assumed return is used in assessing benefit and *(c)* no change is made to the rule that those with savings of under £3,000 receive benefit in full;

(2) what would be the cost of raising the level of savings under which housing benefit is payable to £10,000 *(a)* in 1989-90 and *(b)* in a full year on the assumption that (i) the rules for other benefits are unaltered, (ii) the interest actually received on savings and not an arbitrarily assumed return is used in assessing benefit and (iii) no change is made to the rule that those with savings of under £3,000 receive benefit in full.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained as soon as possible.

## Spending Power

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables using the assumptions in his answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *575-80*, but using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in south Tyneside, together with a column showing the extent of the differences resulting from the April benefit changes.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 22 December 1988]:* The information requested is set out in the tables. They compare the post-reform position in April 1988 not with all actual pre-form cash situation but with a hypothetical position which might have occurred, had the previous structure continued and been uprated on the assumptions in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" (October 1987).

In addition, it should be noted that although the comparisons are based on average local authority housing charges in south Tyneside they do not necessarily reflect either the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people in the borough actually pay or real families' circumstances and their housing arrangements. Finally, the comparisons take no account of the housing benefit transitional cash protection announced on 27 April.

*Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988*
*South Tyneside LA*
*Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6*

| *Earnings head* | *Tax* | *NI* | *FIS* | *Child benefit* | *Rent* | *Rent rebate* | *Rates* | *Rate rebate* | *Fares to work* | *Free school meals* | *Free welfare milk* | *Net inc. after housing costs* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60·00 | 0·00 | 3·00 | 28·70 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 15·80 | 8·08 | 5·64 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 94·77 |
| 70·00 | 0·00 | 4·90 | 23·70 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 14·55 | 8·08 | 5·24 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 96·22 |
| 80·00 | 1·22 | 5·60 | 18·70 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 13·30 | 8·08 | 4·84 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 97·65 |
| 90·00 | 3·92 | 6·30 | 13·70 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 12·05 | 8·08 | 4·44 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 97·60 |
| 100·00 | 6·62 | 7·00 | 8·70 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 10·80 | 8·08 | 4·04 | 5·95 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 97·55 |
| 110·00 | 9·32 | 9·90 | 3·70 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 9·29 | 8·08 | 3·48 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 94·88 |
| 120·00 | 12·02 | 10·80 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 7·21 | 8·08 | 2·66 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 0·00 | 92·85 |
| 130·00 | 14·72 | 11·70 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 3·91 | 8·08 | 1·36 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 0·00 | 94·65 |
| 140·00 | 17·42 | 12·60 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·61 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 0·00 | 96·39 |
| 150·00 | 20·12 | 13·50 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 99·63 |
| 160·00 | 22·82 | 14·40 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 106·03 |
| 170·00 | 25·52 | 15·30 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 112·43 |

*New benefit system from April 1988*
*South Tyneside LA*
*Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6*

| Earnings head | Tax | NI | Family credit | Child benefit | Rent | Rent rebate | Rates | Rate rebate | Fares to work | Net inc. after housing costs | Difference between systems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60·00 | 0·00 | 3·00 | 40·32 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 2·56 | 8·08 | 0·67 | 5·85 | 83·80 | −10·97 |
| 70·00 | 0·00 | 4·90 | 34·65 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·98 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 83·98 | −12·24 |
| 80·00 | 1·22 | 5·60 | 28·99 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 85·42 | −12·23 |
| 90·00 | 3·92 | 6·30 | 24·37 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 87·40 | −10·20 |
| 100·00 | 6·62 | 7·00 | 19·75 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 89·38 | −8·17 |
| 110·00 | 9·32 | 9·90 | 16·67 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 90·70 | −4·18 |
| 120·00 | 12·02 | 10·80 | 12·19 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 92·62 | −0·23 |
| 130·00 | 14·72 | 11·70 | 7·71 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 94·54 | −0·11 |
| 140·00 | 17·42 | 12·60 | 3·23 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 96·46 | +0·07 |
| 150·00 | 20·12 | 13·50 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 99·63 | 0·00 |
| 160·00 | 22·82 | 14·40 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 106·03 | 0·00 |
| 170·00 | 25·52 | 15·30 | 0·00 | 14·50 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 112·43 | 0·00 |

*Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988*
*South Tyneside LA*
*Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11*

| Earnings head | Tax | NI | FIS | Child benefit | Rent | Rent rebate | Rates | Rate rebate | Fares to work | Free school meals | Free welfare milk | Net inc. after housing costs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60·00 | 0·00 | 3·00 | 32·90 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 16·84 | 8·08 | 5·98 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 110·15 |
| 70·00 | 0·00 | 4·90 | 30·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 14·94 | 8·08 | 5·37 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 113·34 |
| 80·00 | 1·22 | 5·60 | 25·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 13·69 | 8·08 | 4·97 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 114·77 |
| 90·00 | 3·92 | 6·30 | 20·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 12·44 | 8·08 | 4·57 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 114·72 |
| 100·00 | 6·62 | 7·00 | 15·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 11·19 | 8·08 | 4·17 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 114·67 |
| 110·00 | 9·32 | 9·90 | 10·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 9·80 | 8·08 | 3·68 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 112·19 |
| 120·00 | 12·02 | 10·80 | 5·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 8·15 | 8·08 | 3·03 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 111·29 |
| 130·00 | 14·72 | 11·70 | 0·50 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 6·50 | 8·08 | 2·38 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 1·83 | 110·39 |
| 140·00 | 17·42 | 12·60 | 0·00 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 3·36 | 8·08 | 1·14 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 0·00 | 110·08 |
| 150·00 | 20·12 | 13·50 | 0·00 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 5·10 | 0·00 | 111·98 |
| 160·00 | 22·82 | 14·40 | 0·00 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 113·28 |
| 170·00 | 25·52 | 15·30 | 0·00 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 119·68 |

*New benefit system from April 1988*
*South Tyneside LA*
*Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11*

| Earnings head | Tax | NI | Family credit | Child benefit | Rent | Rent rebate | Rates | Rate rebate | Fares to work | Net inc. after housing costs | Difference between systems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60·00 | 0·00 | 3·00 | 51·72 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·90 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 100·12 | −10·03 |
| 70·00 | 0·00 | 4·90 | 46·05 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 101·65 | −11·69 |
| 80·00 | 1·22 | 5·60 | 40·39 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 104·07 | −10·70 |
| 90·00 | 3·92 | 6·30 | 35·77 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 106·05 | −8·67 |
| 100·00 | 6·62 | 7·00 | 31·15 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 108·03 | −6·64 |
| 110·00 | 9·32 | 9·90 | 28·07 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 109·35 | −2·84 |
| 120·00 | 12·02 | 10·80 | 23·59 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 111·27 | −0·02 |
| 130·00 | 14·72 | 11·70 | 19·11 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 113·19 | +2·80 |
| 140·00 | 17·42 | 12·60 | 14·63 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 115·11 | +5·03 |
| 150·00 | 20·12 | 13·50 | 10·15 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 117·03 | +5·05 |
| 160·00 | 22·82 | 14·40 | 5·67 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 118·95 | +5·67 |
| 170·00 | 25·52 | 15·30 | 1·19 | 21·75 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 120·87 | +1·19 |

*Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988*
*South Tyneside LA*
*Single person with 2 children aged 4 and 6*

| Earnings head | Tax | NI | FIS | Child benefit | Rent | Rent rebate | Rates | Rate rebate | Fares to work | Free school meals | Free welfare milk | Net inc. after housing costs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60·00 | 0·00 | 3·00 | 28·70 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 14·58 | 8·08 | 5·25 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 98·06 |
| 70·00 | 0·00 | 4·90 | 23·70 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 13·33 | 8·08 | 4·85 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 99·51 |
| 80·00 | 1·22 | 5·60 | 18·70 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 12·08 | 8·08 | 4·45 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 100·94 |
| 90·00 | 3·92 | 6·30 | 13·70 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 10·83 | 8·08 | 4·05 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 100·89 |
| 100·00 | 6·62 | 7·00 | 8·70 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 9·32 | 8·08 | 3·49 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 100·42 |
| 110·00 | 9·32 | 9·90 | 3·70 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 7·67 | 8·08 | 2·84 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 97·52 |
| 120·00 | 12·02 | 10·80 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 5·59 | 8·08 | 2·02 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 0·00 | 95·49 |

| Earnings head | Tax | NI | FIS | Child benefit | Rent | Rent rebate | Rates | Rate rebate | Fares to work | Free school meals | Free welfare milk | Net inc. after housing costs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 130·00 | 14·72 | 11·70 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 2·29 | 8·08 | 0·72 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 0·00 | 97·29 |
| 140·00 | 17·42 | 12·60 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 2·55 | 0·00 | 100·68 |
| 150·00 | 20·12 | 13·50 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 104·53 |
| 160·00 | 22·82 | 14·40 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 110·93 |
| 170·00 | 25·52 | 15·30 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 117·33 |

*New benefit system from April 1988*
*South Tyneside LA*
*Single person with 2 children aged 4 and 6*

| Earnings head | Tax | NI | Family credit | Child benefit | Rent | Rent rebate | Rates | Rate rebate | Fares to work | Net inc. after housing costs | Difference between systems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60·00 | 0·00 | 3·00 | 40·32 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 85·47 | −12·59 |
| 70·00 | 0·00 | 4·90 | 34·65 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 87·90 | −11·61 |
| 80·00 | 1·22 | 5·60 | 28·99 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 90·32 | −10·62 |
| 90·00 | 3·92 | 6·30 | 24·37 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 92·30 | −8·59 |
| 100·00 | 6·62 | 7·00 | 19·75 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 94·28 | −6·14 |
| 110·00 | 9·32 | 9·90 | 16·67 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 95·60 | −1·92 |
| 120·00 | 12·02 | 10·80 | 12·19 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 97·52 | +2·03 |
| 130·00 | 14·72 | 11·70 | 7·71 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 99·44 | +2·15 |
| 140·00 | 17·42 | 12·60 | 3·23 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 101·36 | +0·68 |
| 150·00 | 20·12 | 13·50 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 104·53 | 0·00 |
| 160·00 | 22·82 | 14·40 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 110·93 | 0·00 |
| 170·00 | 25·52 | 15·30 | 0·00 | 19·40 | 17·32 | 0·00 | 8·08 | 0·00 | 5·85 | 117·33 | 0·00 |

*Benefit system from April 1988*
*Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits" October 1987.*
*Average local authority rent and rates for South Tyneside lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6*

| | Income Support | Rent | Rates | Housing Benefit | CHB | FSM | FWM | Net weekly spending power | Difference between systems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *a.* Not working after one year on benefit | 45·35 | 17·32 | 8·08 | 23·84 | 19·40 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 66·27 | −1·88 |

| | Income support | Earnings | Tax | NI | Fares to work | Rent | Rates | Housing Benefit | CHB | FSM | FWM | Net weekly spending power | Difference between systems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *b.* Working part time earning £20 | 40·35 | 20·00 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 2·92 | 17·32 | 8·08 | 23·84 | 19·40 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 78·35 | +8·16 |
| *c.* Working part time earning £40 | 20·35 | 40·00 | 0·00 | 0·00 | 2·92 | 17·32 | 8·08 | 23·84 | 19·40 | 2·55 | 1·83 | 78·35 | +6·70 |

*Old tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates for South Tyneside and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988*
*Lone mother with 2 children aged 4 and 6*

| | (a) Not working after one year on benefit £ | (b) Working part time earning £20 £ | (c) Working part time earning £40 £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Supplementary benefit | 45·93 | 30·89 | 14·35 |
| Earnings | — | 20·00 | 40·00 |
| Tax | — | 0·00 | 0·00 |
| NI | — | 0·00 | 2·00 |
| Fares to work | — | 2·92 | 2·92 |
| Rent | 17·32 | 17·32 | 17·32 |
| Rates | 8·08 | 8·08 | 8·08 |
| Housing benefit | 23·84 | 23·84 | 23·84 |
| CHB | 19·40 | 19·40 | 19·40 |
| FSM | 2·55 | 2·55 | 2·55 |
| FWM | 1·83 | 1·83 | 1·83 |
| Net weekly spending power | 68·15 | 70·19 | 71·65 |

### Widows

45. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received concerning benefits for widows since the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moore** *[pursuant to the reply, 19 December 1988, column 123]:* I have been closely monitoring the operation of the social security reforms introduced by the Social Security Act 1986. An important part of those reforms was the restructuring of widows' benefits. The prime purpose of these changes was to focus help on older widows and widows with dependent children.

The Government believed then—and continue to believe—that the measures taken to change widows' benefit were right; over the years the needs of widows have changed dramatically. But the basic structure of widows' benefits have remained substantially unaltered for forty years, a period when there have been far reaching social changes. More women work than ever before and occupational pension cover for widows has grown significantly. The reforms concentrate help when and where it is most needed—immediately on bereavement and to provide continuing help to widows with children and older widows.

When the revised arrangements were introduced on 11 April 1988, some women whose husbands had died before that date lost their entitlement to widows' pension which they would have had under the old rules. Several such widows have taken cases to the social security commissioner. The commissioner's decisions on four of those cases were published earlier today. We are studying carefully the full legal implications and whether there is a need to appeal on any point. The commissioner decided in these cases that there was entitlement to widows' pension for those receiving widows' allowance but not for those receiving widowed mothers' allowance. I have decided however irrespective of the commissioner's decisions, on grounds of equity and fairness, to extend entitlement to women widowed before 11 April 1988 on the basis of the arrangements applying before that date. My decision will bring in those entitled to widowed mothers' allowance as well as widows' allowance.

As a consequence of my decision, entitlement to widows' pension will be extended to the following groups of women widowed before 11 April 1988.

(i) Women widowed when aged 40 or over but under 45 entitled to widows' allowance on 11 April 1988 (the group benefiting from the commissioner's decision). This group will now have entitlement to widows' pension.

(ii) Women widowed when aged 45 or over but under 55 entitled to widows' allowance on 11 April 1988. This group will now have entitlement to a higher rate of widows' pension.

(iii) Women entitled to widowed mothers' allowance on 11 April 1988 and who will be aged 40 or over but under 45 when their children cease to be dependent. This group will have entitlement to widows' pension.

(iv) Women entitled to widowed mothers' allowance on 11 April 1988 and who will be aged 45 or over but under 55 when their children cease to be dependent. This group will have entitlement to a higher rate of widows' pension.

There will be no changes to affect those women widowed after 11 April 1988.

My Department will be identifying and contacting the women affected in the next few weeks, and will be arranging payment as soon as possible. Any widow who thinks she may be affected and who has not been contacted within six weeks should get in touch with her local social security office. Over 20,000 women are expected to be affected by these changes at an estimated net cost to public funds of around £5 million in a full year. Payments will be made from the national insurance fund. The additional costs in the current year and 1989-90 will be met from the Reserve. It will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. I propose to bring forward an amendment to the Social Security Bill currently before the House as soon as practicable. This will also include provision to allow payment of benefit in cases beyond a 12-month period.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Vocational Qualifications

89. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in rationalising vocational qualifications.

**Mr. Cope:** The National Council for Vocational Qualifications, with the support of industry and the examining and awarding bodies, has established a four-level framework for national vocational qualifications (NVQ) and is making good progress in accrediting qualifications within that framework.

Qualifications are accredited only if they are based on nationally agreed standards of competence; they are then allocated to the appropriate NVQ level. This process is already producing a clearer and more comprehensible qualifications system, and has led in some areas to the replacement of several awards by a single NVQ.

So far, more than 80 qualifications from many sectors of industry and commerce have been accredited, and the council is on target to have levels one to four in place in all significant sectors of employment by 1991.

### TVEI

90. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to further develop and extend the technical and vocational education initiative.

**Mr. Cope:** All education authorities in the country are now participating in TVEI; 48 authorities are currently involved in extending the initiative to all their schools and colleges, 30 more authorities will begin their extension programmes in September 1989, and negotiations are continuing with a number of others. From this autumn, half a million students in more than 3,000 schools and colleges will be participating in TVEI.

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of *(a)* employees in employment, *(b)* self-employed, *(c)* persons on Government training schemes, and *(d)* Her Majesty's

forces each year at mid-year from 1979; and what was the increase each year in each case in numbers and by percentage.

**Mr. Lee:** The information is as follows:

*Work force in employment in Great Britain*

*Thousand. Seasonally adjusted*

| June each year | Employees in employment | | | Self-employed | | | Participants in work related government training programmes | | | Her Majesty's Forces | | | Work force in employment[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Net change since previous year | | Number | Net change since previous year | | Number | Net change since previous year | | Number | Net change since previous year | | Net change since previous year | |
| | | Number | Per cent. | | Number | Per cent. | | Number | Per cent. | | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. |
| 1979 | 22·611 | 365 | 2 | 1·842 | −1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 314 | −4 | −1 | 24·767 | 360 | 2 |
| 1980 | 22·432 | −179 | −1 | 1·950 | 108 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 323 | 9 | 3 | 24·706 | −61 | 0 |
| 1981 | 21·362 | −1·070 | −5 | 2·058 | 108 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 334 | 11 | 3 | 23·754 | −952 | −4 |
| 1982 | 20·896 | −466 | −2 | 2·109 | 51 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 324 | −10 | −3 | 23·329 | −425 | −2 |
| 1983 | 20·556 | −340 | −2 | 2·160 | 51 | 2 | 8 | — | — | 322 | −2 | −1 | 23·046 | −283 | −1 |
| 1984 | 20·729 | 173 | 1 | 2·435 | 275 | 13 | 168 | 160 | 2·000 | 326 | 4 | 1 | 23·658 | 612 | 3 |
| 1985 | 20·995 | 266 | 1 | 2·550 | 115 | 5 | 168 | 0 | 0 | 326 | 0 | 0 | 24·039 | 381 | 2 |
| 1986 | 21·079 | 84 | 0 | 2·567 | 17 | 1 | 218 | 50 | 30 | 322 | −4 | −1 | 24·184 | 145 | 1 |
| 1987 | 21·315 | 236 | 1 | 2·801 | 234 | 9 | 303 | 85 | 39 | 319 | −3 | −1 | 24·736 | 552 | 2 |
| 1988[1] | 21·597 | 282 | 1 | 2·925 | 124 | 4 | 335 | 32 | 11 | 316 | −3 | −1 | 25·172 | 436 | 2 |

[1] Self-employed figures for June 1988 are projections.

[2] The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's Forces and participants on work related Government training programmes.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of vacancies, both regionally and nationally, each month since January 1986; and what was the six-monthly change in percentage terms in each case.

**Mr. Lee:** The following information is also in the Library. The table shows the seasonally adjusted level of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres for each month since January 1986 by region and nationally, together with the percentage change compared with six months previously.

*Unfilled vacancies at jobcentres*

| | Unfilled vacancies (seasonally adjusted) | Percentage change compared with six months ago |
|---|---|---|
| *1986* | | |
| January | 60,330 | −2·8 |
| February | 63,460 | 1·9 |
| March | 64,410 | 5·0 |
| April | 65,250 | 4·5 |
| May | 63,960 | 3·8 |
| June | 68,280 | 14·5 |
| July | 72,380 | 20·0 |
| August | 75,480 | 18·9 |
| September | 76,710 | 19·1 |
| October | 78,790 | 20·8 |
| November | 80,820 | 26·4 |
| December | 80,170 | 17·4 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 81,760 | 13·0 |
| February | 80,180 | 6·2 |
| March | 82,360 | 7·4 |
| April | 83,540 | 6·0 |
| May | 87,200 | 7·9 |
| June | 87,920 | 9·7 |
| July | 90,460 | 10·6 |
| August | 90,690 | 13·1 |
| September | 94,220 | 14·4 |
| October | 101,040 | 20·9 |
| November | 107,060 | 22·8 |
| December | 102,330 | 16·4 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 100,680 | 11·3 |
| February | 100,380 | 10·7 |
| March | 98,500 | 4·5 |
| April | 101,520 | ·5 |
| May | 100,300 | −6·3 |
| June | 100,790 | −1·5 |
| July | 95,930 | −4·7 |
| August | 92,430 | −7·9 |
| September | 88,860 | −9·8 |
| October | 91,060 | −10·3 |
| November | 87,510 | −12·8 |
| December | 82,680 | −18·0 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 79,400 | −17·2 |
| *Greater London* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 24,960 | −5·5 |
| February | 26,240 | −0·5 |
| March | 27,190 | 5·1 |
| April | 27,360 | 5·8 |
| May | 27,750 | 7·9 |
| June | 28,440 | 14·3 |
| July | 30,530 | 22·3 |
| August | 32,430 | 23·6 |
| September | 32,630 | 20·0 |
| October | 33,360 | 21·9 |
| November | 34,500 | 24·3 |
| December | 34,650 | 21·8 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 35,700 | 16·9 |
| February | 35,520 | 9·5 |
| March | 35,620 | 9·2 |
| April | 35,810 | 7·3 |
| May | 36,310 | 5·2 |
| June | 36,250 | 4·6 |
| July | 37,740 | 5·7 |
| August | 36,950 | 4·0 |
| September | 38,530 | 8·2 |
| October | 40,960 | 14·4 |
| November | 43,160 | 18·9 |
| December | 40,440 | 11·6 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 38,640 | 2·4 |
| February | 36,580 | −1·0 |
| March | 34,290 | −11·0 |
| April | 35,130 | −14·2 |
| May | 34,350 | −20·4 |
| June | 33,550 | −17·0 |
| July | 30,450 | −21·2 |
| August | 29,400 | −19·6 |
| September | 27,770 | −19·0 |
| October | 29,010 | −17·4 |
| November | 28,550 | −16·9 |
| December | 28,430 | −15·3 |
| *1989* | | |

| | Unfilled vacancies (seasonally adjusted) | Percentage change compared with six months ago |
|---|---|---|
| January | 26,800 | −12·0 |
| *East Anglia* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 5,670 | −3·1 |
| February | 5,660 | −5·7 |
| March | 5,700 | −3·6 |
| April | 5,710 | −2·1 |
| May | 5,380 | −4·6 |
| June | 6,020 | 10·5 |
| July | 6,340 | 11·8 |
| August | 6,460 | 14·1 |
| September | 6,560 | 15·1 |
| October | 6,960 | 21·9 |
| November | 6,690 | 24·3 |
| December | 7,070 | 17·4 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 6,910 | 9·0 |
| February | 7,030 | 8·8 |
| March | 7,480 | 14·0 |
| April | 7,440 | 6·9 |
| May | 7,850 | 17·3 |
| June | 7,940 | 12·3 |
| July | 7,870 | 13·9 |
| August | 8,150 | 15·9 |
| September | 8,320 | 11·2 |
| October | 8,760 | 17·7 |
| November | 8,990 | 14·5 |
| December | 8,760 | 10·3 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 8,830 | 12·2 |
| February | 8,850 | 8·6 |
| March | 9,060 | 8·9 |
| April | 9,440 | 7·8 |
| May | 9,810 | 9·1 |
| June | 9,940 | 13·5 |
| July | 10,420 | 18·0 |
| August | 10,200 | 15·3 |
| September | 10,310 | 13·8 |
| October | 10,250 | 8·6 |
| November | 10,120 | 3·2 |
| December | 9,460 | −4·8 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 9,300 | −10·7 |
| *South West* | | |
| 1986 | | |
| January | 16,930 | 3·4 |
| February | 17,940 | 5·9 |
| March | 18,430 | 11·6 |
| April | 18,210 | 5·4 |
| May | 16,630 | −6·0 |
| June | 18,550 | 7·3 |
| July | 18,610 | 9·9 |
| August | 18,540 | 3·3 |
| September | 18,570 | 0·8 |
| October | 18,290 | 0·4 |
| November | 18,630 | 12·0 |
| December | 18,230 | −1·7 |
| 1987 | | |
| January | 18,320 | −1·6 |
| February | 18,390 | −0·8 |
| March | 18,980 | 2·2 |
| April | 19,300 | 5·5 |
| May | 20,980 | 12·6 |
| June | 20,150 | 10·5 |
| July | 19,200 | 4·8 |
| August | 19,620 | 6·7 |
| September | 19,970 | 5·2 |
| October | 20,880 | 8·2 |
| November | 20,230 | −3·6 |
| December | 20,060 | −0·4 |
| 1988 | | |
| January | 20,420 | 6·4 |
| February | 19,820 | 1·0 |
| March | 19,820 | −0·8 |
| April | 20,520 | −1·7 |
| May | 20,750 | 2·6 |
| June | 20,940 | 4·4 |
| July | 21,140 | 3·5 |
| August | 20,160 | 1·7 |
| September | 20,200 | 1·9 |
| October | 20,600 | 0·4 |
| November | 19,870 | −4·2 |
| December | 20,170 | −3·7 |
| 1989 | | |
| January | 20,000 | −5·4 |
| *West Midlands* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 13,180 | 12·9 |
| February | 13,540 | 12·3 |
| March | 14,140 | 13·4 |
| April | 13,730 | 6·0 |
| May | 13,960 | 8·2 |
| June | 15,020 | 15·9 |
| July | 15,910 | 20·7 |
| August | 17,230 | 27·3 |
| September | 16,530 | 16·9 |
| October | 17,140 | 24·8 |
| November | 16,990 | 21·7 |
| December | 17,350 | 15·5 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 17,590 | 10·6 |
| February | 18,130 | 5·2 |
| March | 18,330 | 10·9 |
| April | 18,560 | 8·3 |
| May | 20,570 | 21·1 |
| June | 20,950 | 20·7 |
| July | 21,450 | 21·9 |
| August | 21,930 | 21·0 |
| September | 22,740 | 24·1 |
| October | 24,370 | 31·3 |
| November | 24,750 | 20·3 |
| December | 24,190 | 15·5 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 24,370 | 13·6 |
| February | 24,400 | 11·3 |
| March | 24,010 | 5·6 |
| April | 24,020 | −1·4 |
| May | 23,570 | −4·8 |
| June | 23,820 | −1·5 |
| July | 23,720 | −2·7 |
| August | 22,910 | −6·1 |
| September | 22,960 | −4·4 |
| October | 25,370 | 5·6 |
| November | 25,270 | 7·2 |
| December | 24,760 | 3·9 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 23,110 | −2·6 |
| *East Midlands* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 9,590 | 5·3 |
| February | 9,790 | 8·7 |
| March | 9,890 | 10·4 |
| April | 9,910 | 9·3 |
| May | 9,510 | 3·4 |
| June | 9,940 | 6·4 |
| July | 10,490 | 9·4 |
| August | 10,830 | 10·6 |
| September | 10,690 | 8·1 |
| October | 11,170 | 12·7 |

| | Unfilled vacancies (seasonally adjusted) | Percentage change compared with six months ago |
|---|---|---|
| November | 11,220 | 18·0 |
| December | 10,810 | 8·8 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 10,950 | 4·4 |
| February | 11,090 | 2·4 |
| March | 19,900 | 2·0 |
| April | 11,670 | 4·5 |
| May | 12,720 | 13·4 |
| June | 12,500 | 15·6 |
| July | 12,350 | 12·8 |
| August | 12,410 | 11·9 |
| September | 12,750 | 17·0 |
| October | 13,150 | 12·7 |
| November | 12,880 | 1·3 |
| December | 12,740 | 1·9 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 12,730 | 3·1 |
| February | 13,010 | 4·8 |
| March | 13,180 | 3·4 |
| April | 13,750 | 4·6 |
| May | 13,890 | 7·8 |
| June | 14,030 | 10·1 |
| July | 13,750 | 8·0 |
| August | 13,580 | 4·4 |
| September | 13,860 | 5·2 |
| October | 14,630 | 6·4 |
| November | 14,360 | 3·4 |
| December | 14,190 | 1·1 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 13,920 | 1·2 |
| *Yorkshire and Humberside* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 9,350 | 0·5 |
| February | 9,330 | 9·0 |
| March | 9,410 | 9·3 |
| April | 9,640 | 13·5 |
| May | 10,320 | 18·9 |
| June | 11,310 | 22·4 |
| July | 11,720 | 25·3 |
| August | 12,370 | 32·6 |
| September | 12,460 | 32·4 |
| October | 13,270 | 37·7 |
| November | 13,620 | 32·0 |
| December | 13,220 | 16·9 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 13,860 | 18·3 |
| February | 14,230 | 15·0 |
| March | 14,980 | 20·2 |
| April | 14,960 | 12·7 |
| May | 15,800 | 16·0 |
| June | 15,660 | 18·5 |
| July | 15,290 | 10·3 |
| August | 15,710 | 10·8 |
| September | 16,230 | 8·3 |
| October | 17,010 | 13·7 |
| November | 16,840 | 6·6 |
| December | 16,400 | 4·7 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 15,910 | 4·1 |
| February | 15,850 | 0·5 |
| March | 15,690 | −3·3 |
| April | 15,730 | −7·5 |
| May | 15,110 | −10·3 |
| June | 15,140 | −7·7 |
| July | 15,210 | −4·4 |
| August | 15,030 | −5·2 |
| September | 15,340 | −2·2 |
| October | 16,340 | 3·9 |
| November | 15,440 | 2·2 |
| December | 14,880 | −1·7 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 14,420 | −5·2 |
| *North West* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 16,820 | 7·5 |
| February | 17,820 | 12·5 |
| March | 17,480 | 5·2 |
| April | 17,440 | 3·9 |
| May | 17,330 | 4·9 |
| June | 18,780 | 12·1 |
| July | 19,400 | 15·3 |
| August | 19,810 | 11·2 |
| September | 19,630 | 12·3 |
| October | 20,810 | 19·3 |
| November | 21,330 | 23·1 |
| December | 21,660 | 15·3 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 21,970 | 13·2 |
| February | 21,550 | 8·8 |
| March | 22,580 | 15·0 |
| April | 23,030 | 10·7 |
| May | 24,220 | 13·5 |
| June | 24,500 | 13·1 |
| July | 24,970 | 13·7 |
| August | 25,060 | 16·3 |
| September | 25,070 | 11·0 |
| October | 26,820 | 16·5 |
| November | 26,310 | 8·6 |
| December | 23,720 | −3·2 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 22,410 | −10·3 |
| February | 22,170 | −11·5 |
| March | 23,930 | −4·5 |
| April | 23,950 | −10·7 |
| May | 24,000 | −8·8 |
| June | 23,910 | 0·8 |
| July | 23,250 | 3·7 |
| August | 22,920 | 3·4 |
| September | 23,420 | −2·1 |
| October | 25,770 | 7·6 |
| November | 25,820 | 7·6 |
| December | 24,670 | 3·2 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 22,840 | −1·8 |
| *Northern* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 8,240 | 3·78 |
| February | 8,600 | 12·27 |
| March | 8,800 | 8·11 |
| April | 8,770 | 8·54 |
| May | 8,910 | 10·14 |
| June | 9,250 | 16·65 |
| July | 9,780 | 18·69 |
| August | 10,530 | 22·44 |
| September | 10,610 | 20·57 |
| October | 11,320 | 29·08 |
| November | 11,600 | 30·19 |
| December | 11,330 | 22·49 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 11,560 | 18·20 |
| February | 11,280 | 7·12 |
| March | 11,270 | 6·22 |
| April | 11,650 | 2·92 |
| May | 11,720 | 1·03 |
| June | 12,130 | 7·06 |
| July | 12,260 | 6·06 |
| August | 12,190 | 8·07 |
| September | 12,170 | 7·99 |
| October | 12,700 | 9·01 |

| | Unfilled vacancies (seasonally adjusted) | Percentage change compared with six months ago |
|---|---|---|
| November | 12,800 | 9·22 |
| December | 12,080 | −0·41 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 11,460 | −6·53 |
| February | 11,520 | −5·50 |
| March | 11,590 | −4·77 |
| April | 11,680 | −8·03 |
| May | 11,680 | −8·75 |
| June | 11,860 | −1·82 |
| July | 11,230 | −2·01 |
| August | 10,780 | −6·42 |
| September | 10,560 | −8·89 |
| October | 11,480 | −1·71 |
| November | 11,260 | −3·60 |
| December | 11,630 | −1·94 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 11,190 | −0·36 |
| *Wales* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 8,510 | 5·32 |
| February | 8,430 | 6·04 |
| March | 8,790 | 11·83 |
| April | 8,670 | 7·17 |
| May | 8,750 | 6·71 |
| June | 9,110 | 7·18 |
| July | 9,660 | 13·51 |
| August | 10,090 | 19·69 |
| September | 10,400 | 18·32 |
| October | 10,770 | 24·22 |
| November | 10,200 | 16·57 |
| December | 10,490 | 15·15 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 10,510 | 8·80 |
| February | 10,820 | 7·23 |
| March | 10,280 | −1·15 |
| April | 10,230 | −5·01 |
| May | 10,510 | 3·04 |
| June | 11,530 | 9·91 |
| July | 10,990 | 4·57 |
| August | 11,140 | 2·96 |
| September | 11,270 | 9·63 |
| October | 12,340 | 20·63 |
| November | 11,810 | 12·37 |
| December | 11,110 | −3·64 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 11,200 | 1·91 |
| February | 11,180 | 0·36 |
| March | 11,060 | −1·86 |
| April | 11,940 | −3·24 |
| May | 12,640 | 7·03 |
| June | 12,400 | 11·61 |
| July | 12,480 | 11·43 |
| August | 12,130 | 8·50 |
| September | 12,130 | 9·67 |
| October | 12,430 | 4·10 |
| November | 12,640 | 0·00 |
| December | 12,360 | −0·32 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 12,140 | −2·72 |
| *Scotland* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 14,320 | −1·58 |
| February | 14,940 | 4·6 |
| March | 15,780 | 8·1 |
| April | 15,740 | 6·0 |
| May | 15,880 | 9·7 |
| June | 16,990 | 21·9 |
| July | 17,430 | 21·7 |
| August | 17,280 | 15·7 |
| September | 16,930 | 7·3 |
| October | 16,360 | 3·9 |
| November | 16,660 | 4·9 |
| December | 16,750 | −1·4 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 17,470 | 0·2 |
| February | 17,640 | 2·1 |
| March | 17,910 | 5·8 |
| April | 17,230 | 5·3 |
| May | 18,050 | 8·3 |
| June | 18,340 | 9·5 |
| July | 18,430 | 5·5 |
| August | 18,660 | 5·8 |
| September | 19,460 | 8·7 |
| October | 20,590 | 19·5 |
| November | 20,950 | 16·1 |
| December | 20,610 | 12·4 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 19,630 | 6·5 |
| February | 19,490 | 4·4 |
| March | 19,750 | 1·5 |
| April | 20,600 | 0·0 |
| May | 20,060 | −4·2 |
| June | 19,630 | −4·8 |
| July | 19,790 | 0·8 |
| August | 19,970 | 2·5 |
| September | 20,040 | 1·5 |
| October | 20,550 | −0·2 |
| November | 20,010 | −0·2 |
| December | 20,500 | 4·4 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 19,910 | 0·6 |
| *Great Britain* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 162,940 | 1·5 |
| February | 169,500 | 5·6 |
| March | 172,840 | 7·3 |
| April | 173,070 | 5·6 |
| May | 170,640 | 4·7 |
| June | 183,240 | 13·8 |
| July | 191,700 | 17·7 |
| August | 198,620 | 17·2 |
| September | 199,080 | 15·2 |
| October | 204,880 | 18·4 |
| November | 207,760 | 21·8 |
| December | 207,070 | 13·0 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 210,900 | 10·0 |
| February | 210,350 | 5·9 |
| March | 215,070 | 8·0 |
| April | 217,600 | 6·2 |
| May | 229,640 | 10·5 |
| June | 231,620 | 11·9 |
| July | 233,280 | 10·6 |
| August | 235,610 | 12·0 |
| September | 242,200 | 12·6 |
| October | 257,660 | 18·4 |
| November | 262,610 | 14·4 |
| December | 251,990 | 8·8 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 247,640 | 6·2 |
| February | 246,680 | 4·7 |
| March | 246,590 | 1·8 |
| April | 253,140 | −1·8 |
| May | 251,810 | −4·1 |
| June | 252,480 | 0·2 |
| July | 246,930 | −0·3 |
| August | 240,110 | −2·7 |
| September | 237,650 | −3·6 |
| October | 248,460 | −1·8 |

| | *Unfilled vacancies (seasonally adjusted)* | *Percentage change compared with six months ago* |
|---|---|---|
| November | 242,290 | −3·8 |
| December | 235,300 | −6·8 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 226,200 | −8·4 |
| *Northern Ireland* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 1,791 | 9·9 |
| February | 1,907 | 20·9 |
| March | 1,915 | 16·4 |
| April | 2,069 | 27·4 |
| May | 2,007 | 22·6 |
| June | 1,992 | 17·2 |
| July | 2,032 | 13·5 |
| August | 2,128 | 11·6 |
| September | 2,114 | 10·4 |
| October | 2,118 | 2·4 |
| November | 2,130 | 6·1 |
| December | 1,925 | −3·4 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 2,010 | −1·1 |
| February | 1,990 | −6·5 |
| March | 1,963 | −7·1 |
| April | 1,981 | −6·5 |
| May | 1,992 | −6·5 |
| June | 2,031 | 5·5 |
| July | 2,021 | 0·5 |
| August | 2,089 | 5·0 |
| September | 2,191 | 11·6 |
| October | 2,246 | 13·4 |
| November | 2,449 | 22·9 |
| December | 2,937 | 44·6 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 3,134 | 55·1 |
| February | 2,871 | 37·4 |
| March | 2,799 | 27·7 |
| April | 2,801 | 24·7 |
| May | 2,651 | 8·2 |
| June | 2,619 | −10·8 |
| July | 2,725 | −13·1 |
| August | 2,639 | −8·1 |
| September | 2,625 | −6·2 |
| October | 2,695 | −3·8 |
| November | 2,863 | 8·0 |
| December | 2,993 | 14·3 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 2,989 | 9·7 |
| *United Kingdom* | | |
| *1986* | | |
| January | 164,731 | 1·6 |
| February | 171,407 | 5·7 |
| March | 174,755 | 7·4 |
| April | 175,139 | 5·8 |
| May | 172,647 | 4·8 |
| June | 185,232 | 13·8 |
| July | 193,732 | 17·6 |
| August | 200,748 | 17·1 |
| September | 201,194 | 15·1 |
| October | 206,998 | 18·2 |
| November | 209,890 | 21·6 |
| December | 208,995 | 12·8 |
| *1987* | | |
| January | 212,910 | 9·9 |
| February | 212,340 | 5·8 |
| March | 217,033 | 7·9 |
| April | 219,581 | 6·1 |
| May | 231,632 | 10·4 |
| June | 233,651 | 11·8 |
| July | 235,301 | 10·5 |
| August | 237,699 | 11·9 |
| September | 244,391 | 12·6 |
| October | 259,906 | 18·4 |
| November | 265,059 | 14·4 |
| December | 254,927 | 9·1 |
| *1988* | | |
| January | 250,774 | 6·6 |
| February | 249,551 | 5·0 |
| March | 249,389 | 2·0 |
| April | 255,941 | −1·5 |
| May | 254,461 | −4·0 |
| June | 255,099 | 0·1 |
| July | 249,655 | −0·4 |
| August | 242,749 | −2·7 |
| September | 240,275 | −3·7 |
| October | 251,155 | −1·9 |
| November | 245,153 | −3·7 |
| December | 238,293 | −6·6 |
| *1989* | | |
| January | 229,229 | −8·2 |

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the increase in employment each quarter since January 1980; what was the percentage change for *(a)* each quarter and *(b)* each year; and how many jobs in each quarter were (i) full-time male, (ii) full-time female, (iii) part-time male and (iv) part-time female.

**Mr. Lee:** The available information is as follows:

*Work force in employment in Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)*

| | *Work force in employment* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Males* | | | *Females* | | |
| | *Full-time Thousands* | *Part-time*[1] *Thousands* | *All Thousands* | *Full-time Thousands* | *Part-time Thousands* | *All Thousands* |
| December 1979 | [2] | [2] | 15,006 | 5,827 | 4,053 | 9,880 |
| March 1980 | [2] | [2] | 14,958 | 5,777 | 4,089 | 9,866 |
| June 1980 | 14,030 | 856 | 14,886 | 5,711 | 4,109 | 9,819 |
| September 1980 | [2] | [2] | 14,731 | 5,663 | 4,075 | 9,738 |
| December 1980 | [2] | [2] | 14,558 | 5,589 | 4,058 | 9,647 |
| March 1981 | [2] | [2] | 14,387 | 5,532 | 4,047 | 9,579 |
| June 1981 | 13,390 | 843 | 14,232 | 5,480 | 4,041 | 9,521 |
| September 1981 | [2] | [2] | 14,118 | 5,458 | 4,054 | 9,512 |
| December 1981 | [2] | [2] | 14,012 | 5,425 | 4,052 | 9,478 |
| March 1982 | [2] | [2] | 13,957 | 5,449 | 4,029 | 9,478 |
| June 1982 | 13,016 | 869 | 13,885 | 5,420 | 4,023 | 9,443 |
| September 1982 | [2] | [2] | 13,810 | 5,369 | 4,023 | 9,392 |
| December 1982 | [2] | [2] | 13,721 | 5,366 | 3,974 | 9,340 |
| March 1983 | 12,795 | 868 | 13,663 | 5,357 | 3,977 | 9,334 |
| June 1983 | 12,740 | 895 | 13,635 | 5,378 | 4,032 | 9,411 |

*Work force in employment*

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time* Thousands | *Part-time*[1] Thousands | *All* Thousands | *Full-time* Thousands | *Part-time* Thousands | *All* Thousands |
| September 1983 | 12,762 | 982 | 13,744 | 5,417 | 4,143 | 9,560 |
| December 1983 | 12,762 | 1,039 | 13,801 | 5,459 | 4,212 | 9,670 |
| March 1984 | 12,802 | 1,030 | 12,832 | 5,496 | 4,237 | 9,733 |
| June 1984 | 12,830 | 1,045 | 13,875 | 5,523 | 4,260 | 9,783 |
| September 1984 | 12,882 | 1,048 | 13,930 | 5,558 | 4,296 | 9,854 |
| December 1984 | 12,917 | 1,077 | 13,994 | 5,570 | 4,344 | 9,914 |
| March 1985 | 12,953 | 1,062 | 14,015 | 5,605 | 4,357 | 9,962 |
| June 1985 | 12,944 | 1,086 | 14,029 | 5,623 | 4,387 | 10,010 |
| September 1985 | 12,953 | 1,096 | 14,049 | 5,636 | 4,448 | 10,084 |
| December 1985 | 12,935 | 1,112 | 14,047 | 5,643 | 4,456 | 10,099 |
| March 1986 | 12,918 | 1,086 | 14,004 | 5,647 | 4,482 | 10,128 |
| June 1986 | 12,861 | 1,138 | 13,999 | 5,647 | 4,539 | 10,186 |
| September 1986 | 12,879 | 1,167 | 14,046 | 5,672 | 4,604 | 10,276 |
| December 1986 | 12,860 | 1,198 | 14,059 | 5,706 | 4,654 | 10,359 |
| March 1987 | 12,899 | 1,201 | 14,100 | 5,723 | 4,696 | 10,418 |
| June 1987 | 12,938 | 1,263 | 14,201 | 5,777 | 4,758 | 10,535 |
| September 1987 | 12,973 | 1,306 | 14,279 | 5,808 | 4,806 | 10,614 |
| December 1987 | 12,971 | 1,343 | 14,314 | 5,858 | 4,847 | 10,705 |
| March 1988 | 13,029 | 1,330 | 14,359 | 5,892 | 4,882 | 10,774 |
| June 1988 | 13,007 | 1,356 | 14,363 | 5,910 | 4,899 | 10,809 |
| September 1988 | 13,035 | 1,358 | 14,393 | 5,966 | 4,934 | 10,899 |

[1] Part-time male figures are not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Unavailable.

*Work force in employment in Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)*

*Net change over previous quarter*

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time* Thousands | *Part-time*[1] Thousands | *All* Thousands | *Full-time* Thousands | *Part-time* Thousands | *All* Thousands |
| December 1979 | [2] | [2] | 0 | 6 | 35 | 41 |
| March 1980 | [2] | [2] | −47 | −51 | 36 | −14 |
| June 1980 | [2] | [2] | −72 | −66 | 19 | −46 |
| September 1980 | [2] | [2] | −155 | −48 | −33 | −81 |
| December 1980 | [2] | [2] | −173 | −74 | −17 | −92 |
| March 1981 | [2] | [2] | −172 | −56 | −11 | −67 |
| June 1981 | [2] | [2] | −154 | −52 | −6 | −58 |
| September 1981 | [2] | [2] | −114 | −22 | 13 | −9 |
| December 1981 | [2] | [2] | −106 | −33 | −2 | −35 |
| March 1982 | [2] | [2] | −55 | 24 | −23 | 0 |
| June 1982 | [2] | [2] | −72 | −29 | −5 | −34 |
| September 1982 | [2] | [2] | −75 | −51 | −1 | −51 |
| December 1982 | [2] | [2] | −90 | −4 | −49 | −52 |
| March 1983 | [2] | [2] | −57 | −9 | 3 | −6 |
| June 1983 | −55 | 27 | −28 | 21 | 55 | 77 |
| September 1983 | 22 | 87 | 109 | 38 | 111 | 149 |
| December 1983 | 0 | 57 | 57 | 42 | 68 | 110 |
| March 1984 | 40 | −9 | 31 | 37 | 26 | 63 |
| June 1984 | 28 | 15 | 43 | 27 | 23 | 50 |
| September 1984 | 52 | 3 | 55 | 35 | 36 | 71 |
| December 1984 | 35 | 29 | 64 | 12 | 48 | 59 |
| March 1985 | 36 | −16 | 21 | 35 | 13 | 49 |
| June 1985 | −10 | 24 | 14 | 17 | 30 | 48 |
| September 1985 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 14 | 61 | 74 |
| December 1985 | −18 | 16 | −2 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| March 1986 | −16 | −28 | −43 | 4 | 26 | 29 |
| June 1986 | −57 | 52 | −6 | 0 | 57 | 57 |
| September 1986 | 18 | 30 | 47 | 25 | 65 | 90 |
| December 1986 | −18 | 31 | 13 | 34 | 50 | 84 |
| March 1987 | 39 | 3 | 42 | 17 | 42 | 59 |
| June 1987 | 39 | 62 | 101 | 54 | 62 | 117 |
| September 1987 | 34 | 43 | 78 | 31 | 48 | 79 |
| December 1987 | −2 | 37 | 35 | 50 | 41 | 92 |
| March 1988 | 58 | −13 | 45 | 34 | 35 | 89 |
| June 1988 | −22 | 26 | 4 | 18 | 17 | 35 |
| September 1988 | 28 | 2 | 30 | 56 | 35 | 91 |

[1] Part-time male figures are not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Unavailable.

*Work force in employment in Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)*

*Percentage change over previous quarter*

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time per cent.* | *Part-time[1] per cent.* | *All per cent.* | *Full-time per cent.* | *Part-time per cent.* | *All per cent.* |
| December 1979 | [2] | [2] | 0·0 | 0·1 | 0·9 | 0·4 |
| March 1980 | [2] | [2] | −0·3 | −0·9 | 0·9 | −0·1 |
| June 1980 | [2] | [2] | −0·5 | −1·1 | 0·5 | −0·5 |
| September 1980 | [2] | [2] | −1·0 | −0·8 | −0·8 | −0·8 |
| December 1980 | [2] | [2] | −1·2 | −1·3 | −0·4 | −0·9 |
| March 1981 | [2] | [2] | −1·2 | −1·0 | −0·3 | −0·7 |
| June 1981 | [2] | [2] | −1·1 | −0·9 | −0·1 | −0·6 |
| September 1981 | [2] | [2] | −0·8 | −0·4 | 0·3 | −0·1 |
| December 1981 | [2] | [2] | −0·8 | −0·6 | 0·0 | −0·4 |
| March 1982 | [2] | [2] | −0·4 | 0·4 | −0·6 | 0·0 |
| June 1982 | [2] | [2] | −0·5 | −0·5 | −0·1 | −0·4 |
| September 1982 | [2] | [2] | −0·5 | −0·9 | 0·0 | −0·5 |
| December 1982 | [2] | [2] | −0·6 | −0·1 | −1·2 | −0·6 |
| March 1983 | [2] | [2] | −0·4 | −0·2 | 0·1 | −0·1 |
| June 1983 | −0·4 | 3·2 | −0·2 | 0·4 | 1·4 | 0·8 |
| September 1983 | 0·2 | 9·7 | 0·8 | 0·7 | 2·7 | 1·6 |
| December 1983 | 0·0 | 5·8 | 0·4 | 0·8 | 1·7 | 1·2 |
| March 1984 | 0·3 | −0·9 | 0·2 | 0·7 | 0·6 | 0·7 |
| June 1984 | 0·2 | 1·5 | 0·3 | 0·5 | 0·5 | 0·5 |
| September 1984 | 0·4 | 0·3 | 0·4 | 0·6 | 0·8 | 0·7 |
| December 1984 | 0·3 | 2·8 | 0·5 | 0·2 | 1·1 | 0·6 |
| March 1985 | 0·3 | −1·4 | 0·1 | 0·6 | 0·3 | 0·5 |
| June 1985 | −0·1 | 2·2 | 0·1 | 0·3 | 0·7 | 0·5 |
| September 1985 | 0·1 | 1·0 | 0·1 | 0·2 | 1·4 | 0·7 |
| December 1985 | −0·1 | 1·5 | 0·0 | 0·1 | 0·2 | 0·1 |
| March 1986 | −0·1 | −2·3 | −0·3 | 0·1 | 0·6 | 0·3 |
| June 1986 | −0·4 | 4·8 | 0·0 | 0·0 | 1·3 | 0·8 |
| September 1986 | 0·1 | 2·6 | 0·3 | 0·4 | 1·4 | 0·9 |
| December 1986 | −0·1 | 2·7 | 0·1 | 0·6 | 1·1 | 0·8 |
| March 1987 | 0·3 | 0·2 | 0·3 | 0·3 | 0·9 | 0·6 |
| June 1987 | 0·3 | 5·1 | 0·7 | 0·9 | 1·3 | 1·1 |
| September 1987 | 0·3 | 3·4 | 0·5 | 0·5 | 1·0 | 0·7 |
| December 1987 | 0·0 | 2·8 | 0·2 | 0·9 | 0·9 | 0·9 |
| March 1988 | 0·4 | −1·0 | 0·3 | 0·6 | 0·7 | 0·6 |
| June 1988 | −0·2 | 2·0 | 0·0 | 0·3 | 0·3 | 0·3 |
| September 1988 | 0·2 | 0·1 | 0·2 | 0·9 | 0·7 | 0·8 |

[1] Part-time male figures are not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Unavailable.

*Work force in employment in Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)*

*Work force in employment*

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time Thousands* | *Part-time[1] Thousands* | *All Thousands* | *Full-time Thousands* | *Part-time Thousands* | *All Thousands* |
| December 1979 | [2] | [2] | 47 | [2] | [2] | 182 |
| March 1980 | [2] | [2] | −3 | [2] | [2] | 128 |
| June 1980 | −105 | 22 | −83 | −104 | 126 | 22 |
| September 1980 | [2] | [2] | −274 | −158 | 58 | −100 |
| December 1980 | [2] | [2] | −447 | −239 | 5 | −233 |
| March 1981 | [2] | [2] | −572 | −244 | −42 | −286 |
| June 1981 | −640 | −14 | −654 | −230 | −68 | −298 |
| September 1981 | [2] | [2] | −613 | −205 | −21 | −226 |
| December 1981 | [2] | [2] | −547 | −164 | −6 | −169 |
| March 1982 | [2] | [2] | −430 | −84 | −18 | −102 |
| June 1982 | −374 | 27 | −347 | −60 | −18 | −78 |
| September 1982 | [2] | [2] | −308 | −89 | −32 | −120 |
| December 1982 | [2] | [2] | −291 | −59 | −78 | −138 |
| March 1983 | [2] | [2] | −294 | −92 | −52 | −144 |
| June 1983 | −276 | 26 | −250 | −41 | 9 | −33 |
| September 1983 | [2] | [2] | −66 | 47 | 121 | 168 |
| December 1983 | [2] | [2] | 80 | 93 | 238 | 330 |
| March 1984 | 7 | 162 | 169 | 139 | 260 | 399 |
| June 1984 | 90 | 150 | 240 | 145 | 228 | 372 |
| September 1984 | 120 | 66 | 186 | 141 | 153 | 294 |
| December 1984 | 155 | 38 | 193 | 111 | 132 | 243 |
| March 1985 | 151 | 32 | 183 | 109 | 120 | 229 |
| June 1985 | 113 | 41 | 154 | 99 | 127 | 227 |
| September 1985 | 71 | 48 | 119 | 78 | 152 | 230 |
| December 1985 | 18 | 35 | 53 | 73 | 112 | 185 |
| March 1986 | −35 | 24 | −11 | 41 | 125 | 166 |
| June 1986 | −83 | 52 | −31 | 24 | 152 | 178 |
| September 1986 | −75 | 71 | −3 | 35 | 156 | 191 |

*Work force in employment*

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time* Thousands | *Part-time*[1] Thousands | *All* Thousands | *Full-time* Thousands | *Part-time* Thousands | *All* Thousands |
| December 1986 | −75 | 86 | 12 | 63 | 198 | 261 |
| March 1987 | −19 | 115 | 96 | 76 | 214 | 290 |
| June 1987 | 77 | 125 | 203 | 130 | 219 | 349 |
| September 1987 | 94 | 138 | 233 | 136 | 202 | 338 |
| December 1987 | 111 | 145 | 255 | 152 | 194 | 346 |
| March 1988 | 129 | 129 | 258 | 169 | 186 | 356 |
| June 1988 | 68 | 93 | 162 | 133 | 141 | 274 |
| September 1988 | 62 | 52 | 114 | 158 | 128 | 286 |

[1] Part-time male figures are not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Unavailable.

*Workforce in employment in Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)*
*Percentage change over previous year*

*(Per cent.)*

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time* | *Part-time*[1] | *All* | *Full-time* | *Part-time* | *All* |
| December 1979 | [2] | [2] | 0·3 | [2] | [2] | 1·9 |
| March 1980 | [2] | [2] | 0 | [2] | [2] | 1·3 |
| June 1980 | −0·7 | 2·6 | −0·6 | −1·8 | 3·2 | 0·2 |
| September 1980 | [2] | [2] | −1·8 | −2·7 | 1·4 | −1·0 |
| December 1980 | [2] | [2] | −3·0 | −4·1 | 0·1 | −2·4 |
| March 1981 | [2] | [2] | −3·8 | −4·2 | −1·0 | −2·9 |
| June 1981 | −4·6 | −1·6 | −4·4 | −4·0 | −1·5 | −3·0 |
| September 1981 | [2] | [2] | −4·2 | −3·6 | −0·5 | −2·3 |
| December 1981 | [2] | [2] | −3·8 | −2·9 | −0·1 | −1·8 |
| March 1982 | [2] | [2] | −3·0 | −1·5 | −0·4 | −1·1 |
| June 1982 | −2·8 | 3·2 | −2·4 | −1·1 | −0·4 | −0·8 |
| September 1982 | [2] | [2] | −2·2 | −1·6 | −0·8 | −1·3 |
| December 1982 | [2] | [2] | −2·1 | −1·1 | −1·9 | −1·5 |
| March 1983 | [2] | [2] | −2·1 | −1·7 | −1·3 | −1·5 |
| June 1983 | −2·1 | 3·0 | −1·8 | −0·8 | 0·2 | −0·3 |
| September 1983 | [2] | [2] | −0·5 | 0·9 | 3·0 | 1·8 |
| December 1983 | [2] | [2] | 0·6 | 1·7 | 6·0 | 3·5 |
| March 1984 | 0·1 | 18·7 | 1·2 | 2·6 | 6·5 | 4·3 |
| June 1984 | 0·7 | 16·7 | 1·8 | 2·7 | 5·7 | 4·0 |
| September 1984 | 0·9 | 6·7 | 1·4 | 2·6 | 3·7 | 3·1 |
| December 1984 | 1·2 | 3·7 | 1·4 | 2·0 | 3·1 | 2·5 |
| March 1985 | 1·2 | 3·1 | 1·3 | 2·0 | 2·8 | 2·4 |
| June 1985 | 0·8 | 3·9 | 1·1 | 1·8 | 3·0 | 2·3 |
| September 1985 | 0·6 | 4·6 | 0·9 | 1·4 | 3·5 | 2·3 |
| December 1985 | 0·1 | 3·2 | 0·4 | 1·3 | 2·6 | 1·9 |
| March 1986 | −0·3 | 2·3 | −0·1 | 0·7 | 2·9 | 1·7 |
| June 1986 | −0·6 | 4·8 | −0·2 | 0·4 | 3·5 | 1·8 |
| September 1986 | −0·6 | 6·5 | 0 | 0·6 | 3·5 | 1·9 |
| December 1986 | −0·6 | 7·8 | 0·1 | 1·1 | 4·4 | 2·6 |
| March 1987 | −0·1 | 10·6 | 0·7 | 1·3 | 4·8 | 2·9 |
| June 1987 | 0·6 | 11·0 | 1·4 | 2·3 | 4·8 | 3·4 |
| September 1987 | 0·7 | 11·9 | 1·7 | 2·4 | 4·4 | 3·3 |
| December 1987 | 0·9 | 12·1 | 1·8 | 2·7 | 4·2 | 3·3 |
| March 1988 | 1·0 | 10·7 | 1·8 | 3·0 | 4·0 | 3·4 |
| June 1988 | 0·5 | 7·4 | 1·1 | 2·3 | 3·0 | 2·6 |
| September 1988 | 0·5 | 4·0 | 0·8 | 2·7 | 2·7 | 2·7 |

[1] Part-time male figures are not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Unavailable.

## Loan Guarantee Scheme

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *464*, if there is any basis by which he is able to estimate the number and location of jobs created by the loan guarantee scheme; and on what basis the net Exchequer cost of £450 per job is estimated.

**Mr. Cope:** The geographical breakdown of guarantees issued under the loan guarantee scheme up to 31 January 1989 is as follows:

| | *Number of guarantees* | *Value £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| North East | 977 | 30·18 |
| North West | 2,679 | 82·25 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1,652 | 48·33 |
| West Midlands | 1,794 | 56·77 |
| East Midlands | 1,352 | 45·48 |
| South East | 7,778 | 280·55 |
| South West | 1,990 | 62·15 |
| Scotland | 1,533 | 46·79 |
| Wales | 1,010 | 31·56 |
| Northern Ireland | 278 | 10·01 |
| Total | 21,043 | 694·07 |

Information is not available that would permit reliable estimates of the number and location of jobs created to be estimated.

The net Exchequer cost is calculated by taking payments where guarantees are called, less premia received, and any later recoveries of guarantee payments. Deductions are made for savings in benefits and tax and national insurance payments in the first year after the loan is made, which are additional to those that would have occurred in the absence of the loan. The total number of additional jobs is estimated from surveys of loan recipients and banks such as that carried out last year by National Economic Research Associates.

### Maternity Leave

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to review the rules on maternity leave.

**Mr. Nicholls:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to bring British rules on maternity leave into line with European countries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nicholls:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. European countries have different arrangements for maternity leave/absence and associated rights according to their own priorities.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### EC Fishing Regulations

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has further to improve the enforcing of European Community fishing regulations; and how he intends to negotiate with other European Community Ministers to ensure a uniform enforcement within the Community.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Enforcement of Community fishing regulations by the United Kingdom is recognised as being of a standard which is one of the highest in the Community. The United Kingdom has also taken the lead in pressing for improvements in the enforcement performance of other member states, and will continue to do so. Largely due to our efforts, there have been real improvements in other member states over recent years, and Community rules in this area have also been strengthened. There is now a real penalty for member states if they overfish; the powers and complement of the Community inspectorate have been increased, and the council agree measures towards the end of last year which will improve enforcement in the case of vessels landing in a member state other than that in which it is registered. More recently the Commission has made a proposal which would provide Community funding to help improve member states' enforcement.

### Sheep Variable Premium

**Mr. Amos:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to resist the imposition of any headage limits as part of any replacement arrangements for the sheep variable premium scheme.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I shall continue to oppose the introduction of headage limits in the EC sheepmeat regime.

### Goat Milk

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans for goat milk production to be put under the same legislative control as dairy milk production.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 8 February at column *710*.

### Salmonella Enteritidis

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has plans to conduct or fund research into the development of a rapid, sensitive and specific test for salmonella enteritidis phage 4; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ryder** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* My Department has kept closely in touch with the development of a rapid, sensitive and specific test for salmonella enteritidis in the AFRC institute of food research, Norwich laboratory. The Department of Education and Science is funding the work which forms the basis of this test and my Department is working with the institute on further extensions of the technology.

Studies are also taking place at the central veterinary laboratory on the application of a whole-blood test in the field as a flock-screening test. This will be followed by work on laboratory tests such as ELISA and antiglobulin tests.

### Lindane and PCP

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the countries in the EEC which *(a)* ban Lindane and PCP and *(b)* allow Lindane and PCP to be used as wood preservatives (i) with restrictions and (ii) without restrictions.

**Mr. Nicholls:** I have been asked to reply.

Though it is not complete, information currently available to the Health and Safety Executive indicates that, in the European Community, wood preservatives containing PCP are banned in Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands and those containing Lindane in Italy and the Netherlands. I regret that full information on restrictions could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but the HSE knows of only one EC country, France, which is thought to place no restrictions. In the United Kingdom all wood preservatives are subject to the control of pesticides regulations.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 1 March 1989*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### "The Satanic Verses"

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite the Commission for Racial Equality and the local police community liaison committees set up under the Police and Criminal Justice Act to clarify to the leaders of ethnic minority groups that he has no power to ban the publication of Mr. Salman Rushdie's book, "The Satanic Verses."

**Mr. Hurd:** The Minister of State and I have taken every opportunity to explain the position directly to the Moslem communities. My impression is that their representatives are well aware that I have no power to ban the publication of Mr. Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses". I welcome the press statement by the Commission for Racial Equality, sent to all community relations councils, condemning the Ayatollah's statements, paying tribute to the way Moslems have adapted to the requirements of this country and calling for tolerance. I also welcome what the police are doing to explain the legal position to community leaders through various channels of communication; police community consultative groups are available for this purpose.

### Lynx Ltd.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate an inquiry into the charitable status of the company known as Lynx Ltd.

**Mr. John Patten:** I understand that Lynx Ltd. is not a charity.

### Remand Prisoners

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time spent in custody by prisoners awaiting trial, and what was the comparable figure for 1979.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The latest readily available information was published in table 2.1 of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1987" (Cm. 547), a copy of which is held in the Library.

### Complaints Against the Police

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year and by police force for each of the last five years the number of civil cases that have been taken out against the police and the number of cases that were proved; what was the disciplinary action taken; what compensation was paid out; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Information is available centrally only in respect of the Metropolitan police. For that force the available information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Awards made by the courts* | *Total amount paid* | *Settlements out of court* | *Total amount paid* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 7 | £15,617 | 37 | £162,986 |
| 1985 | 7 | £13,949 | 56 | £193,558 |
| 1986 | 10 | £46,836 | 52 | £330,332 |
| 1987 | 6 | £11,233 | 63 | £173,714 |
| 1988 | 17 | £107,035 | 49 | £250,556 |

Corresponding information for other forces, and details of any disciplinary action taken are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Mr. Eamonn John Wadley

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his correspondence with the hon. Member for Leyton concerning Mr. Eamonn John Wadley, if he will name the doctors who decided that he could be interrogated; if he will direct them to explain their reasons for disagreeing with Mr. Wadley's private doctor and the police surgeon who regarded such interrogation as not suitable because of Mr. Wadley's state of health; why they made their decision after Mr. Wadley's doctor and the police surgeon had left the scene; and if he will make a statement on his policy towards interrogation of individuals with a history of recurrent mental illness.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 lays down a statutory procedure for investigating complaints against police. Under this procedure it is open to Mr. Wadley to make a complaint, or for anyone else to do so on his behalf, if he considers that there was misconduct on the part of a police officer during the time he spent in police custody.

Guidance to the police on interviewing suspects who are mentally ill or mentally handicapped is contained in the code of practice for the Detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers, issued in accordance with the 1984 Act.

### Drugs

**Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the value of drugs seized by the police, for the most recent five years for which figures are available, in *(a)* Derby, *(b)* Preston, *(c)* Darlington, *(d)* Slough, *(e)* Luton and *(f)* Gloucester.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The information is not available in the form requested.

### Criminal Justice Legislation

**Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to publish the findings of the working group in connection with proposals for changes to criminal justice legislation.

**Mr. John Patten:** I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the working group set up last year to advise on changes in the law relating to the right of silence. My right hon. Friend expects to receive the working group's report around Easter, and to arrange publication thereafter.

### Animal Experiments

**Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library revised

tables 2 and 3 of the "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1987" (Cm. 515) relating to the number of procedures recorded under safety studies.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The errors are regretted. Revised copies of the tables have been placed in the Library today. Corrected figures will be published in the 1988 statistics in the middle of this year.

## Broadcasting (Gaelic and Welsh)

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of hours in *(a)* Gaelic and *(b)* Welsh broadcast by (i) BBC1 and BBC2 and (ii) ITV, C4 and S4C in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Renton** *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* The relevant broadcasting organisations have provided the following information. The figures given are for new programming only and do not include the significant number of repeat programmes shown in each category each year.

*Table 1*
*Transmission hours for Gaelic language programmes*

| | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BBC | 20·0 | 21·5 | 30·0 | 42·0 | 16·0 |
| Grampian[1 4] | 19·5 | 19·5 | 28·5 | 43·5 | 32·0 |
| Scottish Television[2 4] | 23·0 | 21·5 | 26·5 | 28·5 | 29·0 |
| TOTAL | 62·5 | 62·5 | 85·0 | 114·0 | 77·0 |

*Table 2*
*Transmission hours for Welsh language programmes—shown on S4C[3]*

| | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BBC | 443 | 495 | 568 | 466 | 546 |
| ITV | 400 | 442 | 508 | 454 | 480 |
| Independent producers | 192 | 184 | 206 | 217 | 253 |
| TOTAL | 1,035 | 1,121 | 1,282 | 1,137 | 1,279 |

[1] These figures include some material made by Scottish Television and broadcast by Grampian.
[2] These figures include some material made by Grampian television and broadcast by Scottish Television.
[3] S4C, the Welsh Fourth Language channel transmits programmes.
[4] ITV.

## Prisoners

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of people remanded in custody and classified as *(a)* white, *(b)* West Indian, Guyanese, African, *(c)* Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and *(d)* Chinese, Arab and mixed origin were given a non-custodial sentence during 1987, or for the latest date available;

(2) what percentage of prisoners who were remanded in custody and who were classified as *(a)* white, *(b)* West Indian, Guyanese, African, *(c)* Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and *(d)* Chinese, Arab and mixed origin were eventually acquitted or not proceeded with in 1987 and 1988.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* The information for 1986 is given in the table. The latest information, for 1987, is a less reliable guide because for a large proportion—one fifth—the outcome of court proceedings is not recorded.

*Persons received into prison service establishments in England and Wales as unsentenced prisoners: by outcome of court proceedings and ethnic origin, 1986*

*Percentage*

| *Outcome* | *White* | *West Indian, Guyanese, African* | *Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi* | *Chinese Arab Mixed Origin* | *Other, not recorded, refusal* | *All persons* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Found not guilty or not proceeded against | 4 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| Non-custodial or freed on rising | 31 | 28 | 24 | 31 | 33 | 30 |
| Received under sentence | 54 | 46 | 51 | 49 | 28 | 52 |
| Outcome not recorded | 12 | 18 | 16 | 13 | 34 | 13 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (Number of receptions) | (53,180) | (6,307) | (1,174) | (1,303) | (1,523) | (63,487) |

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the composition of the remand and sentenced prison population by ethnic background of *(a)* Holloway, *(b)* Brixton, *(c)* Wormwood scrubs, *(d)* Wandsworth, *(e)* Pentonville, *(f)* Birmingham, *(g)* Manchester and *(h)* Liverpool for the latest date available.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* The latest readily available information is given in the table.

*Population[1] of specified Prison Service establishments on 30 June 1988: by establishment, type of prisoner and ethnic origin* *Number*

| *Establishment and type of prisoner* | *White* | *West Indian, Guyanese, African* | *Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi* | *Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin* | *Other, not recorded, refusal* | *All origins* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Holloway: | | | | | | |
| Untried | 118 | 79 | 5 | 9 | 53 | 264 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 28 | 5 | — | 3 | 5 | 41 |
| Sentenced | 101 | 50 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 164 |
| Non-criminal | 2 | 1 | — | — | — | 3 |

| Establishment and type of prisoner | White | West Indian, Guyanese, African | Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi | Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin | Other, not recorded, refusal | All origins |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All prisoners | 249 | 135 | 7 | 17 | 64 | 472 |
| | | | Brixton: | | | |
| Untried | 411 | 156 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 613 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 113 | 40 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 167 |
| Sentenced | 226 | 59 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 301 |
| Non-criminal | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| All prisoners | 750 | 255 | 30 | 22 | 24 | 1,081 |
| | | | Wormwood Scrubs: | | | |
| Untried | 324 | 201 | 26 | 19 | 19 | 589 |
| Convicted unsentenced | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Sentenced | 354 | 67 | 20 | 12 | 8 | 461 |
| Non-criminal | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| All prisoners | 678 | 268 | 46 | 31 | 27 | 1,050 |
| | | | Wandsworth: | | | |
| Untried | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Convicted unsentenced | 55 | 2 | — | 1 | 2 | 60 |
| Sentenced | 1,073 | 298 | 41 | 44 | 21 | 1,477 |
| Non-criminal | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| All prisoners | 1,128 | 300 | 41 | 45 | 23 | 1,537 |
| | | | Pentonville: | | | |
| Untried | 169 | 84 | 16 | 8 | 6 | 283 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 87 | 6 | 4 | 3 | — | 100 |
| Sentenced | 353 | 57 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 430 |
| Non-criminal | 15 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 26 |
| All prisoners | 624 | 152 | 30 | 20 | 13 | 839 |
| | | | Birmingham: | | | |
| Untried | 332 | 66 | 35 | 8 | 17 | 458 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 32 | 6 | 5 | — | 4 | 47 |
| Sentenced | 461 | 79 | 26 | 19 | 5 | 590 |
| Non-criminal | 6 | 2 | 5 | — | 1 | 14 |
| All prisoners | 831 | 153 | 71 | 27 | 27 | 1,109 |
| | | | Manchester[2]: | | | |
| Untried | 515 | 39 | 23 | 24 | 12 | 613 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 143 | 8 | — | 1 | 4 | 156 |
| Sentenced | 928 | 43 | 27 | 14 | 3 | 1,015 |
| Non-criminal | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| All prisoners | 1,586 | 90 | 50 | 39 | 19 | 1,784 |
| | | | Liverpool: | | | |
| Untried | 6 | — | — | — | 3 | 9 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 6 | — | — | — | — | 6 |
| Sentenced | 1,306 | 26 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 1,374 |
| Non-criminal | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| All prisoners | 1,318 | 26 | 7 | 14 | 24 | 1,389 |

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate.
2 Remand centre and local prison.

## TRANSPORT

### Short Sea Europe Conference

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will be sending a representative to the short sea Europe conference on 14 to 15 March.

**Mr. Portillo:** Yes.

### Grid-lock Traffic Jams

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to prevent grid-lock traffic jams; and when he intends to implement action throughout the country.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The term "grid-lock" relates mainly to traffic jams that occur in city centres. Often these are the result of particular incidents such as breakdowns. The police have primary responsibility for controlling the movement of traffic. Local highway authorities are responsible for the construction and management of most urban roads. They and the police are able to call on a wide range of traffic management techniques and technology to ease traffic flow.

In London, where congestion is particularly heavy, my right hon. Friend has issued a statement which sets out his policies for improving traffic conditions. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Picnic Areas

**Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will give the number of picnic areas with toilet facilities proposed by his Department, the cost per site and the anticipated dates of opening;

(2) what considerations he has given to appointing a private contractor to operate the picnic sites proposed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We propose the provision of six further picnic sites on all-purpose trunk roads in England. The estimated cost per site ranges between £52,000 and £300,000. Five of the sites are due to open before the end of 1989, and the sixth is planned to open in 1992.

Our policy is to arrange for the general management and maintenance of picnic areas to be carried out by county councils as agent authorities. A small catering facility is also provided at many picnic areas. About half of the existing 26 sites have one and it is intended to provide one at each of the six proposed sites. Private contractors are appointed to operate all such catering facilities. The contractors are selected by competitive tender.

### Ferries (Vehicle Weights)

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to discuss with our EEC partners a requirement for all vehicles using roll-on roll-off passenger vessels to be weighed; and whether he will consider extending this to non-passenger vessels.

**Mr. Portillo:** There have been discussions with European shipping administrations about the United Kingdom regulations requiring the weighing of goods vehicles before loading on passenger ro-ro vessels. Whilst most Administrations have appreciated the value of our regulations, the extent to which they are likely to take such measures themselves is not clear.

I have no plans at present to extend the regulations to non-passenger ro-ro vessels.

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to extend the requirements of Statutory Instrument 1988 No. 1275 concerning the weighing of vehicles using roll-on roll-off passenger vessels to foreign registered ships.

**Mr. Portillo:** A draft order extending the Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and Other Cargo) Regulations 1988 to non-United Kingdom ships will be laid this week. Subject to the appropriate parliamentary approval the new regulations will come into force on 31 March.

### Chelmsford Bypass

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when emergency telephones will be installed on the A12 bypass at Chelmsford; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** It is not general policy to site emergency telephones on non-motorway trunk roads given the other telephone facilities frequently available. We are to announce shortly a limited number of sites where we propose to install such telephones because of the particular need for them there. It is not currently planned to site one on the A12 bypass at Chelmsford.

### British Island Airways

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the appeal was lodged by British Island Airways to his Department regarding the Gatwick-Glasgow, Gatwick-Edinburgh and Gatwick-Manchester routes; when he will make his decision; and what is the reason for the delay.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The appeal was lodged on 23 August 1988. It was one of a number of cases resulting from licensing decisions which followed the merger of British Airways and British Caledonian. My right hon. Friend's decision on the appeal was issued on 22 February.

### Seat Belts

**Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Rear Seat Belts by Children) Act 1988 will be brought into operation.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The Act requires that the regulations to give effect to the legislation have first to be approved by Parliament. We have today published draft regulations, together with an explanatory memorandum, for public consultation. Copies have been placed in the Library. Comments are invited by 2 May.

Our intention is to bring the draft regulations before the House shortly, with a view to their coming into effect during the summer.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Single European Market

72. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of opportunities that exist for the wood processing industry in the United Kingdom on the completion of the single internal market in Europe in 1992.

**Mr. Maude:** The reduction in administrative and technical barriers will provide opportunities for companies throughout the United Kingdom in many business areas and industries. The Government are making every effort to ensure that United Kingdom companies take the necessary action to prepare for the single market.

### Dolls' House Furniture

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to lay an order prohibiting the manufacture, sale and display of doll's house furniture; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** No. I am consulting about the implementation of the European Community dangerous imitations directive 87/357/EEC. The directive prohibits the supply of articles, which, because of their similarity to foodstuffs, endanger health and safety of consumers, especially children. The regulations will not apply to food imitations that do not constitute a hazard, but concern has been expressed about the possibility that the directive may affect imitation food supplies with dolls' houses. All comments made during the current consultation will be carefully considered before final decisions on implementation are made.

### Financial Services Act

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Financial Services Act 1986.

**Mr. Maude:** My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has today published a consultative document proposing two amendments to the Financial Services Act. The first amendment would provide a new basis for the assessment by the Securities and Investments Board of the rules of a self-regulating organisation. The second amendment would enhance the ability of the board and of recognised self-regulating organisations, when carrying out functions under the Act, to rely upon other regulators of the same or similar kinds of financial services. It is intended to effect any changes by means of amendments to the Companies Bill currently being considered in another place. Comments are invited on the proposals by 31 March. A copy of the consultative document has been placed in the Library of the House.

## Telephone Calls (Overcharging)

**Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will call for a report from the Director General of Telecommunications providing figures, expressed in percentage terms of total calls, of failure rates of British Telecom metering equipment resulting in overcharging for telephone calls for the latest period for which figures are available *(a)* in the Stroud exchange area, *(b)* in the Sevenoaks area, and *(c)* nationally.

**Mr. Maude:** The Director General of Telecommunications already takes a close interest in the accuracy of metering. On 29 June 1988, he announced the establishment of a new scheme for the approval of public telecommunications operators' metering and billing systems. Under this scheme, the British Approvals Board for Telecommunications will grant approval to systems which meet a performance standard and the British Standards Institution will undertake routine independent monitoring of quality control procedures. The scheme is currently being implemented. I understand that the director general is already considering the particular issues that my hon. Friend raises and that he will write to my hon. Friend directly once his considerations are complete.

## Directory Inquiries

**Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will direct Oftel to discuss with the chairman of British Telecom whether there has been any diminution in the standard of service and efficiency offered by British Telecom's directory inquiries unit following the transfer of all standard directory telephone numbers on to computer; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maude:** The Director General of Telecommunications already keeps such matters under review. It is for him to decide which issues he should raise with British Telecom, but I shall draw my hon. Friend's interest to the director general's attention.

British Telecom's six-monthly quality of service reports include information on directory inquiry services. I understand that the latest report is available in the Library of the House.

## Gas Prices

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the price of firm gas charged to large industrial gas users in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Spain, *(d)* Luxembourg, *(e)* Belgium, *(f)* Italy, *(g)* West Germany and *(h)* Holland; what is the price per therm in each of these countries; and what effect any disparity in these figures has upon British industry's competitive position in the European Community, the world and in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Maude:** I refer my hon. Friend to the recent study by the Office of Gas Supply "The EEC Industrial Gas Market" for data on the six main gas-consuming countries of the EEC; comparable figures for Spain and Luxembourg are not available. The relative price of gas is only one of many factors affecting British companies' competitive position.

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the effect that British Gas's present policies relating to the pricing of firm gas to large industrial users has upon British industry's competitiveness in *(a)* the European Community, *(b)* the world and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Maude:** The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas (Cm. 500) indicated that British Gas's policy of extensive discrimination in the pricing of firm gas placed an arbitrary cost disadvantage on some of its large industrial users, thereby distorting competition in the markets in which they operate. Part of the action taken following publication of the report, as announced by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 19 October 1988, is to require British Gas not to supply gas to any one contract customer on terms which are more or less favourable than the terms on which it supplies other contract customers with similar volumes, load factors, provision for interruptibility and other relevant conditions of supply.

## Nicaragua and Kampuchea

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the value of exports to, and imports from, Nicaragua for the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the value of exports to, and imports from, Nicaragua as a proportion of the European Community's total figure for the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what was the value of exports to, and imports from, Kampuchea for the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what was the value of exports to, and imports from, Kampuchea as a proportion of the European Community's total figure for the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Alan Clark:** The available information is in the tables:

*United Kingdom and European Community trade*[1]

*(i) Exports*

*million ECUs*

| | *Total EC exports to:* | | | *United Kingdom exports to:* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *World*[2] | *Nicaragua* | *Kampuchea* | *Nicaragua* | *Kampuchea* |
| 1986 | 341,934 | 150·2 | 2·3 | 11·0 | 0·3 |
| 1987 | 339,338 | 132·5 | 2·7 | 11·2 | 0·6 |
| 1988 January to June[3] | 170,465 | 39·0 | 1·5 | 3·7 | 0·3 |

*(ii) Imports*

*million ECUs*

| | *Total EC imports from:* | | | *United Kingdom imports from:* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *World*[2] | *Nicaragua* | *Kampuchea* | *Nicaragua* | *Kampuchea* |
| 1986 | 334,564 | 146·7 | 0·4 | 2·4 | 0·1 |
| 1987 | 340,058 | 84·6 | 0·3 | 1·2 | 0·1 |
| 1988 January to June[3] | 183,950 | 43·3 | 0·1 | 0·3 | 0·0 |

[1] Special trade.
[2] Trade with non-EC countries.
[3] EC excludes Greece.
*Source:* Eurostat.

### Thanet Working Group

**Mr. Gale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress made by the Thanet working group and action taken following publication of the Thanet working group report.

**Mr. Atkins:** I have today placed in the Library of the House copies of a progress report by the working group, entitled "Thanet into the 1990s". I am grateful to those in the local authorities and other organisations who have played their part in the activities of the group and the production of this report.

The business improvement services scheme which DTI launched less than a year ago, has been a success. Two companies supported by this scheme have gone on to win national prizes for marketing and enterprise. Our enterprise initiative business consultancy scheme has also been attractive to Thanet firms. Up to the end of 1988, more than 30 companies had received application forms and a dozen business reviews, for which the DTI pays the full cost, had been completed. The DTI's enterprise and education initiative adviser for Kent is paying special attention to the needs of Thanet.

Thanet now enjoys European Community employment area status. A major business park development is in train as the working group recommended. United Kingdom and foreign-owned firms are starting to take an interest in the area. Communications are being improved.

Many of the recommendations that the working group put forward just over a year ago have been followed up, but there is still work to be done. We know that local communities and agencies will continue to tackle the area's development needs with commitment and enthusiasm.

The DTI south-east's area office in Reigate and our office in Margate, in Thanet itself, are well placed to offer advice and help and necessary contact with all Departments.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Indirect Taxation

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of central Government revenue was raised by indirect taxation in the latest year for which figures are available; and what information he has on the corresponding figures for the other member states of the European Economic Community.

**Mr. Major:** The latest directly comparable OECD figures are for 1986. They show the percentage of total general Government taxes and social security contributions derived from indirect taxes.

*Percentage of total taxes and social security contributions derived from indirect taxes*

| | *1986* |
|---|---|
| Belgium | 25 |
| Denmark | 39 |
| France | 35 |
| Federal Republic of Germany | 30 |
| Greece | 50 |
| Italy | 28 |
| Netherlands | 27 |
| Spain | 35 |
| United Kingdom | 43 |

*Source:* Economic Trends, January 1989.

### Casinos

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was received in the latest available year from *(a)* the licensing of casinos and *(b)* the taxation of casinos gaming.

**Mr. Lilley:** In the financial year 1987-88, a total of £58,000 accrued from the licensing of gaming premises and £61 million from the duty on gross gaming yield.

### VAT

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to make an announcement concerning the rate of value added tax that he will apply to the supply of water and sewerage services respectively to commercial and industrial users, and other items currently not subject to that tax, in accordance with the ruling of the court of the European Economic Community of 21 June 1988, and state for each commodity the range of tax permitted by that ruling together with the range of estimated annual yields.

**Mr. Lilley:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 6 February at columns *548-50*.

### EC Fraud Inspectorate

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what approach or request has been received by Her Majesty's Government from the Commission of the European Economic Community concerning resources for the expansion of its fraud inspectorate; and what response he has made to such requests.

**Mr. Brooke:** The Commission proposed additional posts for anti-fraud work in the 1988 and 1989 preliminary draft budgets. The posts were part of a wider staffing bid which the United Kingdom was not able to accept in full. But the Government have consistently supported the Commission as regards the anti-fraud posts.

### VAT (Zero-rating)

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the assurances given by Her Majesty's Government on the alteration of zero-rating includes domestic water supplies, books, magazines and periodicals; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in the debate on indirect tax harmonisation on 11 May 1988 at column 412.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Aid Statistics

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total public and private aid and investment from the United Kingdom to under developed countries during 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** The figures are not yet available.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Plastic Bullets

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times plastic bullets have been used since they came into use; what were the circumstances at each incident; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** The information requested by the right hon. Member has been held in the Library since August 1984. Details of incidents prior to this period are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

I am writing to the hon. Member with the information for 1988, in which 3,109 plastic baton rounds were fired and I shall place a copy of my letter in the Library. The higher number of plastic baton rounds fired during 1988 than in 1987 was largely in response to widespread rioting in West Belfast during March and August.

### Emergency Provisions Acts

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to accept the recommendations made by Lord Colville in his review of the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987.

**Mr. Tom King:** I warmly welcome Lord Colville's report. It contains a number of important recommendations both for the short and medium term. In particular I welcome his recommendations that certain powers in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 can now be allowed to lapse. These are section 24, under which the security forces have the power to call upon assemblies to disperse, paragraph 4 of schedule 3 under which the Royal Ulster Constabulary may impose directions on the conduct of funerals, and paragraph 5 of schedule 3 under which the Secretary of State has a power to close licensed premises, clubs and so on by order. The draft order and regulations that have been laid before the House today will allow these provisions to lapse, apart from one section of paragraph 4 of schedule 3 which gives the Royal Ulster Constabulary the power to require people taking part in funerals to travel in vehicles.

The fact that these provisions are being allowed to lapse demonstrates the Government's purpose in keeping the emergency law under review, and in making adjustments where these are justified. I will be giving careful consideration over the coming months to some other recommendations in Lord Colville's report which have implications for the longer term.

### Prisoners (Education)

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions are made for prisoners wishing to continue their studies while in prison at all levels of education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ian Stewart** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* There is an education service in every prison and young offenders' centre in Northern Ireland, and, except for those who are in custody for very short periods, all prisoners—including those on remand—are offered continuing education on a voluntary basis throughout the period of their imprisonment. This enables the majority of prisoners to continue with studies that may have been interrupted by their arrest and subsequent imprisonment. It also allows adult prisoners, not previously involved in any educational activities, a second chance to further their education. The service is orientated towards the needs of the individual and all programmes and courses reflect those needs.

The range of subjects taught runs from adult basic education through to Open university level and prisoners are prepared for the various public examinations—for example, GCSE; A-levels; Royal Society Arts; City and Guilds of London Institute. Statistics available for the 1987-88 academic year show that about 47 per cent. of the total prison population were involved in some form of education. Of this, 28 per cent. were enrolled in basic education, 55 per cent. were enrolled in examination classes and the remaining 17 per cent. were enrolled in social-leisure classes.

In addition, 86 were involved in Open University degree courses, five of whom completed their degrees in this academic year.

A comprehensive library service is available to all prisoners, with 35,000 books on loan from the various education and library boards. About 60 per cent. of the prison population use this facility.

**Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the ratio of teachers to prisoners in Northern Ireland over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ian Stewart** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* A total of 12 full-time and approximately 70 part-time teachers are employed in providing the education service to prisoners. This number has remained fairly constant over the past five years and works out at a student-teacher ratio of between 1 : 5 and 1 : 6. Problems of security, control and layout of Northern Ireland prisons militate against a more economical ratio such as might be expected in mainstream education.

## WALES

### Welsh Language

**Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to make provision for the use of Welsh in forms relating to the community charge.

**Mr. Wyn Roberts:** The introduction of the community charge provides an excellent opportunity to enhance the use of the Welsh language in local government administration. Under existing legislation district councils are not obliged to provide rate demands in Welsh and, while many choose to do so, others do not.

We propose that, as a minimum, all those liable for the community charge will have a right to receive their community charge demand in Welsh if they require it. District councils who choose to send out demands in English will have to state clearly on that demand that a version in Welsh will be available on request. We will be prescribing the content of both the English and Welsh demands by regulation so there will be no translation burden for local authorities.

We will also be prescribing a bilingual version of the demand which local authorities will be encouraged to adopt. I hope that eventually all authorities will issue bilingual demands as a matter of course. But if they wish, they will be able by resolution of the council to use the English or Welsh versions instead. Even if some councils choose to use the English version of the demand, Welsh speakers in those areas will be able to request a community charge demand in Welsh.

I propose that similar arrangements should apply for the issue of non-domestic rate demands from April 1990.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Scottish Universities (Funding)

71. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received seeking the establishment of a Scottish university funding committee.

**Mr. Jackson:** None since debates on various amendments during the passage of the Education Reform Act 1988.

### Class Sizes

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the percentage change in average class size and the total number of pupils in nursery, primary and secondary education since 1979.

**Mr. Butcher:** The information requested is given for maintained schools in England in the table. Class sizes relate to those taught by one teacher during a selected period on the day of the census count in January. They do not necessarily represent the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole. The average class size in maintained nursery schools is not available centrally.

| | | | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *January each year* | *1979* | *1988* | *Change* |
| Average size of class taught by one teacher | | | |
| Primary[1] | 25·9 | 25·4 | −1·9 |
| Secondary[1] | 21·0 | 19·9 | −5·2 |
| Total pupils on roll in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools (Thousands)[1] | 8,438·9 | 6,965·0 | −17·5 |

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.

### Logica Report

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the management consultants Logica, commissioned by his Department to carry out a study of information requirements relating to teachers, to report; and if he will publish that report.

**Mr. Butcher:** The final report from Logica Consultancy Ltd. was considered by the Department's information systems steering committee on 24 February 1989. Work is now in hand to enable the Department to make proposals to local education authorities and others. Meanwhile I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

### University Salaries

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to set up a review of university salaries; and what terms of reference he intends for such a review.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will take steps to intervene in order to assist a settlement in the current dispute regarding the remuneration of university teachers; and what proposals he has for bringing about a meeting of committee A, or asking the chairman of committee A to exercise his powers as an arbitrator.

**Mr. Jackson:** My right hon. Friend is in correspondence with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers, about their dispute.

Under the existing arrangements committee A brings together representatives of the vice-chancellors and of the university teachers on a voluntary basis. My right hon. Friend is not represented on committee A and is not involved in decisions whether to convene it.

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why university teachers have so far received no pay award for 1988; and what sum of money he has allocated to the University Grants Committee for salaries in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989.

**Mr. Jackson:** University lecturers received a pay increase of 7·4 per cent. from 1 March 1988 following one of 16·6 per cent. with effect from December 1986. Salary levels are currently under discussion. Grants to the UGC are based on an assessment of universities' needs as a whole and do not, as a rule, treat salaries separately. The Government exceptionally provided conditional additional funding amounting to £40 million in 1987-88, £56 million in 1988-89 and £71 million in 1989-90 in respect of the 1987 academic pay restructuring settlement. The Government have also allocated sums of £3·1 million in 1988 and £2·8 million in 1989 to enable the universities to meet the extra costs of paying salaries to clinical academics in line with settlements following the reports of the review body for doctors and dentists.

## Teachers (Salaries)

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he is making in setting up new permanent machinery for the negotiation of the salaries of teachers.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 31 January at column 159.

## Departmental Publicity and Press Work

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total number of officials engaged upon information publicity and press work in his Department; at what grades; and at what estimated cost, for the years 1979, 1983, 1986 and 1989.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker** *[holding answer 16 February 1989]:* Information in the precise form requested is not available. The total number of officials engaged in information, publicity and press work on the dates shown below was as follows:

| *Grade* | [1] *1 January 1980* | *1 April 1983* | *1 January 1986* | *1 February 1989* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 5 (Chief Information Officer) | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Grade 5 (Assistant Secretary) | — | — | — | 1 |
| Personal Secretary | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Grade 7 (Principal Information Officer) | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Senior Information Officer | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Information Officer | 7 | 8 | 8 | 11 |
| Assistant Information Officer | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Graphics Officer (Higher) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Graphics Officer (Lower) | 4 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Senior Executive Officer | — | — | — | 1 |
| Executive Officer | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Administrative Officer | 11 | 8 | 9 | 5 |
| Administrative Assistant | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Total numbers | 38 | 37 | 37 | 39 |
| [2]Total estimated salary costs | £557,550 | £539,765 | £546,935 | £611,952 |

[1] Figures for 1979 are not available.
[2] Calculated at current average salary rates for each grade.

# EMPLOYMENT

## Labour Statistics

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the size of the total labour force each year since 1970, calculated from the labour force survey data; what was the percentage change each year; and if he will estimate the size of the total labour force for the current year and for each year up to 1995.

**Mr. Lee:** Consistent estimates of the size of the labour force in past years and projections for the future, based on a number of sources including the labour force survey, are available only for the civilian labour force, and back to 1971. They are given in the table:

*Civilian labour force in Great Britain*

| | *Level (thousand)* | *Annual Change (per cent.)* |
|---|---|---|
| *Estimates* | | |
| 1971 | 24,895 | — |
| 1972 | 24,953 | 0·2 |
| 1973 | 25,125 | 0·7 |
| 1974 | 25,269 | 0·6 |
| 1975 | 25,305 | 0·1 |
| 1976 | 25,702 | 1·6 |
| 1977 | 25,901 | 0·8 |
| 1978 | 25,949 | 0·2 |
| 1979 | 26,021 | 0·3 |
| 1980 | 26,198 | 0·7 |
| 1981 | 26,242 | 0·2 |
| 1982 | 26,045 | −0·8 |
| 1983 | 25,907 | −0·5 |
| 1984 | 26,428 | 2·0 |
| 1985 | 26,639 | 0·8 |
| 1986 | 26,735 | 0·4 |
| 1987 | 27,161 | 1·6 |
| *Projections* | | |
| 1988 | 27,538 | 1·4 |
| 1989 | 27,690 | 0·6 |
| 1990 | 27,790 | 0·4 |
| 1991 | 27,872 | 0·3 |
| 1992 | 27,928 | 0·2 |
| 1993 | 27,959 | 0·1 |
| 1994 | 28,001 | 0·2 |
| 1995 | 28,073 | 0·3 |

*Source:* "Employment Gazette", May 1987 and March 1988.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate for 1979 and the most recently available date for the number of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employees with a length of service of (i) up to six months, (ii) from six months to one year, (iii) from one year to two years and (iv) over two years, giving the figures separately for men and women.

**Mr. Lee** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* Estimates from the 1987 labour force survey (LFS) of the number of full and part-time employees in Great Britain, by the length of time continuously employed by their current employer, are shown in the following table:

*Employees—length of time continuously employed by current employer—Great Britain, Spring 1987 estimates*

*thousands*

| *Length of employment* | *Men* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time*[1] | *Part-time*[2] | *All*[3] | *Full-time*[1] | *Part-time*[1] | *All*[3] |
| Less than 6 months | 857 | 146 | 1,005 | 512 | 686 | 1,200 |
| 6 months less than 1 year | 745 | 103 | 852 | 487 | 513 | 1,003 |
| 1 year but less than 2 years | 968 | 93 | 1,064 | 604 | 592 | 1,198 |
| 2 years or more | 8,063 | 370 | 8,458 | 3,212 | 2,717 | 5,938 |
| All employees[4] | 10,674 | 714 | 11,399 | 4,822 | 4,515 | 9,356 |

[1] basic usual hours (i.e. excluding paid and unpaid overtime and meal-breaks) of 31 hours or more per week.
[2] basic usual hours of 30 hours or less per week.
[3] includes those employees who did not state hours worked.
[4] includes those employees who did not state length of time continuously employed by current employer.

Comparable estimates are not available from the 1979 LFS.

## Wages Councils

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a breakdown by wages inspectorate division of the information given in his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *182*, regarding the establishments underpaying and prosecutions for underpayment of wages council rates.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The information requested is given in the tables:

*Table A: Prosecutions for underpayment*

| *Division* | *1979* | *1980* | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| London | 3 | — | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| South East | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Eastern | — | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — | 1 | — | 2 |
| South West | 4 | 2 | 3 | — | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | 2 |
| Midlands | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 | 1 |
| North West | — | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 2 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1 | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Northern | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Scotland | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Totals | 9 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 10 |

*Table B: Establishments found to be underpaying 1979-85*

| *Division* | *1979* | *1980* | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| London (East) | 431 | 495 | 440 | 391 | 441 | 324 | 298 |
| London (West) | 249 | 259 | 270 | 294 | 339 | 354 | 357 |
| South East | 521 | 769 | 749 | 764 | 871 | 703 | 670 |
| Southern | 585 | 576 | 450 | 441 | 494 | 475 | 556 |
| Eastern | 685 | 941 | 848 | 726 | 727 | 914 | 688 |
| South West | 1,010 | 1,201 | 1,070 | 954 | 1,078 | 1,033 | 929 |
| Midlands (East) | 634 | 771 | 623 | 532 | 573 | 534 | 430 |
| Midlands (West) | 605 | 674 | 598 | 666 | 543 | 552 | 712 |
| North West (East) | 946 | 879 | 613 | 648 | 704 | 560 | 529 |
| North West (West) | 1,115 | 1,060 | 688 | 652 | 865 | 886 | 804 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1,156 | 1,119 | 871 | 964 | 941 | 1,026 | 818 |
| Northern | 893 | 902 | 736 | 552 | 630 | 721 | 815 |
| Scotland (East) | 710 | 687 | 529 | 515 | 525 | 480 | 488 |
| Scotland (West) | 597 | 750 | 556 | 349 | 389 | 365 | 361 |
| Wales | 832 | 1,071 | 1,033 | 821 | 722 | 534 | 609 |
| Totals | 10,969 | 12,154 | 10,074 | 9,269 | 9,842 | 9,461 | 9,064 |

*Table C: Establishments found to be underpaying 1986-88*

| *Division* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|
| London | 608 | 270 | 317 |
| South East | 646 | 503 | 537 |
| Eastern | 974 | 405 | 462 |
| South West | 832 | 961 | 1,156 |
| Midlands | 943 | 525 | 747 |
| North East | 1,397 | 541 | 869 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 805 | 511 | 631 |
| Northern | 844 | 404 | 369 |
| Scotland | 656 | 323 | 509 |
| Wales | 500 | — | — |
| Totals | 8,205 | 4,443 | 5,597 |

*Note:* The statistics of underpayments have been separated into two tables because the divisional boundaries were changed in 1986.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the levels of employment and changes in employment levels for each wages council for each year from 1979 to 1988.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Statistical returns of the number of workers in Great Britain employed in establishments within scope of wages councils are not collected, but periodic estimates are made. The results of exercises conducted in 1979, 1982 and 1987 are shown in the table. The figures in the third column exclude young people under 21 who are in scope of the legislation but for whom the councils are not empowered to fix minimum rates.

*Comparison of the 1979, 1982 and 1987 estimates of coverage by wages councils*

| *Wages council* | *Number of workers covered* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1979* | *1982* | *1987* |
| | *All workers* | | *Excluding under-21s* |
| Retail trades (non-food) | 563,700 | 512,800 | 745,000 |
| Licensed non-residential establishment | 470,000 | 508,700 | 492,000 |
| Retail food and allied trades | 522,800 | 519,300 | 465,000 |
| Licensed residential establishment and licensed restaurant | 530,000 | 555,300 | 379,000 |
| Clothing[1] | 294,500 | 252,800 | 147,000 |
| Unlicensed place of refreshment | 121,900 | 116,400 | 96,000 |
| Hairdressing undertakings | 128,600 | 135,600 | 64,000 |
| Laundry | 39,200 | 33,700 | 26,000 |
| General waste materials reclamation | 20,200 | 19,300 | 13,000 |
| Toy manufacturing | 23,300 | 18,900 | 11,000 |
| Aerated waters | 14,900 | 15,000 | 5,500 |
| Boot and shoe repairing | 7,900 | 7,100 | 5,000 |
| Hat cap and millinery | 7,800 | 6,800 | 4,000 |
| Retail bespoke tailoring | 5,000 | 5,200 | 4,000 |
| Made-up textiles | 6,500 | 4,800 | 3,000 |
| Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods | 5,600 | 5,200 | 2,500 |
| Rope twine and net | 4,000 | 4,000 | 2,500 |
| Perambulator and invalid carriage | 2,100 | 1,500 | 2,000 |
| Fur | 5,100 | 4,500 | 1,500 |
| Button manufacturing | 3,300 | 2,100 | 1,000 |
| Sack and bag | 1,800 | 1,400 | 1,000 |
| Lace finishing | 700 | 800 | 900 |
| Flax and hemp | 2,300 | 1,400 | 500 |
| Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower | 1,500 | 1,400 | 500 |
| Cotton waste reclamation | 400 | 500 | 300 |
| Coffin furniture and cerement-making | 500 | 300 | 200 |
| TOTAL | 2,783,600 | 2,734,800 | 2,472,400 |

[1] In 1979 there were seven councils covering the clothing manufacturing trade.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the statistics on wages council employment and compliance with wages council rates in 1988, in the same format as in the reply given on 4 March 1988, *Official Report*, columns *731-36*.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The information requested is given in the following tables:

*Table 1*
*Establishments Covered by Wages Councils on Register—as at January 1988*

| *Divisions* | *London* | *S. East* | *Eastern* | *S. West* | *Midlands* | *N. West* | *Yorks & H'side* | *North* | *Scotland* | *Great Britain* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Wages Councils* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aerated Waters | 7 | 14 | 57 | 16 | 111 | 25 | 24 | 22 | 66 | 342 |
| Clothing Manufacture | 3,006 | 159 | 306 | 301 | 1,282 | 937 | 452 | 214 | 307 | 6,964 |
| Boot and Shoe Repairing | 764 | 255 | 258 | 345 | 373 | 406 | 277 | 70 | 130 | 2,878 |
| Button Manufacturing | 18 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 18 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 57 |
| Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making | 1 | — | — | 2 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 20 |
| Cotton Waste Reclamation | — | — | — | — | 1 | 28 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 42 |
| Flax and Hemp | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | 6 | 8 |
| Fur | 147 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 28 | 11 | 3 | 36 | 262 |
| General Waste Materials Reclamation | 124 | 74 | 107 | 151 | 291 | 308 | 240 | 99 | 137 | 1,531 |
| Hairdressing Undertakings | 4,482 | 3,181 | 3,302 | 4,106 | 5,362 | 5,171 | 3,029 | 1,968 | 2,840 | 33,441 |
| Hat Cap and Millinery | 25 | 2 | 44 | 5 | 12 | 14 | 8 | 11 | 2 | 123 |
| Lace Finishing | — | — | — | 1 | 73 | — | — | — | — | 74 |

| Divisions | London | S. East | Eastern | S. West | Midlands | N. West | Yorks & H'side | North | Scotland | Great Britain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Laundry | 215 | 281 | 79 | 114 | 105 | 68 | 67 | 35 | 122 | 1,086 |
| Linen and Cotton Handkerchief | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 80 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 114 |
| Made-up Textile | 34 | 13 | 36 | 31 | 51 | 34 | 42 | 18 | 33 | 292 |
| Ostrich and Fancy Feather | 12 | 1 | 6 | 4 | — | — | — | 4 | 3 | 30 |
| Perambulator and Invalid Carriage | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 36 |
| Retail Bespoke Tailoring | 180 | 55 | 52 | 38 | 42 | 52 | 39 | 14 | 37 | 509 |
| Rope Twine and Net | — | 1 | 5 | 12 | 5 | 20 | 18 | 5 | 19 | 85 |
| Sack and Bag | 20 | — | 7 | 5 | 14 | 20 | 12 | 2 | 6 | 86 |
| Toy Manufacturing | 17 | 16 | 45 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 32 | 15 | 9 | 239 |
| Retail Non-Food Trades | 20,069 | 11,990 | 9,840 | 12,085 | 19,457 | 13,350 | 8,712 | 4,495 | 8,840 | 108,838 |
| Retail Food and Allied Trades | 11,770 | 13,100 | 10,066 | 12,853 | 13,339 | 15,891 | 10,018 | 7,199 | 10,881 | 105,117 |
| Licensed Non-Residential | 6,263 | 5,962 | 6,363 | 9,323 | 12,406 | 9,540 | 6,452 | 4,001 | 5,429 | 65,739 |
| Licensed Residential and Restaurant | 5,023 | 3,901 | 3,595 | 6,842 | 3,591 | 3,355 | 2,013 | 1,418 | 3,890 | 33,628 |
| Unlicensed Place of Refreshment | 4,143 | 2,049 | 1,540 | 2,585 | 1,746 | 1,977 | 1,324 | 851 | 1,497 | 17,712 |
| Total | 56,325 | 41,069 | 35,728 | 48,867 | 58,357 | 51,354 | 32,801 | 20,451 | 34,301 | 379,253 |

*Table 2*
*Establishments checked and underpayments found in wages council trades—1*

| Wages councils | Establishments checked by all methods | Percentage of register checked | Establishments checked by visit | Percentage of register checked by visit | Establishments found underpaying | Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying | Percentage of establishments visited underpaying |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aerated waters | 31 | 9·0 | 21 | 6·1 | 2 | 6·4 | 9·5 |
| Clothing manufacture | 603 | 8·6 | 559 | 8·0 | 128 | 21·2 | 22·8 |
| Boot and shoe repairing | 245 | 8·5 | 166 | 5·7 | 18 | 7·3 | 10·8 |
| Button manufacturing | 7 | 12·2 | 6 | 10·5 | — | — | — |
| Coffin furniture and cerement making | 3 | 15·0 | 2 | 10·0 | — | — | — |
| Cotton waste reclamation | 4 | 9·5 | 4 | 9·5 | — | — | — |
| Flax and hemp | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Fur | 18 | 6·8 | 18 | 6·8 | 2 | 11·1 | 11·1 |
| General waste materials reclamation | 150 | 9·7 | 111 | 7·2 | 11 | 7·3 | 9·9 |
| Hairdressing undertakings | 2,392 | 7·1 | 1,654 | 4·9 | 330 | 13·7 | 19·9 |
| Hat, cap and millinery | 26 | 21·1 | 23 | 18·6 | — | — | — |
| Lace finishing | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Laundry | 125 | 11·5 | 97 | 8·9 | 20 | 16·0 | 20·6 |
| Linen and cotton handkerchief | 12 | 10·5 | 11 | 9·6 | 4 | 33·3 | 36·3 |
| Made-up textile | 32 | 10·9 | 25 | 8·5 | 2 | 6·2 | 8·0 |
| Ostrich and fancy feather | 3 | 10·0 | 2 | 6·6 | — | — | — |
| Perambulator and invalid carriage | 2 | 5·5 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Retail bespoke tailoring | 43 | 8·4 | 37 | 7·2 | 6 | 13·9 | 16·2 |
| Rope, twine and net | 8 | 9·4 | 6 | 7·0 | — | — | — |
| Sack and bag | 12 | 13·9 | 11 | 12·7 | — | — | — |
| Toy manufacturing | 24 | 10·0 | 23 | 9·6 | 2 | 8·3 | 8·6 |
| Retail non-food trades | 9,649 | 8·8 | 4,219 | 3·8 | 1,130 | 11·7 | 26·7 |
| Retail food and allied trades | 9,860 | 9·3 | 5,713 | 5·4 | 2,143 | 21·7 | 37·5 |
| Licensed non-residential | 5,063 | 7·7 | 3,503 | 5·3 | 1,016 | 20·0 | 29·0 |
| Licensed residential and restaurant | 2,631 | 7·8 | 2,143 | 6·3 | 405 | 15·3 | 18·8 |
| Unlicensed place of refreshment | 1,530 | 8·6 | 1,218 | 6·8 | 378 | 24·7 | 31·0 |
| Total | 32,474 | 8·6 | 19,573 | 5·2 | 5,597 | 17·2 | 28·6 |

*Table 3*
*Workers covered by wages councils and results of checks—1988*

| Wages councils | Number of workers covered by Wages Order (Est. 1988) | Workers whose pay was checked by all methods | Workers whose pay was checked by visit | Workers found underpaid | Percentage underpaid of all workers checked | Percentage underpaid of all workers checked by visit | Arrears paid | Arrears not pursued at workers request | Arrears not pursued for other reasons | Total arrears assessed as due |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Aerated waters | 5,500 | 2,798 | 390 | 13 | 0·4 | 3·3 | 336 | — | — | 336 |
| Clothing manufacture | 147,000 | 12,662 | 11,083 | 453 | 3·5 | 4·0 | 31,015 | 10,469 | 7,546 | 49,030 |
| Boot and shoe repairing | 5,000 | 759 | 548 | 20 | 2·6 | 3·6 | 1,623 | 652 | — | 2,275 |

| Wages councils | Number of workers covered by Wages Order (Est. 1988) | Workers whose pay was checked by all methods | Workers whose pay was checked by visit | Workers found underpaid | Percentage underpaid of all workers checked | Percentage underpaid of all workers checked by visit | Arrears paid | Arrears not pursued at workers request | Arrears not pursued for other reasons | Total arrears assessed as due |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Button manufacturing | 1,000 | 163 | 150 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Coffin furniture and cerement making | 200 | 42 | 32 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cotton waste reclamation | 300 | 54 | 54 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Flex and hemp | 500 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Fur | 1,500 | 220 | 220 | 2 | 0·9 | 0·9 | 150 | 120 | 1,654 | 1,924 |
| General waste materials reclamation | 13,000 | 1,425 | 1,163 | 12 | 0·8 | 1·0 | 2,204 | — | 167 | 2,371 |
| Hairdressing undertakings | 64,000 | 8,063 | 5,515 | 418 | 5·1 | 7·5 | 41,742 | 6,822 | 6,397 | 54,961 |
| Hat cap and millinery | 4,000 | 651 | 599 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Lace finishing | 900 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Laundry | 26,000 | 4,044 | 2,696 | 42 | 1·0 | 1·5 | 3,685 | 347 | 2,730 | 6,762 |
| Linen and cotton handkerchief | 2,500 | 404 | 396 | 49 | 12·1 | 12·3 | 2,766 | 2,771 | — | 5,537 |
| Made-up textile | 3,000 | 540 | 440 | 8 | 1·4 | 1·8 | 125 | — | — | 125 |
| Ostrich and fancy feather | 500 | 33 | 15 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Perambulator and invalid carriage | 2,000 | 139 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Retail bespoke tailoring | 4,000 | 161 | 147 | 8 | 4·9 | 5·4 | 474 | 107 | — | 581 |
| Rope twine and net | 2,500 | 300 | 234 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Sack and bag | 1,000 | 154 | 124 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Toy manufacturing | 11,000 | 583 | 571 | 4 | 0·6 | 0·7 | 23 | — | 259 | 282 |
| Retail non-food trades | 745,000 | 95,502 | 17,849 | 1,731 | 1·8 | 9·6 | 156,327 | 69,883 | 24,049 | 250,259 |
| Retail food and allied trades | 465,000 | 121,718 | 21,598 | 4,052 | 3·3 | 18·7 | 321,851 | 158,094 | 74,568 | 554,513 |
| Licensed non-residential | 492,000 | 33,200 | 22,541 | 2,532 | 7·6 | 11·2 | 160,502 | 23,012 | 22,590 | 206,104 |
| Licensed residential and restaurant | 379,000 | 30,898 | 26,524 | 753 | 2·4 | 2·8 | 67,220 | 5,304 | 13,685 | 86,209 |
| Unlicensed Place of refreshment | 96,000 | 8,526 | 6,182 | 763 | 8·9 | 12·3 | 52,149 | 18,165 | 11,934 | 82,248 |
| Total | 2,472,400 | 323,091 | 119,123 | 10,860 | 3·3 | 9·1 | 842,192 | 295,746 | 165,579 | 1,303,517 |

*Table 4*

*Checks carried out and underpayments found in wages inspectorate divisions—1988*

| Division | Establishments checked by all methods | Percentage of register checked | Establishments checked by visit | Percentage of register checked by visit | Establishments found underpaying | Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying | Percentage of establishments visited underpaying |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| London | 3,732 | 6·6 | 1,893 | 3·4 | 317 | 8·5 | 16·7 |
| South East | 2,539 | 6·2 | 1,654 | 4·0 | 537 | 21·2 | 32·5 |
| Eastern | 5,415 | 15·1 | 2,509 | 7·0 | 462 | 8·5 | 18·4 |
| South West | 3,586 | 7·3 | 2,512 | 5·1 | 1,156 | 32·2 | 46·0 |
| Midlands | 4,999 | 8·6 | 2,609 | 4·5 | 747 | 14·9 | 28·6 |
| North West | 4,085 | 7·9 | 3,198 | 6·2 | 869 | 21·3 | 27·2 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 3,123 | 9·5 | 1,931 | 5·9 | 631 | 20·2 | 32·7 |
| Northern | 1,686 | 8·2 | 1,004 | 4·9 | 369 | 21·9 | 36·8 |
| Scotland | 3,309 | 9·6 | 2,263 | 6·6 | 509 | 15·4 | 22·5 |
| Great Britain | 32,474 | 8·6 | 19,573 | 5·2 | 5,597 | 17·2 | 28·6 |

All branches of mulitiple firms are recorded under the division in which the Head Office is located. Account has to be taken of this when comparing divisional figures.

*Table 5*

*Workers whose pay was checked in wages inspectorate divisions—1988*

| Division | Workers whose pay was checked by all methods | Workers whose pay was checked by visit | Workers found underpaid | Per cent. underpaid of all workers checked | Per cent. underpaid of all workers checked by visit | Arrears paid | Arrears not pursued at workers request | Arrears not pursued for other reasons | Total arrears assessed as due |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| London | 54,501 | 13,365 | 513 | 0·9 | 3·8 | 65,756 | 5,588 | 7,186 | 78,530 |
| South East | 13,089 | 8,635 | 975 | 7·4 | 11·3 | 87,439 | 27,315 | 7,810 | 122,564 |
| Eastern | 50,221 | 14,996 | 895 | 1·8 | 5·7 | 79,713 | 21,590 | 47,460 | 148,763 |
| South West | 20,855 | 14,015 | 2,204 | 10·6 | 15·7 | 133,376 | 58,255 | 30,952 | 222,583 |
| Midlands | 36,503 | 18,222 | 1,425 | 3·9 | 7·8 | 113,335 | 50,908 | 26,455 | 190,698 |
| North West | 94,318 | 19,369 | 1,697 | 1·8 | 8·7 | 144,990 | 52,505 | 14,531 | 212,026 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 22,405 | 10,741 | 1,270 | 5·7 | 11·8 | 72,947 | 44,466 | 6,088 | 123,501 |
| Northern | 8,827 | 5,553 | 784 | 8·9 | 14·1 | 60,465 | 6,734 | 9,139 | 76,338 |
| Scotland | 22,372 | 14,228 | 1,097 | 4·9 | 7·7 | 84,171 | 28,385 | 15,958 | 128,514 |
| Great Britain | 323,091 | 119,123 | 10,860 | 3·4 | 9·1 | 842,192 | 295,746 | 165,579 | 1,303,517 |

The numbers of workers in branches of multiple firms are recorded under the division in which the Head Office is located. Account has to be taken of this when comparing divisional figures.

## "How to be Better off in Work"

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many copies of his Department's booklet "How to be Better off in Work" were printed, and at what cost; how many copies were distributed to his Department's offices; and, of these, how many were issued to the public and how many remain in stock.

**Mr. Lee:** The production and distribution of the booklet were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of booklets printed | 3,000,000 |
| Cost | £98,395 |
| Number of booklets distributed to Employment Service Offices | 1,768,000 |

The balance is in stock.

A publicity campaign to explain in-work benefits ran from 15 August to 24 October 1988. It is recorded that some 550,000 copies were issued to the public during that period.

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will revise his Department's booklet "How to be Better off in Work", to include *(a)* an example of an income support claimant with a mortgage, *(b)* mention of the taper affecting withdrawal of benefits as wages rise and *(c)* a warning that claimants who take low-paid employment who then leave because they are financially worse off risk a 26-week period of reduced income support.

**Mr. Lee:** The purpose of the booklet "How to be Better off in Work" is to show unemployed people that finding a job need not mean losing out on benefits. The booklet is intended to be a simple illustrative guide. It would not be possible to cover within this format every circumstance which might affect an individual's entitlement. That is why unemployed people are advised in the booklet to contact their local unemployment benefit office or jobcentre for further information.

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will revise his Department's booklet "How to be Better off in Work", to take account in the family examples given of costs of travelling to work, and the loss of free school meals and free milk for the under-five-year-olds abolished by the Social Security Act 1988; what rates were used, and why different rent and rates figures were used for each example in the current edition of the booklet.

**Mr. Lee:** Travel-to-work costs are not included in the examples in the booklet "How to be Better off in Work", as they vary widely and many people do not have to pay them. The examples clearly state that only the out-of-work families are entitled to free school meals and milk tokens. The rent and rates figures were based on the 1987 average of all local authority rent and rates in Great Britain uprated by the retail prices index which gives a figure of £27·14; the booklet gives examples both above and below this figure.

## Disabled People (Factories Act 1961)

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had with disability organisations on the proposal to repeal section 119A of the Factories Act 1961; which organisations were consulted; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Cope:** My Department issued a consultation paper last November setting out proposals for alternative arrangements to replace section 119A of the Factories Act 1961; copies have been placed in the Library. Comments were invited by 28 February 1989. Annex 4 of the paper lists the organisations representing disabled people who were sent the document when it was first issued. A copy was subsequently supplied to the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped.

## Employment Training

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training places in each Training Agency area have been filled with starts with training managers, and what percentage that is in each case of total employment training places contracted in each Training Agency area.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The information requested is given in the following table:

*Employment training places*

| *Area office* | *Filled places at 17 February* | *Filled places as a percentage of total contracted places in December* |
|---|---|---|
| *South East Region* | | |
| Berkshire and Oxfordshire | 995 | 54·3 |
| Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire | 1,357 | 53·2 |
| Essex | 1,380 | 38·4 |
| Hampshire and Isle of Wight | 1,900 | 59·0 |
| Kent | 1,987 | 52·4 |
| Surrey | 370 | 32·0 |
| Sussex | 1,290 | 42·7 |
| *London Region* | | |
| Inner London North | 4,951 | 67·7 |
| Inner London South | 2,480 | 52·3 |
| London East | 2,001 | 69·2 |
| London North | 2,881 | 70·0 |
| London South | 1,259 | 73·0 |
| London West | 1,051 | 72·0 |
| *South West Region* | | |
| Avon | 1,858 | 48·0 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 5,035 | 71·0 |
| Dorset and Somerset | 1,612 | 54·0 |
| Gloucester and Wiltshire | 1,172 | 40·0 |
| *West Midlands Region* | | |
| Birmingham and Solihull | 5,406 | 50·1 |
| Coventry and Warwickshire | 1,972 | 42·4 |
| Dudley and Sandwell | 2,248 | 46·0 |
| Staffordshire | 2,945 | 60·0 |
| The Marches, Hereford/Worcester | 2,181 | 52·1 |
| Wolverhampton and Walsall | 2,532 | 47·0 |
| *East Midlands and Eastern Region* | | |
| Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire | 1,438 | 70·0 |
| Derbyshire | 2,247 | 51·1 |
| Leicestershire and Northamptonshire | 2,287 | 52·0 |
| Lincolnshire | 1,114 | 55·0 |
| Norfolk and Suffolk | 2,456 | 59·5 |
| Nottinghamshire | 2,619 | 48·0 |
| *Yorkshire and Humberside* | | |
| Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees | 3,825 | 61·0 |
| Humberside | 4,576 | 79·1 |
| North Yorkshire and Leeds | 3,558 | 53·5 |
| Sheffield and Rotherham | 4,768 | 59·0 |
| Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley | 4,789 | 70·0 |

| Area office | Filled places at 17 February | Filled places as a percentage of total contracted places in December |
|---|---|---|
| *North West Region* | | |
| Cheshire | 2,570 | 51·0 |
| Cumbria | 1,173 | 54·1 |
| Lancashire | 3,872 | 54·0 |
| Central Manchester | 3,260 | 35·2 |
| Greater Manchester North | 2,236 | 34·5 |
| Greater Manchester East | 2,105 | 54·0 |
| Merseyside | 6,182 | 37·4 |
| *Northern Region* | | |
| Cleveland | 4,900 | 51·1 |
| County Durham | 3,955 | 56·0 |
| Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle | 3,229 | 43·0 |
| Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead | 4,867 | 49·4 |
| *Wales* | | |
| Dyfed and West Glamorgan | 3,300 | 52·1 |
| Gwent | 1,676 | 43·0 |
| Gwynedd, Clywd and Powys | 2,420 | 45·0 |
| Mid and South Glamorgan | 3,845 | 47·0 |
| *Scotland* | | |
| Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway | 2,183 | 47·0 |
| Central and Fife | 2,278 | 47·0 |
| Glasgow City | 3,279 | 33·3 |
| Grampian and Tayside | 2,006 | 46·0 |
| Highlands and Islands | 597 | 35·1 |
| Lanarkshire | 1,847 | 39·1 |
| Lothian and Borders | 2,686 | 51·1 |
| Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll | 1,988 | 33·1 |

### Retail Trades (Working Conditions)

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has made any survey of working hours and conditions in the retail trades with reference to *(a)* the extent of reduction of working hours to levels which put them outside statutory employment rights, and *(b)* the extent of unpaid working time imposed on check-out operators and sales staff by any requirements to work beyond closing hours but counting their paid hours only up to closing time.

**Mr. Nicholls** *[holding answer 17 February 1989]:* My right hon. Friend has not made any such survey, but information on working hours is available from the labour force survey. In general, pay is a matter for employers and employees, provided that in wages council trades the total amount paid to workers for all time worked is not less than the minimum due.

## ENERGY

### Employment Potential

**Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what work his Department has undertaken on the employment potential which would accrue in the course of achieving his target of £8 billion annual savings in the national energy bill.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** It is very difficult to assess the precise employment potential of energy efficiency measures. However, projects under the community insulation programme have provided work experience and training for the long-term unemployed, and improved energy efficiency enables industry to become more competitive which facilitates economic growth and creates new job opportunities.

### Gas Prices

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any information as to the manner by which gas supply industries in *(a)* Holland, *(b)* France, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* Italy, *(e)* Belgium, *(f)* Spain and *(g)* Luxembourg calculate the price to be charged for the supply of firm gas to large industrial users; and how British Gas calculates such a price.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** Yes. I refer my hon. Friend to the chapter on pricing principles in the report "The EEC Industrial Gas Market" published by the Office of Gas Supply in January 1989. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what controls he has over the prices of gas charged by British Gas to large industrial consumers.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** None. Under the proposed modification to British Gas's authorisation published on 30 January, the Director General of Gas Supply would have control over the structure of British Gas's price schedule for large industrial customers. The actual level of prices however would remain a matter for British Gas.

### Gas

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to estimate when British Gas will have less than a 90 per cent. share in the supply of piped gas in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** It is a matter for the Director General of Gas Supply to monitor the gas market as he sees fit. However I will, of course, take a close interest in such work.

### Grimethorpe Power Station

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his future plans in respect of Grimethorpe power station; if he has any plans to provide Government funding to assist research at this plant to continue; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My Department is at present considering carefully a request from British Coal for financial support for additional trials to be carried out at the Grimethorpe experimental facility. I am not yet able to make a statement.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Oman (British Base)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the agreement made in 1958 with the Sultan of Oman in which the air base in that country was handed over to British control for 99 years still applies in its original form or has been updated; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The RAF maintained an air base on Masirah island until the late 1960s.

### South Africa (Sanctions)

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of Nelson Mandela's continued imprisonment, he will reconsider his opposition to economic sanctions against South Africa.

**Mrs. Chalker:** No.

### Short-range Nuclear Missiles

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards a NATO agreement on short-range nuclear missiles.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Short-range nuclear missiles play an important role in NATO's strategy of flexible response: the Alliance is united in its resolve to keep its weapons up to date as necessary. Discussions on how this is to be done are under way in the Alliance.

### EC Central American Meeting

**Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the last European Community central American meeting which he attended in Honduras; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the last European Community central American meeting which he attended in Honduras; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We will make available to the House the economic and political communiqués which we expect the conference to adopt when it concludes on 1 March.

### Islamic Fundamentalism

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the consequences for international stability of Islamic fundamentalism in *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We fully support the right of the Iranian and Afghan peoples to choose freely their own representative Governments and to run their own affairs. If they choose Islamic fundamentalist Governments that is their right.

### Central America (Visit)

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he discussed during his recent visit to central America.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State does not return from his trip to Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala until 6 March.

### Iran

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the state of diplomatic relations with Iran.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's statement in the House on 21 February.

### Council of Ministers

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present eight meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for March.

The Environment Council will meet on 2 March. It will discuss two draft directives on genetically modified organisms; limits on emissions from municipal waste incineration plants; discharges of dangerous substances in water; limits on emissions of sulphur dioxide; the prospects for further reductions in CFCs; transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste, and possibly the conservation of the African elephant.

The Industry Council meets on 6 March to consider three items on Community support for small and medium enterprises: a Commission paper on the establishment of the enterprise directorate, DG XXIII; the third report on the action programme and an evaluation of Europartenariat (trans-national co-operation between small firms). It will also hold a general orientation debate on the industrial aspects of high definition television and possibly a preliminary discussion of the Commission's proposed Council decision on HDTV, which is due to be discussed in detail at the Telecommunications Council on 27 April.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 6, 7 and possibly 8 March and again on 20, 21 and possibly 22 March to discuss 1989 CAP price fixing proposals, New Zealand butter and sheepmeat, aid for the conversion of agricultural production, and the forestry action programme. It may also consider the proposal on preservatives for use in foodstuffs.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 13 March to consider the Commission's quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community; to discuss fraud against the EC budget in the context of the Court of Auditors' annual report and the discharge of the 1987 budget; and to prepare for the spring IMF/IBRD meetings.

The Research Council will meet on 14 March. The agenda anticipates the adoption of three R and D programme proposals: large-scale facilities (a plan to facilitate access to large-scale scientific facilities of European interest); JOULE (non-nuclear energy and efficient use of energy) and BRITE/EURAM (research in manufacturing technologies and advanced materials). The Commission hopes that common positions will be agreed on the following programmes: FLAIR, MAST, DOSES, VALUE, MONITOR, and EUROTRA. It is hoped to adopt a decision on a programme of decommissioning of nuclear installations. There will also be an initial debate on the mid-term review of the framework programme (1987-1991).

The Transport Council on 14 March is expected to continue its discussions on the weights and dimensions of 2, 3 and 4-axled commercial vehicles; the rules governing access to the road haulage profession; a scheme for dealing with overcapacity on certain inland waterways; and

possible arrangements for introducing road haulage cabotage. It may also discuss the inter-regional air services directive, and allow initial exchanges on the future of Community spending on transport infrastructure, and on road safety issues. The Commission may give an interim report on its negotiations with Austria, Switzerland and Yugoslavia on the transit through those countries of Community traffic.

The Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 20 March will probably be asked to give the Commission the guidance necessary to ensure a positive outcome to the April meeting of the GATT round trade negotiations committee. The Council will also discuss EC/Council of Europe relations. In the margins there will be an EC/Malta Association Council to discuss matters of mutual concern arising out of the EC/Malta association agreement, and an informal meeting between Community and EFTA Ministers to discuss future economic co-operation between the EC and EFTA.

## ENVIRONMENT

### River Pollution

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions there have been under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in respect of alleged river pollution since the implementation of this Act; if he will list such prosecutions in date order and location; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave him on 8 December at column *276* and 11 January at column *659* and to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend, the Minister of State, Home Department, on 3 February at columns *417-18*.

### Housing Associations

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the level of funding from each local authority to housing associations in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

**Mr. Trippier:** The information requested is shown in the "HIP2 ALL ITEMS PRINT" which was placed in the Library in response to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) at columns *704-5*. The figures shown there are as reported by local authorities in their 1988 HIP returns.

### Rats

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the rat population of Great Britain; what measures he is encouraging to reduce it; and whether his Department is investigating the possible growth of a more virulent species of rat.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Information is not held centrally on rat population. The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, places a general duty on local authorities to ensure that their districts are kept free from rats and mice so far as practicable. There is no evidence to show that there has been a growth of a more virulent species of rat.

### Dust and Noise (St. Stephen's House)

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to initiate an inquiry into noise measured in all work areas in St. Stephen's house.

**Mr. Chope:** Some noise from the construction of the new parliamentary building and refurbishment of No 1 Cannon row is unavoidable. The contractors are required to follow good working practices. The Cannon row contract restricts particularly noisy work to between 8 am and 10 am. The imposition of any additional conditions or any instructions to stop work could delay completion of this additional accommodation for Members and their staff and cause extra costs. There is no need for an inquiry.

### Homelessness

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (i) if he will list, for each scheme carried out under the Housing Corporation's programme to provide homeless households with hostel accommodation through a mixture of public and private funding *(a)* during 1987-88, and *(b)* during 1988-89, stating in each case (i) the capital cost of the scheme, (ii) the proportion of the capital cost met by HAG, (iii) the first year revenue cost of loan repayments, (iv) the weekly management and maintenance allowance, and (v) the average weekly rent charged to the homeless households;

(2) if he will list each scheme carried out under the Housing Corporation's programme to provide homeless households with hostel accommodation through a mixture of public and private funding *(a)* during 1987-88, and *(b)* during 1988-89, stating in each case (i) the number of units of accommodation provided, (ii) the housing association involved, (iii) the local authority with nomination rights to these units, and (iv) the date of completion of the scheme.

**Mr. Trippier:** This information is not held centrally, and I have asked the Housing Corporation to supply it direct to the hon. Member.

### Water Privatisation

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will keep a record of the households that have their mains water cut off after privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moynihan:** As a condition of their appointment companies will be required to report to the director general each year on unplanned supply interruptions, giving reasons where these have exceeded targets set by them. The director general may also undertake such monitoring of planned interruptions as he considers appropriate—for instance so that he can review the operation of appointees' codes of practice on disconnections for non-payment of water charges.

The Government have welcomed the proposed revisions to the model disconnection code of practice announced by the water industry on 9 February, which should help to ensure that disconnections are kept to the absolute minimum of those customers who can pay but refuse to do so.

### Exchequer Grants

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of

Exchequer grant paid to *(a)* all the inner London boroughs excluding the City of London for each year since 1981-82 and *(b)* the south-east, excluding Greater London for each year since 1981-82, showing the amounts in cash terms and at 1988-89 prices.

**Mr. Gummer:** The information is as follows:

*(a) Aggregate Exchequer Grant—cash terms*

£m

| | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner London boroughs (excluding City of London) | 387 | 418 | 431 | 413 | 476 | 673 | 689 | 736 |
| South East excluding Greater London | 1,685 | 1,651 | 1,697 | 1,760 | 1,607 | 1,645 | 1,656 | 1,545 |

*(a) Aggregate Exchequer Grant—1988-89*

£m

| | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner London boroughs (excluding City of London) | 555 | 559 | 552 | 503 | 550 | 753 | 732 | 736 |
| South East excluding Greater London | 2,417 | 2,210 | 2,172 | 2,144 | 1,858 | 1,840 | 1,759 | 1,545 |

Cash values have been converted to constant 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

### Croxteth Hall and Country Park

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of Croxteth hall and country park, Merseyside.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** In my answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) on 22 December, at column *437*, I said that we would be consulting the district councils and other interested parties on the proposed transfer of Croxteth hall and country park to Liverpool city council with a ringfenced endowment of £3 million. The consultation period ended on 27 January 1989 and I have considered the responses very carefully.

Although not all districts felt able to agree with our proposals, there was majority support for transfer of the estate. We remain of the opinion that transfer to Liverpool city council with an endowment is the only realistic available option that will provide for the long-term future of Croxteth. It is a valued facility with considerable countrywide support and should be maintained for all the people of Merseyside to use.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has therefore laid before Parliament an order giving effect to the transfer and endowment on 1 April 1989.

### Rent Arrears

**Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available figures on the arrears of rent outstanding to each local authority in England; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Trippier:** I have today arranged for details of the rent arrears outstanding to English local authorities as at 1 April 1988 to be placed in the Library.

The 16 per cent. overall increase during 1987-88 is very disappointing and highlights yet again the poor performance of a minority of authorities. No less than 38 per cent. of the total arrears of £226 million (and 66 per cent. of the increase during the year) is attributable to just 10 authorities, nine Labour-controlled inner London boroughs and Liverpool.

This sorry state of affairs can be attributed only to poor housing management. That is the conclusion of independent reports by both the Audit Commission and the centre for housing research, University of Glasgow.

The control of rent arrears is a vital part of good housing management. Lack of proper control is doubly unfair on those tenants who do pay their rents—it deprives authorities of money that could be used to keep their stock in good order; and it pushes rents higher than they need to be. It is unfair, too, on ratepayers who are called upon to underwrite this blatant inefficiency. We do not intend to let this state of affairs persist. Our proposals for a new financial regime will prevent subsidisation of the housing revenue account from the general rate fund. We are also considering further measures to raise management standards. But I must stress that the responsibility lies with authorities to collect the rent due to them properly and efficiently, for the benefit of all their tenants and ratepayers.

### Football Membership Scheme

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, columns 987-88, if he will reject the recommendations of his working party report for non-United Kingdom passport holders who wish to attend league matches and international matches in England and Wales.

**Mr. Moynihan** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* It has always been our view that everyone, including foreigners, who intends to visit Football League matches, should be a member of the scheme. However, we have also accepted that special arrangements should be made for occasional foreign visitors to attend a particular game. Clubs could issue temporary membership cards in advance of the match. It is possible that the presentation of passports might have a part to play in this process. That is for the Football Membership Authority to consider.

It will be for the Football Membership Authority to consider appropriate arrangements in consultation with the clubs and, in the case of international matches, the Wembley authorities, and to submit its proposals to the Secretary of State for approval.

### Rating Reform

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for each local authority in England, the community charge for 1989-90 which is consistent with the expenditure and grant assumptions in the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement, showing the estimated budget figures for 1988-89 and the percentage change between the two figures.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 14 February 1989]:* I have placed the information requested in the Library.

The community charges shown assume that local authorities will spend according to the assumptions used for the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement and rate accordingly, and that non-domestic rate income increases in line with the RPI. When 1989-90 budget returns have been received, I will publish a further set of illustrative charges. If these show charges higher than those I have placed in the Library today, this will be entirely the result of the individual authorities deciding to spend more than was assumed.

### Government Officers

**Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of office buildings acquired by Her Majesty's Government in the London SW1 area since 1980, the additional square footage now available and the number of civil servants now working in these new offices; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Chope** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* The present size of the Government office estate in the London SW1 postal district is approximately 754,000 sq m. Equivalent figures for 1980 for this postal district are not available. Details of the number of civil servants working in SW1 are not available, but for Greater London as a whole the total floor space in offices on PSA's estate works out to an average of 18·8 sq m per non-industrial civil servant.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Forestry

66. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what number of forestry projects are currently taking place in Essex.

**Mr. Ryder:** Between 1 April 1988 and 31 January 1989 the Forestry Commission has, under its grant scheme, approved 45 new applications for planting grants in Essex.

67. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of forestry projects currently taking place in Cleveland and Durham.

**Mr. Ryder:** Between 1 April 1988 and 31 January 1989 the Forestry Commission has, under its grant schemes, approved 16 new applications for planting grants in Cleveland and Durham.

69. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of forestry projects currently taking place in Derbyshire.

**Mr. Ryder:** Between 1 April 1988 and 31 January 1989 the Forestry Commission has, under its grant schemes, approved 14 new applications for planting grants in Derbyshire.

70. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of forestry projects currently taking place in the county of Avon.

**Mr. Ryder:** Between 1 April 1988 and 31 January 1989 the Forestry Commission has, under its grant schemes, approved eight new applications for planting grants in Avon.

### New Forest

68. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made towards ensuring the future well-being of the New Forest.

**Mr. MacGregor:** In 1986, with the future well-being of the New Forest foremost in mind, the Forestry Commissioners set up the New Forest review group consisting of representatives from the Forestry Commission, the Countryside Commission, the New Forest district council, the Verderers of the New Forest, Hampshire county council and the Nature Conservancy Council, with the following terms of reference:

- to appraise the aims and effectiveness of the measures already taken to safeguard the New Forest;
- to consider whether these measures need to be changed or developed;
- to identify whether further measures may be necessary to maintain the character of the New Forest;
- to report within two years, making recommendations.

The report was published in January 1989 and its recommendations are being considered by the Forestry Commissioners.

### Woodlands (Kent)

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all woodlands in Kent either sold or proposed for sale by the Forestry Commission since the passage of the Forestry Act 1981 and state, for each such woodland the *(a)* acreage, *(b)* map reference and *(c)* species composition, by percentage.

**Mr. Ryder:** The information is given in the following tables:

| *Name* | *Area (hectares)* | *Grid reference* | *Species*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Woodlands sold in Kent* | | | |
| Challock Woodlands | | | |
| Brook Wood | 19·0 | TR 069 439 | C |
| Burnt Oak Wood | 2·3 | TQ 950 438 | C |
| Cadman's Wood | 13·5 | TR 082 428 | B |
| Handen Wood | 9·4 | TR 052 367 | C |
| Longbeech Wood | 41·4 | TQ 971 502 | C |
| March Wood | 42·0 | TQ 945 433 | C |
| Newlands Wood | 24·0 | TQ 955 432 | C |
| Norland and Pierland Wood | 35·0 | TR 024 358 | C |
| Church Wood | 25·0 | TQ 570 632 | C |
| College Wood | 17·0 | TQ 676 652 | B |
| Court Farm (Churchlands) | 16·0 | TQ 669 649 | C |
| Covet Wood (land at) | 0·1 | TR 178 497 | C |
| Covet Wood (land at) | 0·3 | TR 173 494 | C |

| Name | Area (hectares) | Grid reference | Species[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ford Manor Estate: | | | |
| Bowshot Wood (part) | 2·5 | TQ 433 421 | B |
| Jules Wood/Greybury | 24·0 | TQ 436 422 | B |
| Middleroom, Coalhearth (parts) | 18·5 | TQ 435 430 | B |
| Hurst Wood | 16·5 | TQ 568 405 | B |
| Hurst Wood Platt | 66·0 | TQ 628 550 | C |
| Joydens Wood and Gattons Wood | 127·0 | TQ 500 718 | B |
| Little Sharsted Wood | 6·0 | TQ 944 585 | C |
| Maplescombe Farm Woods | 53·6 | TQ 563 626 | B |
| Quornden Wood | 13·0 | TQ 477 533 | C |
| Rochester and Monk Wood | 294·0 | TQ 680 650 | B |
| St. Julian's Wood | 17·0 | TQ 545 525 | C |
| Sharsted Wood and Plantation | 82·9 | TQ 946 581 | B |
| Spring Wood Dene Park | 5·0 | TQ 597 501 | C |
| Squerryes Court | 85·0 | TQ 440 520 | C |
| *Woodlands proposed for sale in Kent* | | | |
| Eggringe Wood (land at) | 3·3 | TR 094 508 | B |
| Flimwell Outliers: | | | |
| Crouches Wood | 9·0 | TQ 705 353 | C |
| Furnace Wood etc. | 68·0 | TQ 735 354 | C |
| Lillesden Wood | 5·0 | TQ 714 358 | B |
| Priors Heath Wood | 7·0 | TQ 708 348 | C |
| Renacre Wood | 26·0 | TQ 945 440 | C |
| Shoreham Wood | 101·5 | TQ 505 615 | B |

[1] The species composition is not available in any more detail than B for mainly broadleaves and C for mainly conifers.

## Water Quality

**Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make available in the Library the recent report quoted by the clerk and chief fishery officer of the Eastern sea fisheries joint committee in the chapter on pollution in his annual report for 1989 in which he refers to Government actions on standards of water quality applicable to sewage in the interim period during which the water public limited companies are established.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** No. The report to which I believe the hon. Member is referring was neither prepared for nor published by Her Majesty's Government.

## Salmonella

**Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place corrected copies of the report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health and BEIC working group on salmonella and eggs in the Library.

**Mr. Ryder:** An error was made in transcribing one of the paragraphs of the "conclusions" section of the report from an earlier draft into the final version. A corrected version, clearly distinguishable by its orange cover, has been placed in the Library of the House. The body of the report and the summary of its recommendations were in no way affected.

## Research

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has of the number of redundancies amongst scientists resulting from the switch in AFRC funding of research away from its own institutes to universities.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have been asked to reply.

I understand that no redundancies are expected over the next two years as a result of AFRC's plans to increase its support for research at higher education institutions. The position in later years will depend on the decisions that the council takes in the light of the future level of allocations to the AFRC from the science budget.

# DEFENCE

## Low Flying

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what safety precautions exist in respect of RAF aircraft on low-flying exercises in the vicinity of nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my predecessor gave to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 19 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *452*.

## Royal Military Police

**Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of Royal Military policemen who have passed out from the RMP training barracks in Chichester in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The numbers of RMP men and women who have passed out from the RMP training course at Chichester, having completed their basic provost course, are as follows:

| | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 179 | 65 |
| 1980 | 291 | 45 |
| 1981 | 210 | 32 |
| 1982 | 160 | 37 |
| 1983 | 182 | 52 |
| 1984 | 245 | 41 |
| 1985 | 294 | 26 |
| 1986 | 302 | 37 |
| 1987 | 172 | 52 |
| 1988 | 157 | 58 |

**Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the principal operational responsibilities of the Royal military police; and what is the total number of military policemen currently in service.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The principal operational responsibilities of the Royal military police in peace, on transition to war and in war are to:

a. enforce the law with the military community and assist with the maintenance of military discipline;
b. assist and support the Services and other law enforcement agencies;
c. provide an assistance, advice and information service to the military community and the public;
d. provide a crime prevention service to the military community;
e. provide a close protection service;
f. provide operational Provost Support.

The total number of regular military police currently in service is 2,411 which may be broken down as follows:

| | *Male* | *Female* |
|---|---|---|
| Officers | 149 | 6 |
| Other Ranks | 1,977 | 279 |
| Total | 2,126 | 285 |

**Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria he uses to assess the quality of training and defence contribution of the Royal military police; and if these are currently being met.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The role of the Royal military police is to provide the provost support required by the Army, meeting legal obligations and operational requirements at least cost. RMP training is framed against these criteria and its effectiveness is judged by theatre commanders throughout the Army. The training programme itself is reviewed continuously in the light, inter alia, of feedback from theatre commanders and to reflect changes in policy and law as they arise.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence proposals he has to replace military police personnel with private security guards at any Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The use of private security firms in guarding establishments is an option open to the Ministry of Defence in cases where their use can satisfy certain security criteria.

We have no proposals at present to replace military police personnel in this way. However, such an arrangement might be considered at an establishment following a change in the use of the premises and a reappraisal of the security circumstances.

## Clyde Submarine Base (Security)

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will strengthen the Ministry of Defence police establishment at the Clyde submarine base in the light of the break-ins by civilians at Faslane.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The numbers of MOD police required at individual locations as well as physical security arrangements are reviewed regularly in the light of current policing and security needs. Additional MOD police have recently been provided at the Clyde submarine base.

## Police

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Defence Police Federation on the future size of the Ministry of Defence police establishment.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) on 23 February 1989 at column *760*.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the Defence Police Federation on the future deployment of Ministry of Defence Police personnel at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The Defence Police Federation is a member of two joint committees which provide it with the opportunity to raise questions on a wide range of issues including complementing.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the replacement of retiring Ministry of Defence police personnel.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Recruitment targets are set to attract the numbers necessary to meet these levels, taking account of natural wastage through retirement and other causes.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present approved establishment for the Ministry of Defence police; how many staff are currently in post; and what is the proposed establishment for each of the next three years.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The strength of the MOD police on 1 February 1989 was 4,772 (inclusive of dedicated civilians, and of manpower provided to repayment users). The requirements for MOD police are reviewed regularly in the light of policing and security needs and it is not MOD policy to provide details of future manning levels.

## Security Staff

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of private sector security staff commissioned by his Department on each of the past three years to guard Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The number of private security guards employed at MOD establishments is variable. The totals in the last three years were approximately:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1986-87 | 200 |
| 1987-88 | 200 |
| 1988-89 | 250 |

## Thermal Imaging

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what examination he has made of the effects of installing thermal imaging equipment at those high security military bases where firearms, ammunition, missiles and warheads are stored.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Security at all Ministry of Defence establishments is under continuous review and the

use of thermal imaging equipment has been considered, together with other aids to physical security which have become available through advances in technology. The cost-effectiveness of such equipment has to be taken into account in our response to the assessed security threat at any particular establishment.

### Security

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last reviewed the security arrangements at RAF Honington and at the United States airbases at RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath; whether he has any proposals to improve the present levels and methods of preventing or detecting access by unauthorised personnel; how the guarding duties of the RAF Regiment, the auxiliary air force, the Ministry of Defence police and the civil police are co-ordinated; and under which senior officer's direct command they are.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The security of a military establishment is the responsibility of its commanding officer, who is normally responsible for any necessary liaison with the civil police. In the case of bases made available to United States forces, the RAF commander is responsible for liaison with the civil police. Security at RAF Honington, as at other Ministry of Defence establishments, is kept under continuous review—and I understand that the same applies to RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath—but it is not our practice to comment in detail on such matters.

### A90 Project

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from Mr. Michael Phillips of Haden Young on developments in the A90 contract.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** None.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment had been made of the progress of the A90 project prior to its amendment to a cost-plus basis.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 10 appendix 4 of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General—"Control and Management of the Trident Programme"—HC 27.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has discussed with Sir Ronald Mason the role of managers and scientists at AWE Aldermaston in the development of the A90 construction project; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** No.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration was given to basing the design and construction techniques used for the A90 project closely on similar projects in the United States of America.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** In response to a report in 1978 by an independent expert, Sir Edward Pochin, which highlighted deficiencies in existing aging facilities at AWRE, MOD instituted a study to examine the available options to ensure the retention of nuclear warhead research and development and fissile component manufacturing capabilities. This study concluded that the best course would be to build a new facility based on the TA55 plutonium facility at Los Alamos scientific laboratory. In 1980 the then Secretary of State approved the construction of the new facility together with associated minimum remedial work essential for the United Kingdom location.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any allegations have been received by him concerning the conduct of the A90 project by any participating contractors; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I assume the hon. Member has in mind the allegations made in the recent "World in Action" programme. The contract in question is the responsibility of the Property Services Agency which I understand is currently investigating the claims made in the programme.

### EMP Simulators

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the largest vehicle which can be subjected to test by the EMP simulators at Aldermaston atomic weapons establishment.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The working dimensions of the EMP simulators at AWE are 25 m long, 11 m wide, and 6 m high. The facility will accommodate all current service land vehicles.

### Procurement

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met members of the Defence Manufacturers Association to discuss matters relating to procurement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** On 6 December 1988 at a meeting of the National Defence Industries Council.

### Aviation Medicine Training Centre

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the proposed move of the Royal Air Force aviation medicine training centre from RAF North Luffenham, Rutland, to RAF Mount Batten, Plymouth, which was originally notified to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton by ministerial letter D/US of S(AF) RNF 19/2/11 of 27 January 1987.

**Mr. Neubert:** I shall write to my hon. Friend.

### No. 144 Signals Unit

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it remains his intention to move the RAF No. 144 Signals unit from RAF Wattisham to RAF North Luffenham, Rutland, in early 1989, as originally notified to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton by ministerial letter D/US of S(AF) RNF 4844 of 10 March 1988; and whether he will give details of the number of personnel who will be transferred in such a move.

**Mr. Neubert:** The move of No. 144 Signals unit from RAF Wattisham to RAF North Luffenham is being reviewed following a reassessment of the unit's role.

### Conscription

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the cost of conscription for

an 18-month period of *(a)* all males and *(b)* both males and females of 18 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** The Government have no plans to reintroduce conscription.

## Contractors

**Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid to each of the contractors listed on page 15 of "Statement of the Defence Estimates 2", Cm 344-II, by his Department in the financial year 1986-87.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The payments made to each of these companies in the year ended 31 March 1987 in respect of headquarters contracts were as follows:

| *Company* | *Payments £ million* |
|---|---|
| British Aerospace plc (Aircraft) | 320 |
| British Aerospace plc (Dynamics) | 610 |
| The General Electric Co. plc | 850 |
| The Plessey Co. plc | 365 |
| Rolls Royce Ltd. | 425 |
| Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. | 345 |
| The British Petroleum Co. plc | 100 |
| Ferranti plc | 200 |
| Hunting Associated Industries plc | 205 |
| Racal Electronics plc | 105 |
| Royal Ordnance plc | 245 |
| Thorn-EMI plc | 155 |
| Vickers plc | 115 |
| Westland plc | 135 |
| British Railways Board | 58 |
| British Telecommunications plc | 56 |
| Dowty Group plc | 66 |
| ESSO United Kingdom plc | 91 |
| Lucas Industries plc | 61 |
| General Motors Ltd. | 51 |
| Pilkington Bros. plc | 69 |
| Philips Electronic and Associated Industries Ltd. | 54 |
| The "Shell" Transport and Trading Co. plc | 52 |
| Short Bros plc | 67 |
| STC plc | 76 |
| Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd. | 77 |
| Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd. | 92 |
| Austin Rover Group Ltd. | 47 |
| British Airways plc | 33 |
| BTR plc | 27 |
| Civil Aviation Authority | 25 |
| Digital Equipment Co. Ltd. | 35 |
| F R Group plc | 37 |
| GKN plc | 38 |
| Marshall of Cambridge (Engineering) Ltd. | 47 |
| Paccar UK Ltd. | 27 |
| Smiths Industries plc | 28 |
| United Scientific Holdings plc | 38 |
| Vosper Thorneycroft (UK) Ltd. | 38 |
| Avon Rubber plc | 10 |
| BET plc | 21 |
| The British and Commonwealth Shipping Co. plc | 13 |
| British Shipbuilders | 14 |
| Cambridge Electronic Industries plc | 16 |
| Coats Viyella plc | 18 |
| Control Data Ltd. | 10 |
| Cossor Electronics Ltd. | 21 |
| Clanfield Institute of Technology | 14 |
| Cray Electronics Holding plc | 12 |
| DRG plc | 22 |
| Frazer-Nash Group Ltd. | 12 |
| Harland and Wolff plc | 11 |
| Hawker Siddeley Group plc | 12 |
| Hewlett Packard Ltd. | 14 |
| Honeywell Ltd. | 12 |
| Mobil Holdings Ltd. | 11 |
| Northern Engineering Industries plc | 11 |
| Petrofina (UK) Ltd. | 10 |
| RCA Ltd. | 21 |
| Remploy Ltd. | 11 |
| Singer Link Miles Ltd. | 12 |
| Systems Designers plc | 13 |
| UK Universities | 12 |
| United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority | 13 |
| The Weir Group plc | 19 |
| Yarrow plc | 14 |
| Apricot Computers plc | 6 |
| BBA Group | 6 |
| BMARC Ltd. | 9 |
| Bodycote International plc | 5 |
| Caledonian Aviation Group plc | 5 |
| CAP Group plc | 7 |
| The Charente Steamship Co. Ltd. | 7 |
| Chemring Group plc | 7 |
| Chloride Group plc | 6 |
| Commercial Shearing Inc. | 5 |
| CONOCO (UK) Ltd. | 10 |
| Courtaulds plc | 7 |
| David Brown (Holdings) Ltd. | 5 |
| F. L. Smidth and Co. (Holdings) Ltd. | 7 |
| Ford Motor Co. Ltd. | 7 |
| George Blair plc | 8 |
| Gibraltar Shiprepair Ltd. | 7 |
| Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Co. (GB) Ltd. | 8 |
| Hall Russell Ltd. | 8 |
| Hogg Robinson Group plc | 6 |
| Humber Shiprepairers Ltd. | 6 |
| IBM United Kingdom Holdings Ltd. | 8 |
| Inchcape plc | 9 |
| J. C. Bamford Excavators Ltd. | 9 |
| John Brown plc | 7 |
| Logica plc | 7 |
| MacTaggart Scott (Holdings) Ltd. | 5 |
| M. L. Holdings plc | 5 |
| Martin-Baker Aircraft Co. Ltd. | 5 |
| Massey Ferguson Holdings Ltd. | 7 |
| Meggitt Holdings plc | 6 |
| Portsmouth Aviation Ltd. | 5 |
| The Rank Organisation plc | 9 |
| Readicut International plc | 5 |
| RFD Group plc | 6 |
| RHP Group plc | 5 |
| Ropner plc | 9 |
| Saft (UK) Ltd. | 7 |
| Schlumberger Measurement and Control (UK) Ltd. | 7 |
| Total Oil Holdings Ltd. | 5 |
| Tozer Kemsley and Millbourn Holdings plc | 8 |
| Watsham's plc | 6 |
| Waverley Electronics | 6 |
| Wills Group plc | 5 |

*Note:* The figures below £100 million are rounded to the nearest £1 million and those above £100 million are rounded to the nearest £5 million.

# SCOTLAND

## Rating Reform

17. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the latest forecast about the impact of the community charge on single pensioners.

**Mr. Lang:** It is estimated that over 80 per cent. of single pensioner households in Scotland will benefit from the introduction of the community charge.

24. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the administration of the poll tax registers in Scotland, as regards variations adopted with regard to the furnishings of dates of birth.

**Mr. Lang:** Section 13(1)(d) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, requires the community charges register for each registration area to specify the date of birth of each natural person registered therein. Statutory responsibility for compiling these registers rests with the community charges registration officer for each area and it is for them to decide, within the framework of the powers given to them, how best to carry out their functions.

48. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from organisations and individuals seeking to have poll tax liability removed from all persons who are mentally or physically impaired.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations from Members of Parliament, interested organisations and individuals about the liability for the community charge of people with various forms of physical and mental disability.

51. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the level of community charge in Lothian region.

**Mr. Lang:** Since the beginning of this year my right hon. and learned Friend and I have received about 30 representations on the level of the community charge in Lothian region. All have expressed dismay at the unacceptably high level of charges imposed in Lothian region.

## Storm Damage

18. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what use is being made of the Bellwin scheme to help local authorities deal with the consequences of the storm damage in Scotland on 13 February.

**Mr. Lang:** It is too soon to say whether it would be appropriate to invoke the Bellwin scheme in relation to the recent storms.

32. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate of the cost of the clearing-up operations following the storm of 13 February.

44. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is yet in a position to announce details of his response to local authorities and other interested parties within the Highlands and Islands on financial assistance following the flooding and storm damage of this winter; and if he will make a statement.

47. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the financial implications of the recent severe weather in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** It is too soon to assess the full extent and cost of damage and restoration work arising from the recent flooding and storms. Rather than initiate discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, my right hon. and learned Friend has sought detailed reports directly from those authorities in the Highlands affected by the flooding, and from housing authorities, so that he can make an assessment of the situation as soon as possible. He made it clear in the House on 14 February that if other authorities make representations about excessive costs, he will consider these on the basis of principles for financial assistance well established in previous years. A decision on whether special financial assistance would be appropriate for any area will be made as soon as reports have been received and assessed.

## Procurator Fiscal Service

19. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on the National Audit Office report into the procurator fiscal service; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on the National Audit Office report into the procurator fiscal service; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Five representatives have been received by the Lord Advocate on the National Audit Office report on the prosecution of crime in Scotland and review of the procurator fiscal service. Since the report of the Public Accounts Committee has not yet been published, it would be inappropriate to make a statement.

## Transport Links

20. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the future adequacy of transport links between the central belt and the north-east of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I have received several representations about rail links about the future adversity of trunk road links between the central belt and north-east of Scotland. Over the last few years the Government have made it a major priority to upgrade the A94 to dual carriageway standard. That committment is now nearly fulfilled.

## Alzheimer's Disease

22. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate for the number of people with Alzheimer's disease in Scotland.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Alzheimer's disease is one of a number of degenerative brain disorders which occur in later life. It is not possible to give accurate estimates of the numbers of people with these conditions because of the very gradual onset of symptoms and changes in the diagnostic classifications as a result of research in this area. Recent studies have, however, suggested that between 112,000 and 160,000 people in Scotland may have dementia of varying severity in one form or another of whom between one half and two thirds may have Alzheimer's disease.

### Education (Renfrewshire)

23. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has recently received in relation to the provision of school education in Renfrewshire; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from parents of pupils attending St. Aelred's high school, Paisley and others expressing opposition to a proposal by Strathclyde regional council to close the school. That proposal has been submitted by the education authority to my right hon. and learned Friend for his consent.

### Tourism

25. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applicants for section 4 grants under the Development of Tourism Act 1969, have been approved; what was the value awarded for each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 16 February. Prior to 1984-85 the approvals were:

| *Financial year* | *Number of approvals* | *Value of assistance (£ million)* |
|---|---|---|
| 1980-81 | 126 | 2·2 |
| 1981-82 | 165 | 2·7 |
| 1982-83 | 188 | 3·3 |
| 1983-84 | 250 | 5·5 |

I have no statement to make on the operation of section 4 in Scotland.

### Church of Scotland

26. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from the church and nation committee of the Church of Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** None.

### Claim of Right

27. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received about the "A Claim of Right for Scotland" document.

35. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received concerning the document "A Claim of Right for Scotland".

45. **Mr. David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what further representations he has received about the "A Claim of Right for Scotland" document.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I refer the right hon. Member and the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on 9 November 1988 at column *228*. No further representations have been received.

### Scottish National Party

28. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has recently received from the Scottish National party about the future government of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** None.

### Scottish Constitutional Convention

29. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the Scottish constitutional convention.

46. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet the Scottish constitutional convention.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I refer the hon. Members to the reply which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudon (Mr. McKelvey).

42. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had concerning the Scottish constitutional convention.

**Mr. Rifkind:** No representations have been received since my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on 9 November 1988 at column *228*. Both letters referred to in that reply advocated the establishment of a Scottish constitutional convention.

### Scotland (Government)

30. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will deposit in the Library copies of all the speeches he has made on the structure of government in Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind:** No. Copies of speeches which I have made in the House on the structure of government in Scotland are recorded in the *Official Report* and are thus available for reference. I often refer on other occasions to aspects of the structure of government in Scotland, but no comprehensive record of these comments is available.

### Forestry (Perthshire)

31. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of forestry projects currently taking place in Perthshire.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Between 1 April 1988 and 31 January 1989, the Forestry Commission has, under its grant schemes, approved 71 new applications for planting grants in Perthshire.

### Legal Profession

33. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the president of the Law Society of Scotland and the dean of the Faculty of Advocates.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no such engagement, but has had a recent meeting with the president of the Law Society and the dean of the Faculty of Advocates on Monday 19 December 1988.

### Devolution

34. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for legislation to devolve power to an elected Scottish Assembly.

40. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to introduce legislation to devolve further powers to Scotland.

60. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he intends to bring forward to improve the democratic accountability of government in Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I refer the hon. Members to the reply which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray).

### Forest Parks

36. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans are in progress to enhance public usage of forest parks.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** There are now 12 forest parks in Britain, the latest being Tummel forest park which was declared by the Forestry Commission last year. A free leaflet publicising the parks was issued by the commission last June. Plans for encouraging increased public use of the forest parks include the provision of further recreational facilities, the development of an attractive style of signing—already introduced at certain forest parks—and the production of a new series of forest park guidebooks.

### Harbours

37. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of the number of harbour developments in Scotland funded by European Community assistance since 1979; what is the total level of funding associated with these developments; and what is the cost associated with each development.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The number of harbour development projects in Scotland since 1979 which received financial assistance from the European Community totalled 144. The total cost of these developments amounted to £97·5 million to which the European Community contributed £34·7 million. A list of individual projects could be provided only at disproportionate costs, but projects ranged in cost between £10,000 and £5 million.

### Scottish Parliament

38. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now take steps to assess the level of demand for a Scottish Parliament.

**Mr. Rifkind:** No.

### Scottish Assembly

39. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly.

61. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I have received four letters since June 1987, culminating in October last year in representations about the claim of right document advocating the establishment of a Scottish constitutional convention.

### NHS White Paper

43. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has had from area health boards on the White Paper on the future of the National Health Service.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I received an encouraging and positive response at my meetings with health board chairmen, general managers and senior professionals, held at the time of the launch of the White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555), We shall now be working closely with health boards and others to ensure that the White Paper proposals are effectively implemented.

65. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a detailed analysis of the implications of the chapter of the Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients" which relates to Scotland.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly be issuing to interested parties various working papers giving further details of our proposals for the Scottish Health Service set out in chapter 10 of the White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555). I shall ensure copies of these are made available in the Library.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he will be publishing working papers detailing the changes resulting in Scotland from the "Working for Patients" White Paper, similar to those issued by the Department of Health;

(2) whether the consultation period on the "Working for Patients" White Paper will be extended in Scotland to take account of the current lack of working papers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The first in the series of six Scottish working papers will be published shortly. It is intended to complete the consultation process by the end of May, which we regard as a reasonable time scale.

### Investment

49. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of inward investment announcements in Scotland over the past year; what has been the level of investment secured; and if he will give the number of jobs associated with these projects.

**Mr. Lang:** In 1987-88, the latest complete year for which figures are available, there were 88 decisions to locate in Scotland. These projects were associated with total planned investment of £337 million and 11,852 jobs.

### Scottish Independence

50. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many written representations he has received since June 1987 advocating an independent Scotland.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Seventeen.

### NHS (Competitive Tendering)

52. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of resources for direct patient care he expects to be released through competitive tendering in the National Health Service.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Contracts awarded so far will release £15·6 million over the next three years for reinvestment in direct patient care. This is equivalent to the cost of around 2,600 bypass operations or 5,300 hip replacement operations or could buy around 1,500 renal dialysis machines.

### Local Services (Payment)

53. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning alternative means of paying for local services.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations over the years suggesting alternatives to the unfair and discredited domestic rating system.

### Public Housing (Springburn)

54. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision he is making to improve public housing for families in Springburn.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** As the statutory housing authority, Glasgow district council is responsible for determining its own policies and programmes for dealing with improvements to its housing stock. This year the council received a gross capital allocation of £89·3 million for investment in its own housing stock. The council also has additional resources available through a covenant scheme providing £140 million over a five-year period.

The Housing Corporation has made £4·4 million available in the current year to the Springburn and Possilpark housing association programme, of which £3·8 million will go towards family housing and owner-occupation. The association has five rehabilitation schemes on site, at a total cost of £5·5 million, which will provide 165 housing units, 104 of which will be for general needs.

The association is also progressing a new build scheme for shared ownership which will provide 49 units at a cost of £1·6 million, towards which the corporation has committed a subsidy of 15 per cent.

The Scottish special housing association is landlord of 848 properties in Springburn and has recently completed a new build development of 26 amenity flats in the area.

### Council House Sales

**Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of applications for the purchase of council housing in Scotland; what is the proportion of houses in Scotland now under owner-occupation; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** During 1988 a monthly average of over 4,100 council house purchase applications were received. Over 44 per cent. of Scottish houses are now in owner-occupation. The sustained high level of applications from public sector tenants seeking to exercise the right to buy is clear evidence of the continuing success of the Government's right-to-buy policy.

62. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the total of tenants to have purchased a property under the right to buy to reach 150,000.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** From information available to date, the number of local authority and new town tenants who have purchased houses under the right to buy legislation between October 1980 and December 1988 is over 108,000. Since April 1979 total sales of public sector stock to sitting tenants in Scotland are over 144,000. This figure may reach 150,000 within the next few months.

### Japanese and Korean Investment

56. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what action he has taken to encourage Japanese and Korean investment in Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** Through Locate in Scotland, the Government continue successfully to encourage companies from the far east to establish themselves in Scotland. To further increase the effectiveness of Locate in Scotland operations in the Japanese and other far eastern markets, two new posts have been established in Tokyo within the past 12 months. An additional far east post was also created at Locate in Scotland headquarters in Glasgow last year.

### Elderly People (Housing Management)

57. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will introduce legislation to allow residents of private housing developments for older people to change their management agency following a ballot.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** No.

### Education Expenditure

58. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent *(a)* on teachers' salaries and *(b)* books and learning materials in the past year and five, 10, 15 and 20 years ago in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The information in the tables is taken from local authority financial returns; details for 1967-68 are no longer held.

*Table 1*
*Expenditure on teachers' salaries*
*£000 at 1987-88 prices*

| *Year* | *Expenditure* |
|---|---|
| 1972-73 | 580,115 |
| 1977-78 | 688,345 |
| 1982-83 | 731,209 |
| 1987-88 | 791,410 |

*Table 2*
*Expenditure on supplies and services*

*£000 at 1987-88 prices*

| *Year* | *Text and library books* | *Equipment and materials* | *Provisions* | *Other supplies and services* | *Total supplies and services* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1972-73 | 19,726 | 24,069 | 212 | 3,845 | 47,852 |
| 1977-78 | 9,956 | — | 604 | 29,838 | 40,398 |
| 1982-83 | 9,406 | 19,475 | 344 | 7,299 | 36,524 |
| 1987-88 | 8,396 | 20,585 | 266 | 4,552 | 33,799 |

*Note:* In 1977-78 expenditure on equipment and materials was not separately identified in local authority financial returns.

## Self-employed People

59. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet representatives of the National Federation of Self-Employed; and what matters he intends to discuss.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses Limited. I met representatives of the federation in July of last year and I will continue to correspond with the federation on issues of mutual concern.

## Wood Products

63. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the level of demand for wood products has been over the past year.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The apparent consumption of wood and wood products in the United Kingdom in 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, was 49·4 million cu m of wood raw material equivalent. This does not include recycled waste paper and residues of United Kingdom origin.

## European Regional Development Fund

64. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since 1979.

**Mr. Lang:** Awards totalled £738 million between 1979 and 1988.

## NHS Staff

**Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number of ancillary staffs employed in the National Health Service in Scotland as at 30 September 1988, excluding nurse auxiliaries, *(b)* the number of whole-time equivalents in Scotland, *(c)* the average hours of ancillary staffs, whole-time, by grade together with average pay by grade and *(d)* the average hours of part-time ancillary staffs by grade and average pay; broken down by male and female for of each of categories *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)*.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** There are 30,439 ancillary staff employed by the National Health Service in Scotland at 30 September 1988, a contracted whole-time equivalent of 22,068 of whom 6,176 were males and 15,892 females. Average hours and average weekly pay are shown in the tables.

*Ancillary staff: Estimated average hours worked and average weekly pay*[1]

| *Grade*[2] | *Pay scale* | *Males* | | | | *Females* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Whole-time* | | *Part-time* | | *Whole-time* | | *Part-time* | |
| | | *Hours* | *Pay £* | *Hours* | *Pay £* | *Hours* | *Pay £* | *Hours* | *Pay £* |
| Non-supervisors and chargehands | A | 46 | 130 | 30 | 78 | 42 | 114 | 23 | 60 |
| | B | 45 | 132 | 25 | 68 | 42 | 114 | 26 | 71 |
| | C | 46 | 156 | 26 | 85 | 42 | 134 | 26 | 79 |
| | D | 50 | 172 | — | — | 44 | 157 | 30 | 102 |
| Supervisors | I | 46 | 137 | — | — | 43 | 140 | 27 | 84 |
| | II | 47 | 168 | — | — | 41 | 135 | 28 | 88 |
| | III | 47 | 167 | — | — | 41 | 129 | — | — |
| | IV | 47 | 169 | — | — | 42 | 150 | — | — |

[1] Pay is based on 1987-88 rates.
[2] Grades with fewer than 20 staff are omitted.

## Resource Management

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current status of the resource management initiative at Inverclyde royal infirmary and Bangour general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Pilot projects are being undertaken at both Inverclyde royal hospital (Argyll and Clyde health board) and Bangour general hospital (Lothian health board) and valuable experience on the introduction of resource management has already been gained from the work at these sites. Initially work concentrated on the development and introduction of suitable information systems with a computerised patient administration system at the core and various related "feeder" systems, some clerical and some computerised. However, there is still a need for futher work at both sites before the resource management objectives can be met. In particular, there is a requirement for a clinical information system to provide consultants with the detailed information they require. Further work is also required on the development of treatment costings.

Argyll and Clyde health board has recently proposed an extension of the project at Inverclyde following the installation of a clinical information system which will give

clinicians a lead role in the exercise. These plans include an increase in the administrative support necessary to operate resource management. The Scottish Home and Health Department and the directorate of health service information systems (DHSIS) of the Common Services Agency will be sharing the costs of this project with the board, initially on a 50-50 basis, and contracts are about to be signed.

Lothian health board is also looking at ways of extending the Bangour project. An essential corollary of any resource management initiative is the provision of clinically informative data and in Lothian there are established clinical auditing systems which can be built upon. These will be taken account of in the board's proposals which are currently being prepared and the Department and DHSIS will consider the extent of further financial support which should be provided for this project from central funds.

### Solicitors (Interim Payment)

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce arrangements for interim payment to a solicitor for work done under a section 1 certificate.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamiliton:** The Scottish Home and Health Department is currently discussing such a possibility with the Law Society of Scotland.

### Legal Aid

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will give consideration to relaxation of the criteria governing determination of hardship provisions under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 1988 where *(a)* a pursuer, and *(b)* a defender to a small claims process has been in receipt of advice and assistance cover in respect of such small claims and where property has been recovered or preserved by such pursuer or defender.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I see no need to do so. The regulations provide that in cases where the recovery provision might, in the opinion of the solicitor, cause grave hardship or distress to the client or could be effected only with reasonable difficulty because of the nature of the property, the solicitor may apply to the board for authority not to enforce payment of his fees or outlays out of any property recovered or preserved.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recommendations his Department has received from the Scottish Legal Aid Board on the need for additional resources to enable it to discharge its statutory functions; and what response has been made.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamiliton:** Following representations from the Scottish Legal Aid Board, additional funds have been made available for legal aid adminstration increasing this year's provision from £4·96 million to £5·09 million. In addition, the planned expenditure on the Scottish legal aid fund has been increased—subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate—from £52 million to £54 million to meet increased demand.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to amend the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 to remove the disentitlement to payment of solicitors for work necessarily and reasonably done.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Act contains no such provision.

### Prisons (Staff Inspections)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reintroduce staff inspection to Scottish prisons; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Scottish prison service operational manpower unit will begin a staff inspection on the residential and operations functional areas of Edinburgh prison on 6 March. Similar staff inspections at Perth, Glonochil and Shotts prisons are planned during the coming year. The programme of inspections was suspended during the introduction of the fresh start restructuring exercise.

### Penal Institutions (Visiting Committees)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many penal institutions in Scotland have visiting committees; and if he will list the numbers serving in each such committee.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Every penal institution in Scotland is served by a visiting committee. The table lists the numbers serving on each:

*Prison visiting committees*

| *Establishment* | *Number of members* |
|---|---|
| Aberdeen | 12 |
| Barlinnie | 35 |
| Cornton Vale | 29 |
| Dungavel | 13 |
| Edinburgh | 25 |
| Glenochil | 22 |
| Inverness | 14 |
| Low Moss | 11 |
| Noranside | 12 |
| Penninghame | 14 |
| Perth | 22 |
| Peterhead | 13 |
| Shotts | 13 |

*Young offenders institution visiting committees*

| *Establishment* | *Number of members* |
|---|---|
| Castle Huntly | 10 |
| Cornton Vale | 10 |
| Dumfries | 11 |
| Glenochil | 12 |
| Greenock | 9 |
| Polmont | 7 |

Friarton prison is served by a sub-group of Perth prison visiting committee. Longriggend remand institution is served by a sub-group of Barlinnie prison visiting committee.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to encourage attendance at meetings of visiting committees of penal institutions in Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am anxious to encourage members of visiting committees to play an effective role in the work of their committees. In January 1989, the Scottish Home and Health Department organised a conference at which every visiting committee was given the opportunity to be represented. Delegates to the conference discussed the duties of visiting committee members and the issue of training. A comprehensive manual of guidance for all visiting committee members has been prepared by the Scottish Home and Health Department and will be issued shortly. This emphasises the need for regular attendance by members at penal establishments. Moreover the Scottish Home and Health Department gave support to the establishment, in September 1988, of an Association of Visiting Committees for Scotland, with the aim of encouraging and supporting visiting committee members in their duties.

## Penal Institutions (Workshops)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prison officers are employed in supervising workshops; and in which penal institutions.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Industrial workshops in prisons are supervised by civilian industrial managers and assistant managers. There are 18 such staff. Under their supervision 176 uniformed prison officers are employed as instructors in the workshops. In addition 50 prison officers work as relief instructors to cover annual leave and sick leave of instructional staff.

## Penal Institutions

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the staffing establishment of each penal institution in Scotland together with staff vacancies in each case.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The table sets out the current position.

| *Establishment* | *Complement at 1 April 1988* | *Staff currently in post or training*[1] | *Difference plus/minus* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Aberdeen | 104·0 | 110 | +6·0 |
| 2. Barlinnie | 485·0 | 497 | +12·0 |
| 3. BSU | 16·0 | 15 | −1·0 |
| 4. Castle Huntly | 67·0 | 64 | −3·0 |
| 5. Cornton Vale | 179·5 | 184 | +4·5 |
| 6. Dumfries | 112·5 | 121 | +8·5 |
| 7. Dungavel | 67·0 | 63 | −4·0 |
| 8. Edinburgh | 360·0 | 383 | +23·0 |
| 9. Friarton | 48·0 | 51 | +3·0 |
| 10. Glenochil | 387·5 | 380 | −7·5 |
| 11. Greenock | 146·5 | 155 | +8·5 |
| 12. Inverness | 86·5 | 97 | +10·5 |
| 13. Longriggend | 149·5 | 155 | +5·5 |
| 14. Low Moss | 121·0 | 124 | +3·0 |
| 15. Noranside | 63·0 | 64 | +1·0 |
| 16. Penninghame | 33·5 | 31 | −2·5 |
| 17. Perth | 319·0 | 329 | +10·0 |
| 18. Peterhead | 260·5 | 270 | +9·5 |
| 19. Polmont | 232·5 | 252 | +19·5 |
| 20. Shotts | 325·5 | 331 | +5·5 |
| 21. SPSC | 29·0 | 28 | −1·0 |
| TOTAL | 3,593·0 | 3,704 | +111·0 |

[1]Staff in post or in training exceed the complement because of the need to anticipate the reduction of prison officers' contracted hours by 2 hours per officer per week from 1 April 1989.

## Prison Industries

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he proposes to take to increase the turnover in prison industries; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** So far as is consistent with the needs of security and providing balanced regimes for inmates, I will continue policies to maximise manufacturing efficiency. Measures are being taken to ensure that working hours reflect, as closely as possible, those of private sector industry, that staff and inmates are properly trained and that contracts are completed on time and to the required quality standards.

The Scottish prison service is planning to increase the value of industrial production by £275,000 in 1989-90.

## Schools (Assisted Places)

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the cost to his Department of the assisted places scheme in each school in Scotland which benefited in the latest year for which figures are available and the number of pupils involved in each school.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The information is as follows:

| *School* | *Total expenditure in 1987-88 school year* | *Number of pupils* |
|---|---|---|
| Albyn School for Girls, Aberdeen | 26,852 | 15 |
| Belmont House School, Newton Mearns | 30,926 | 17 |
| Craigholme School for Girls, Glasgow | 42,158 | 30 |

| School | Total expenditure in 1987-88 school year | Number of pupils |
|---|---|---|
| Daniel Stewarts & Melville College, Edinburgh<br>Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh<br>George Watsons College, Edinburgh | 1,054,034 | 560 |
| Dollar Academy | 99,923 | 57 |
| Edinburgh Academy | 94,858 | 38 |
| Fernhill School, Glasgow | 64,669 | 42 |
| Fettes College, Edinburgh | 93,060 | 26 |
| Fort Augustus Abbey School | 110,700 | 43 |
| George Heriot's School, Edinburgh | 397,293 | 221 |
| Glasgow Academy | 79,471 | 42 |
| Glenalmond College, Perthshire | 124,965 | 35 |
| Gordonstoun School, Morayshire | 82,209 | 22 |
| The High School of Dundee | 309,400 | 170 |
| The High School of Glasgow | 100,843 | 58 |
| Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow | [1]205,125 | 148 |
| Keil School, Dumbarton | 117,456 | 57 |
| Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow | 102,809 | 54 |
| Kilgraston (Convent of the Sacred Heart) | 98,374 | 51 |
| Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas | 34,354 | 17 |
| Laurel Bank School, Glasgow | 128,202 | 60 |
| Lomond School, Helensburgh | 88,898 | 43 |
| Loretto School, Musselburgh | 81,711 | 23 |
| Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh | 167,206 | 49 |
| Morrison's Academy, Crieff | [1]267,297 | 156 |
| The Park School, Glasgow | 116,530 | 54 |
| Rannoch School, Perthshire | 68,081 | 25 |
| Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen | [1]81,119 | 54 |
| Rudolf Steiner School of Edinburgh | 98,283 | 58 |
| St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow | 231,765 | 137 |
| St. Columba's Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire | 97,841 | 47 |
| St. Denis & Cranley School, Edinburgh | 41,471 | 20 |
| St. George's School for Girls, Edinburgh | 31,512 | 16 |
| St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews | 53,692 | 22 |
| St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen | 23,404 | 13 |
| St. Margaret's School for Girls, Edinburgh | 107,711 | 54 |
| Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire | 122,736 | 34 |
| Wellington School, Ayr | [1]74,600 | 41 |
| Westbourne School for Girls, Glasgow | 151,647 | 71 |
| Total | 5,303,185 | 2,680 |

[1] Provisional figures.

## Sunday Trading

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to seek to change the law on Sunday trading in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** With one small exception relating to hairdressers and barbers, the restrictions on Sunday trading in the Shops Act 1950 do not apply in Scotland. I have no present plans to change the existing law.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the law on Sunday trading in Scotland from *(a)* the Keep Sunday Special campaign and *(b)* the Shopping Hours Reform Council; what analysis of the economic consequences of implementing these representations he has made; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received the proposals of both the Keep Sunday Special campaign and the Shopping Hours Reform Council. He has no plans to implement the proposals of the Keep Sunday Special campaign which would impose new restrictions on Sunday trading in Scotland. The proposals of the Shopping Hours Reform Council on Sunday trading are not intended to extend to Scotland. He has, therefore, made no analysis of the economic consequences of implementing the proposals.

## General Practitioners

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will be issuing a document detailing his proposals for changes to general practitioners' terms of service and remuneration system.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I shall shortly be writing to all general practitioners in Scotland with a report setting out the proposed changes to GPs' remuneration and terms of service as they would apply in Scotland.

## Child Care (Fife)

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the discharge by Fife regional council of its statutory responsibilities for child care.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Scottish Office officials have undertaken extensive discussions with officials of Fife regional council concerning the discharge by the authority of certain statutory functions relating to the use of voluntary and compulsory measures of care for children, together with relations between the social work department and the children's panel. In the course of these discussions, clear differences of view have emerged as to whether the practice followed by the social work department is consistent with the best interests of children at risk and with the provision of effective support to the children's hearings system in the region. I have concluded after careful consideration that, with a view to resolving these issues, it would now be right for me to constitute an inquiry under section 99 of the Children Act 1975. The terms of reference are as follows:

1. To inquire into the policies pursued by Fife regional council through its social work department in discharging its functions under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and related legislation
   in the use of voluntary and compulsory measures of care for children, and
   in particular, in the advice given to children's hearings before they decide on or review compulsory measures of care for children referred to them.
2. To assess the extent to which the regional council's current policies relating to these matters and the Department's interpretation and application of them meet the best interests of children at risk.
3. To make recommendations for any modification of the child care policies of Fife regional council and their interpretation and application in the best interests of children.
4. To report to the Secretary of State.

I have invited Sheriff Brian Kearney to undertake the inquiry. Sheriff Kearney will be assisted by Professor Elisabeth Mapstone, OBE, professor of social administration and social work, University of Dundee.

I hope that it will be possible for the inquiry to be completed within three months.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Income-Related Benefits

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update tables 1b, 5b and 7b of the paper entitled "The Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" published in October 1987 to show the position after October 1989, taking into account benefit upratings and the additional payments for pensioners aged 75 years and over.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that the reply can be supplied only at disproportionate cost. There was no prescribed procedure for uprating supplementary benefit, housing benefit or family income supplement—different elements of these schemes were uprated in different ways and by different indices at different times. It is therefore impossible to say what the rates of these benefits would have been in April 1989 if reforms had not been introduced. A simple mechanistic uprating in line with the retail price indices would be unrealistic.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

**Mr. Moore:** Information in the form required is not available because records are held on a combined basis with the Department of Health. Information for both Departments as at 23 February is given in the table:

| | *Total staff* | *Female staff* | | *[1]Ethnic minorities staff* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Numbers* | *Per cent.* | *Numbers* | *Per cent.* |
| Grades 1 to 7 | 1,066 | 149 | 13·9 | 12 | 1·1 |
| SEO and HEO | 6,885 | 2,195 | 31·8 | 63 | 0·9 |
| EO | 23,245 | 13,543 | 58·2 | 534 | 2·3 |
| AO and below | 61,749 | 46,221 | 74·8 | 2,752 | 4·4 |
| Others[2] | 3,280 | 812 | 24·7 | 125 | 3·8 |
| Total | 96,225 | 62,920 | 65·3 | 3,495 | 3·6 |

[1] Ethnic minorities figures are based on questionnaires voluntarily completed by staff.
[2] eg Industrial and professional staff.

### Benefits

**Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was spent by way of benefit on *(a)* all families with children aged under 16 years for the last year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Separate information on family support for families with children aged under 16 years is not available. In 1988-89, it is estimated that, excluding unemployment benefit, social security support for all families with children totals almost £8·6 billion. Of this, approximately £3·4 billion is being provided for lone parents.

### Social Security Act 1986

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the first year's operation of the Social Security Act 1986.

**Mr. Scott:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 January at columns *802-3*.

### Disability Benefits

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had with disability organisations concerning proposed criteria for the forthcoming review of disability benefits.

**Mr. Scott:** Ian Bruce, director-general, Royal National Institute for the Blind, has recently written to me on behalf of his and seven other disability organisations to ask about plans for a review of disability benefits after the publication of all the reports by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on its surveys of disability. My response makes it clear that I would welcome the opportunity to meet Mr. Bruce and his colleagues to listen to views and reactions on the OPCS reports already published and their implications. I have sent a copy of my reply to the right hon. Member.

### Mobility Allowance

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to increase the age limit for mobility allowance; and how many people reaching the age of 75 years in the current year stand to have their mobility allowance withdrawn from 1 April.

**Mr. Scott:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on 13 February at column *63*. No existing beneficiaries will reach age 75 before 29 November.

## HEALTH

### NHS Costs

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate in cash terms for the current year the cost of the teaching hospitals based in London and other national resources for the National Health Service based in London.

**Mr. Mellor:** We do not collect information in the form requested. But London is a centre for a wide range of services a number of which are of national importance. Costing returns submitted to the Department by district and special health authorities in London for major hospitals in teaching districts and postgraduate teaching

hospitals respectively show that total revenue expenditure attributable to those hospitals amounted to some £656 million in 1986-87.

For further information on the expenditure and statistics relevant to individual London teaching hospitals I refer the hon. Member to the Department's annual publication "Health Services Costing Returns" (the latest being for 1986-87), copies of which are in the Library.

## AIDS

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment his Department is conducting of early intervention strategies for AIDS and HIV infection in the United States of America;

(2) what proposals there are for assessment of early intervention strategies with the aim of restraining, slowing down or stopping the development of AIDS in people who are HIV anti-body positive including *(a)* complementary/alternative medicine, *(b)* therapies, *(c)* diet and *(d)* psychological approaches.

**Mr. Mellor:** The Medical Research Council is the main Government agency for biomedical research. It is conducting a clinical trial of zidovudine in early HIV infection, but no other early intervention is seen to be ready for evaluation by clinical trial. The MRC keeps abreast of results of clinical trials in HIV infection both from the United States of America and elsewhere.

## Doctors and Dentists

**Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* doctors and *(b)* dentists born and trained in the Republic of Ireland have taken up National Health Service posts in the United Kingdom in each of the past 10 years.

**Mr. Mellor:** The information requested is not immediately available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## Phlebotomists and Venepuncturists

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to equalise the scale of wages paid by health authorities to phlebotomists and venepuncturists.

**Mr. Mellor:** The pay of phlebotomists and venepuncturists is a matter for negotiation in the appropriate Whitley council.

## Eye Tests

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what directives he intends issuing to general practitioners to ensure effective plans are made to inform relatives of patients suffering from diabetes and glaucoma that eye tests will be free provided that general practitioners provide confirmatory certification.

**Mr. Freeman:** From 1 April 1989 close relatives aged 40 and over of patients with glaucoma will be eligible for an NHS sight test. A leaflet describing the importance of regular eye checks for this group, their eligibility for an NHS sight test and the method of making a claim will be sent to general practitioners and health authorities for display in waiting rooms and out-patient departments. It is also intended to write to hospital doctors asking them to supply copies for patients with diagnosed glaucoma to pass to their relatives. Regular eye-testing for diabetic retinopathy is appropriate only for people already known to have diabetes and they are eligible for NHS sight tests.

## MMR Immunisation

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* any preliminary figures available for the uptake of MMR immunisation in each health authority in England during the first three months of the MMR being available.

**Mr. Freeman:** Immunisation uptake figures are reported and recorded on an annual (financial year) basis. Rates for health authorities in general, following the introduction of MMR vaccine, will not, therefore, be available for some time. Reports from a sample of districts who have co-operated with the communicable disease surveillance centre are being analysed and the results will be made public as soon as possible. However, the distribution of doses of the vaccine from 1 October to the end of January (1·2 million against a maximum requirement from the two priority groups of children of 400,000) indicates a very high uptake level and a likely acceleration of the "catch up" period for other children.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** We do not have information in the form requested because records are held on a combined basis with the Department of Social Security. Information for both Departments as at 23 February is given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security in his reply to the hon. and learned Member today.

## Fullerton Hospital, Doncaster

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the proposed sale of Fullerton hospital for old people at Denaby, Doncaster, will be taken into account in the local health authority's general manager and senior manager's performance-related pay scheme.

**Mr. Mellor:** The assessment for performance-related pay will take account of all the objectives which have been set for the manager concerned. We do not hold centrally information about the objectives set for individual managers. For this purpose property sales or planned hospital closures would normally be set in the context of wider objectives such as improving the use of an authority's resources or developing new patterns of service and the assessment would reflect the achievement of these wider objectives.

## Nursing Homes

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide details of placements of elderly persons in *(a)* private residential homes per county in England and *(b)* private nursing homes in England.

**Mr. Mellor:** Provisional information on the number of elderly people supported by local authorities in private

residential accommodation for elderly and younger physically handicapped people as at 31 March 1987 is given in the table. The numbers of elderly people receiving treatment in private nursing homes under contractual arrangements is given in "Patients Receiving Treatment Under Contractual Arrangements with Institutions Outside the NHS in England, National and Regional Summaries" (form SH9). The latest available data relates to 31 December 1986. A copy is available in the Library.

*Number of residents aged 65 and over supported by local authorities in private homes for elderly people and younger physically handicapped people, as at 31 March 1987 (provisional).*

| *Local Authority* | *Supported residents aged 65 and over in private homes* |
|---|---|
| Cleveland | 4 |
| Cumbria | 1 |
| Durham | 0 |
| Northumberland | 0 |
| Gateshead | 0 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 2 |
| North Tyneside | 1 |
| South Tyneside | 0 |
| Sunderland | 4 |
| Humberside | 0 |
| North Yorkshire | 1 |
| Barnsley | 0 |
| Doncaster | 0 |
| Rotherham | 0 |
| Sheffield | 0 |
| Bradford | 4 |
| Calderdale | 0 |
| Kirklees | 15 |
| Leeds | 0 |
| Wakefield | 0 |
| Cheshire | 0 |
| Lancashire | 1 |
| Bolton | 0 |
| Bury | 0 |
| Manchester | 0 |
| Oldham | 2 |
| Rochdale | 6 |
| Salford | 0 |
| Stockport | 0 |
| Tameside | 0 |
| Trafford | 0 |
| Wigan | 0 |
| Knowsley | 5 |
| Liverpool | 4 |
| Sefton | 19 |
| St. Helens | 0 |
| Wirral | 1 |
| Hereford & Worcester | 1 |
| Shropshire | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 0 |
| Warwickshire | 4 |
| Birmingham | 8 |
| Coventry | 0 |
| Dudley | 0 |
| Sandwell | 1 |
| Solihull | 0 |
| Walsall | 2 |
| Wolverhampton | 7 |
| Derbyshire | 0 |
| Leicestershire | 4 |
| Lincolnshire | 4 |
| Northamptonshire | 0 |
| Nottinghamshire | 0 |
| Bedfordshire | 0 |
| Berkshire | 6 |
| Buckinghamshire | 10 |
| Cambridgeshire | 1 |
| Essex | 0 |
| Hertfordshire | 0 |
| Norfolk | 10 |
| Oxfordshire | 6 |
| Suffolk | 3 |
| Camden | 27 |
| Greenwich | 0 |
| Hackney | 34 |
| Hammersmith | 3 |
| Islington | 23 |
| Kensington | 6 |
| Lambeth | 0 |
| Lewisham | 22 |
| Southwark | 16 |
| Tower Hamlets | 34 |
| Wandsworth | 27 |
| Westminster | 15 |
| City of London | 6 |
| Barking | 0 |
| Barnet | 24 |
| Bexley | 0 |
| Brent | 9 |
| Bromley | 1 |
| Croydon | 0 |
| Ealing | 39 |
| Enfield | 1 |
| Haringey | 20 |
| Harrow | 0 |
| Havering | 1 |
| Hillingdon | 4 |
| Hounslow | 0 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 30 |
| Merton | 12 |
| Newham | 0 |
| Redbridge | 1 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0 |
| Sutton | 1 |
| Waltham Forest | 21 |
| Dorset | 0 |
| Hampshire | 22 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 |
| Kent | 0 |
| Surrey | 1 |
| East Sussex | 0 |
| West Sussex | 16 |
| Wiltshire | 5 |
| Avon | 0 |
| Cornwall | 0 |
| Devon | 0 |
| Gloucestershire | 0 |
| Isles of Scilly | 0 |
| Somerset | 0 |
| England | 558 |

## Health Statistics (Norwich)

**Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of *(a)* leukaemia, *(b)* cot deaths and *(c)* birth abnormalities in the Norwich area; and what are the national averages.

**Mr. Freeman** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* Numbers and rates for *(a)* notifications of newly diagnosed cases of leukaemia, *(b)* deaths with leukaemia as underlying cause, *(c)* cot deaths[1] and *(d)* birth abnormalities[5] for Norwich district health authority and England and Wales in 1987, except registrations of leukaemia for which 1984 is the latest available data.

| | Norwich DHA | | England and Wales | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Numbers | Rate | Numbers | Rate |
| Registrations of leukaemia 1984[1] | 46 | [2]10·11 | 4,307 | [2]8·65 |
| Deaths from leukaemia 1987[1] | 45 | [2]9·60 | 3,650 | [2]7·26 |
| Cot deaths[4] | 6 | [3]1·11 | 1,528 | [3]2·23 |
| Number of malformed babies[5] | 74 | [3]13·71 | 13,581 | [3]19·83 |

[1] Leukaemia assigned to an International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision code 204-208.
[2] Rate per 100,000 population.
[3] Rate per 1,000 total births.
[4] Any mention of cot death or similar term on death certificate whether underlying cause or not. Under 1 year of age only.
[5] Information is derived from a voluntary system of notifications at birth or up to 7 days afterwards. It is likely to be an incomplete measure of the total number of babies affected.

## Electromagnetic Radiation

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies his Department has undertaken to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on human health.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Department does not itself undertake research into possible hazards to health from radiation. However, the National Radiological Protection Board is under a statutory duty to inform and advise Government, and others, in relation to any such hazards.

I understand that the electricity supply industry is currently funding a research programme to investigate any late effects on health from electromagnetic fields. Other research into the subject is continuing, both nationally and internationally, and we shall monitor the results closely.

## Trent Regional Health Authority

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by district health authority within the Trent regional health authority, how much National Health Service land has been sold in 1987-88 prices for each year since 1979

**Mr. Freeman:** A list of all land and property sold by the Trent RHA was given in my hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 22 December 1988 at columns *401-4*. To arrive at 1987-88 prices the figures should be divided by the following gross domestic product (market prices) deflators:

1979-80—0·56955
1980-81—0·67460
1981-82—0·74104
1982-83—0·79398
1983-84—0·83014
1984-85—0·87214
1985-86—0·91922
1986-87—0·94988

These deflators however take no account of the volatility of the property market.

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much undeveloped National Health Service land is owned by the Trent regional health authority; and who benefits from the sale of such land.

**Mr. Freeman:** Information on the amount of NHS land which is undeveloped is not held. However at 31 March 1988 the total land holding of Trent RHA amounted to approximately 4,324 acres, of which just over 800 acres had been declared surplus to requirements and was in the process of disposal. All proceeds from the sale of surplus NHS land are retained by health authorities for reinvestment in the service.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 9 February concerning the resource allocation working party, *Official Report*, column *803*, what is his best estimate of the likely impact on resources available to the Trent region, of the trends he describes.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The question is a rephrasing of the hon. Member's original question and there is nothing that I can sensibly add to my original answer.

## Ambulance Service (London)

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what number of out-patient appointments were cancelled at *(a)* the Newham general and *(b)* St. Andrews hospital, Bow, in each of the weeks in January and at first two in February consequent on no ambulance being available; and if he will list comparable figures for each of the divisions of the London ambulance service over the same period, together with respective totals.

**Mr. Freeman:** Out-patient appointments cancelled at Newham general and St. Andrews hospital, Bow, because no ambulance was available, were as follows:

| Week ending | Newham general | St. Andrews, Bow |
|---|---|---|
| January 7 | 13 | 35 |
| January 14 | 24 | 18 |
| January 21 | 0 | 3 |
| January 28 | 5 | 0 |
| February 4 | 1 | 4 |
| February 11 | 8 | 7 |

Out-patient appointments cancelled in each division of the London ambulance service because no ambulance was available were as follows:

| Week ending | North East | North West | South East | South West | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January 7 | 140 | 43 | 9 | 0 | 192 |
| January 14 | 157 | 53 | 22 | 2 | 234 |
| January 21 | 69 | 62 | 14 | 3 | 148 |
| January 28 | 132 | 60 | 56 | 0 | 248 |
| February 4 | 125 | 34 | 21 | 0 | 180 |
| February 11 | 87 | 56 | 9 | 8 | 160 |

*Note:*
The North East division is the largest and carries the highest number of patients.

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South of 23 February concerning expenditure of the London ambulance service he will itemise the expenditure of £23,967,237 on emergency ambulance service and £7,977,645 on non-emergency services, respectively, in the year 1987-88; and what are the recent sums budgeted for in the year 1988-89.

**Mr. Freeman:** A breakdown of the figures requested could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The figures for the emergency and non-emergency services for 1988-89 will be available when the South West Thames regional health authority produces its final accounts later this year.

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what publication the annual expenditure and income of the London ambulance service has been made available to the public; when he expects its budget for the financial years 1989-90 to be agreed; and with what body or bodies he consulted prior to its determination.

**Mr. Freeman:** The budget for the London ambulance service is determined by the South West Thames regional health authority, not by my right hon. and learned Friend. The information requested is published in the authority's annual accounts. It is also included in the Department's publication "Health Services Costing Returns" (latest edition 1986-87) copies of which are in the Library.

The 1989-90 budget for the LAS is currently the subject of discussion with the other three Thames regions, and district health authorities, community health authorities and family practitioners committees will be consulted before the budget is approved by South West Thames regional health authority.

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated or actual proportion of emergency calls to the headquarters of the London ambulance service which were initially referred to a recorded message service during the first and second weeks of February, respectively, together with the highest proportion during a specific day and hour during that fortnight.

**Mr. Freeman:** This information is not collected routinely in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## Mid-Essex Health Authority

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on hospital building and upgrading of existing facilities in the Mid-Essex health authority since 1979.

**Mr. Freeman:** This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of Mid-Essex health authority for the information he seeks.

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients treated by the National Health Service in the Mid-Essex health authority area in 1979 and the latest available year, respectively.

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested is given in the table:

*Mid-Essex health authority*

| | *1979* | *1987-88* |
|---|---|---|
| In-patient cases treated | 20,971 | 30,218 |
| Total out-patient attendances, of which | 119,443 | 147,698 |
| new out-patient cases | 34,853 | 39,354 |

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hip replacement operations were carried out in the Mid-Essex health authority area in 1979 and the latest available year, respectively;

(2) how many cataract operations were carried out in the Mid-Essex health authority area in 1979 and the latest available year, respectively.

**Mr. Freeman:** This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of Mid-Essex health authority for the information he seeks.

## Humana Hospital (Inquiry)

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether the Bloomsbury health authority inquiry has yet revealed who billed recipients of kidneys received at the Wellington Humana hospital;

(2) whether the computerised billing records of the Wellington Humana hospital have been made available to the Bloomsbury health authority inquiry.

**Mr. Freeman:** The allegations have been carefully examined. None of the inquiries, including an examination of the hospital's computerised billing, have revealed evidence of the sale or purchase of human kidneys for transplantation. As is normal practice, the bills were sent to the admitting clinician.

## Salmonella

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library copies of all papers prepared by his Department or by the public health laboratory service for the working group on salmonella and eggs.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* The public health laboratory service represented my Department on this group. I am informed that all its documents were working documents. As such, none were intended for, nor were they in a form suitable for, separate publication.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of salmonella enteriditis being found in imported eggs.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* I have no evidence that salmonella enteriditis has been found in imported eggs.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 2 March 1989*

## DEFENCE

### National Curriculum

**Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, how, following the introduction of the national curriculum in service children's schools, he will seek to minimise the disruption to children's education on military posting.

**Mr. Neubert:** The introduction of the national curriculum will in itself help reduce such disruption. In order to avoid possible difficulties associated with the syllabi of different examining groups, the joint council for GCSE has set up a working party to agree upon common procedural guidelines for the transfer of course work. My Department is represented on this working party.

### Exercise Red Lanyard

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence ii he will list how many aircraft and by type were employed during exercise Red Lanyard; how many service personnel were engaged; what types of other ancillary equipment were employed; what were the locations of bases and the area covered; what is the projected estimated cost to public funds; and what were the aims and objectives of the exercise.

**Mr. Neubert:** Exercise Red Lanyard was designed to rehearse the procedures that the services would use should they be called upon to assist in the safe evacuation of British subjects from a trouble spot overseas. A maximum of 15 C130 Hercules aircraft were employed, with two Chinook and one Puma helicopters. Up to 750 Army and 180 RAF personnel were involved at any one time. Ancillary equipment employed included Landrovers, associated trailers, Fox and Scorpion armoured vehicles and guns. The exercise proper took place on the Standford training area in Norfolk; the C130 Hercules aircraft used RAF airfields at Lyneham and Watton. This execise was not costed separately and it is not possible to derive the financial information requested except at disproportionate cost.

### Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for his policy on nuclear modernisation in the light of General John Galvin's announcement that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is prepared to scrap up to 1,000 artillery shells, provided member countries agree to modernise other nuclear armaments; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I am not aware of any such announcement by Saceur. However, the Government continue to believe that it is essential that we maintain an up-to-date stockpile. NATO's nuclear stockpile in Europe is today at its lowest level for 20 years, having reduced by some 35 per cent. since 1979. Any further reductions will be welcome provided we retain a fully effective, reliable and survivable deterrent.

**Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy, in the event of the breakdown of nuclear deterrence, towards North Atlantic Treaty Organisation initiating the use of tactical nuclear weapons;

(2) if he will define the Government's understanding of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's doctrine of flexible response;

(3) whether, in the event of the breakdown of nuclear deterrence, the use of tactical nuclear weapons is an option which the Government might take;

(4) whether, in the event of the breakdown of nuclear deterrence, limited nuclear war is a possibility under the strategy of flexible response.

**Mr. Neubert:** I refer the hon. Member to the annual statement on the Defence Estimates, in particular the essays on NATO strategy in 1985 and 1987, which contains the information he seeks.

### West German Minister

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the West German Defence Minister; and what subjects were discussed.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend last met Dr. Scholz at the Anglo-German summit in Frankfurt on 20-21 February. A range of subjects of mutual defence interest were discussed.

### Aircraft (Missiles)

**Mr. Shore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dual capable LRINF and SRINF aircraft were in service with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact in 1985 and at the latest available date; and how many of these aircraft are equipped with air-to-surface missiles.

**Mr. Neubert:** The numbers of dual-capable LRINF and SRINF aircraft in service with NATO and the Warsaw pact are as follows:

| | *1985* | *End 1988* |
|---|---|---|
| | *LRINF* | |
| NATO | 150 | 140 |
| Warsaw pact | 350 | 300 |
| | *SRINF* | |
| NATO | 1,300 (600) | 1,500 (650) |
| Warsaw pact | 3,800 | 3,250 |

These figures cover land based aircraft deployed in Europe west of the Urals and exclude French aircraft and those with a primary maritime role. The figures in brackets show NATO aircraft certified for nuclear use. Comparable figures are not available for the Warsaw pact.

The majority of Warsaw pact dual-capable aircraft in these ranges are capable of carrying air-to-surface missiles armed with conventional or nuclear warheads. Some of these missiles have ranges of up to several hundred kilometres. None of the NATO aircraft is currently equipped with air-to-surface missiles armed with nuclear warheads.

### Backfire Bombers

**Mr. Shore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dual capable Backfire bombers were available to the Warsaw pact in 1985; and how many were added in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** In 1985 the Warsaw pact air order of battle included approximately 230 Backfire bombers. In each of the three years 1986, 1987 and 1988 around 30 additional Backfire were deployed.

### Shots

**Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when was the last time that service personnel fired shots on the British mainland in the course of their duty when they were not involved in training exercises, previous to the Tern hill incident.

**Mr. Neubert:** To the best of our knowledge the last time prior to the Tern hill incident that service personnel fired shots on the British mainland in the course of their duty and when they were not involved in training exercises was in support of the police in the Iranian embassy siege in May 1980.

### Start II

**Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Government intend to participate in a Start II negotiation.

**Mr. Neubert:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) on 10 January 1989 at columns *677-78*.

### A90 Project

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for changes in the management of the A90 project.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The National Nuclear Corporation Ltd. was appointed in June 1988 to provide a comprehensive management and co-ordination service.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial claims against his Department are outstanding or expected from Balfour Kilpatrick relative to the A90 project.

**Mr. Chope:** I have been asked to reply.

No claims are outstanding or expected from Balfour Kilpatrick. The PSA has no contract with this company. It is subcontractor to Haden Young, which is the main contractor for the mechanical and electrical engineering works services on the A90 project. The contract was substantially completed in March 1988. Negotiations on the final account for the contract are proceeding. Haden Young has submitted a claim which is under consideration in accordance with the conditions of contract. The amounts and grounds of the claim are a matter of commercial confidence.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held between his Department and Balfour Kilpatrick on the financial position of the company and its impact on its ability to fulfil the A90 contract.

**Mr. Chope:** I have been asked to reply.

The answer is none.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any assessment has been made of the quality of materials supplied by Messrs Hargreaves of Bury for the A90 project as against the original specifications.

**Mr. Chope:** I have been asked to reply.

All materials supplied by Messrs Hargreaves of Bury have been inspected in accordance with the contract specification. Certain duct flange welds have failed to meet the specified requirements and options for overcoming this problem in the most economical way are under discussion with the Ministry of Defence.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the cost of aborted mechanical and electrical work on the A90 project.

**Mr. Chope:** I have been asked to reply.

A broad estimate of the cost of mechanical and electrical work which has been rendered abortive by changes of requirement during the course of the contract is £1 million.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he has assessed the fitness of Balfour Kilpatrick to undertake further government contracts;

(2) if he will make a statement on the management by Haden Young of the A90 project;

(3) what assessment he has made of the achievements of Balfour Kilpatrick in ensuring the speediest possible achievement of targets in the A90 construction project;

(4) if he will carry out an assessment of all contracts awarded by his Department to Balfour Kilpatrick in the past five years.

**Mr. Chope:** I have been asked to reply.

The financial position and performance of all companies working or likely to be engaged on work for PSA are kept regularly under review and appropriate action taken where necessary. Findings concerning specific firms are a matter of commercial confidence.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will investigate disputes in the A90 construction project between the main contractors and Balfour Kilpatrick; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Chope:** I have been asked to reply.

Any disputes which may exist between Haden Young and Balfour Kilpatrick are a matter for them.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### "Pathway to International Security"

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has received any invitation to send delegates or observers to the conference "Pathways to International Security" at the Royal Society of Medicine, London, on 18 March, organised by Professions for World Disarmament and Development.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** I received an invitation which I had to decline.

### Falklands

**Ms. Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been set aside by the European development fund for each year since 1984, to be spent on the Falklands; and how much has been spent.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** The Falkland Islands receive an allocation of aid under each five year European development fund (EDF). Under EDF V, this was 0·05 mecu for 1980-85. This has been fully committed but not yet spent. Under EDF VI, 1·1 mecu were allocated for 1985-90. Commitments have yet to be made. In addition the Falkland Islands were allotted 0·067 mecu in 1988 for a shortfall of export earnings from sheep's or lamb's wool.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Breach of Confidence

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to implement the recommendations of the 1981 Law Commission report on breach of confidence affecting the disclosure of information obtained by improper means.

**The Attorney-General:** The Law Commission's report No. 110, Cmnd. 8388, amounts for the most part to a recommendation for a restatement of the common law of breach of confidence and the Government do not propose, particularly in the light of recent judgments which restate that law, to give its implementation high priority at present.

### Guardian Angels

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make it his policy to give his consent under section 2(2) of the Public Order Act 1936 to any prosecution of members of the organisation known as the Guardian Angels under section 2(1)(a) of that Act, for usurping the functions of the police.

**Mr. Attorney-General:** No. It will remain my policy to give consent under section 2(2) of the Public Order Act 1936, and any policy as regards consents generally, only in cases where the evidence is sufficient to justify the conclusion that there is a reasonable prospect of a conviction and the public interest requires a prosecution.

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Attorney-General whether the Crown prosecution service is considering any prosecutions of members of the organisation known as the Guardian Angels under sections 4 or 5 of the Public Order Act 1986.

**Mr. Attorney-General:** No.

### Mr. Chander Singh

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Attorney-General what progress has been made in proceedings with the prosecution of Mr. Chander Singh for offences of fraud in connection with the Marconi company.

**The Attorney-General:** Mr. Chander Singh has no connection with the Marconi Company Ltd.

### Planning (High Court Applications)

**Mr. Conway:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will state, for the past three years, the number of applicants to the High Court under section 245 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, seeking review of the decisions of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

**The Attorney-General:** For the financial years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 there were respectively 114, 137 and 154 applications to the High Court under section 245 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Sexual Offences

12. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average clear-up rate recorded by the police for sexual offences in 1987 and 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** In 1987 the average clear up rate for sexual offences was 75 per cent. compared with 71 per cent. in 1986. The figure for 1988 is not yet available. The police give a high priority to the detection and apprehension of sexual offenders.

### Charities Commission

13. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief commissioner of the Charities Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

**Mr. John Patten:** My right hon. Friend last met the chief charity commissioner on Wednesday 22 February to discuss the proposals that the Government will be putting forward in the forthcoming White Paper on charities.

### Crime (Derbyshire)

14. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Derbyshire for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** We hope to publish the crime figures for 1988 shortly. The figures for Derbyshire are likely to show a drop of 7·5 per cent.

### Sunday Trading

15. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the number of local authorities who made no prosecutions for breaches of the Sunday trading law in 1988.

**Mr. Renton:** Information about the number of local authorities which made no prosecutions for breaches of the Sunday trading law is not held centrally. Decisions on whether or not to prosecute in any given case are a matter for the local authorities concerned.

33. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last circulated guidance to district councils on their duty to enforce the law on Sunday trading.

**Mr. Renton:** I am sure that local authorities are well aware of their responsibilities under section 71 of the Shops Act 1950. We have not circulated guidance to councils on this matter.

70. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in response to his request for views on the reform of Sunday shopping.

**Mr. Renton:** Since I last answered a question on this subject, from the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) on 2 February 1989 at column *415*, we have received 133 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and 155 against.

### Police Efficiency

16. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in securing greater efficiency and value for money from the police in East Anglia.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** It is primarily the responsibility of chief officers of police and local police authorities, to ensure that their resources are used to best effect. Value for money has been improved in the Cambridgeshire constabulary by streamlining administrative procedures, devolving operational management responsibility to sub-divisional level, and establishing civilian administrative units in the sub-divisions.

68. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to implement the recommendations of the Audit Commission on police efficiency.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 2 February at column *387*.

### Single European Act

17. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet Ministers of the Trevi group to discuss the implications of the Single European Act.

47. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet Ministers from other Governments in the European Economic Community to discuss the movement of persons within the European Economic Community after 1992.

59. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet Ministers within the Trevi group; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hurd:** I shall be meeting Trevi Ministers informally on 9 and 10 March in Seville. We shall discuss a range of matters of mutual interest including the implications of the Single European Act.

### Prison Service

18. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to alter the negotiating structure for pay and conditions in the prison service.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** There are no plans to alter the established negotiating structure for pay and conditions in the prison service.

### Carole Richardson

19. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what medical attention has been offered to Carole Richardson currently in Her Majesty's prison Styal.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Miss Richardson has received appropriate medical treatment under the care of the medical staff at Her Majesty's prison Styal. Specific clinical information pertaining to individual prisoners is confidential and is not normally disclosed.

### Criminal Appeal Act 1968

20. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have been referred to the Court of Appeal in exercising of the power under section 17(1) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, since 1968; and what was the outcome in each case.

**Mr. John Patten:** Between 1 September 1968, when the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 came into force, and 31 December 1988, 105 defendants had their convictions referred to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)(a) of the Act. The appeals of 57 defendants were allowed, 40 were dismissed, four were abandoned and one retrial was ordered. The cases of three defendants have yet to be determined.

### Drugs

21. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the last meeting of the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs took place, and what it discussed.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The last meeting of the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, which I chair, took place on 9 February. Issues discussed included Customs' provisional drug seizure figures for 1988, plans for regionally-based anti-drug publicity campaigns, the development of drug misuse services in 1989-90 and evaluation of pilot syringe exchange schemes.

27. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing greater international co-operation against the illegal drug trade.

**Mr. Hurd:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 2 February to a similar question from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) at column *419*. Since then, I have taken part in useful discussions about co-operation against illicit drug trafficking, among other matters, with my counterparts in the Federal Republic of Germany and in France.

29. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to curtail the illegal import of drugs.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Government have developed a comprehensive and balanced strategy aimed at tackling all aspects of the drugs problem; it is overseen by the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs.

Specific measures aimed at preventing and detecting the illicit importation of drugs include:

- supporting international efforts to curb trafficking in drugs. Last December together with 42 other countries we signed the new United Nations convention against illicit traffic in drugs. We also provide drug-related assistance overseas and maintain a number of drug liaison officers at strategic points on drug trafficking routes.
- strengthening Customs and police enforcement. During 1988-89 a further 233 customs preventive staff have been allocated and the number of specialist customs drugs investigation staff will have risen to 395. We have also further strengthened the national drugs intelligence unit which co-ordinates drugs intelligence for Customs and police.
- deterring drug traffickers by high maximum penalties and by confiscating the profits of their crime. We have already entered into reciprocal agreements with four countries for the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets, and are negotiating more.

46. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing closer international co-operation on confiscation of drug-traffickers' assets.

**Mr. John Patten:** We have signed bilateral agreements with the United States of America, Canada, the Bahamas and Australia, and have completed substantive negotiations with Spain, Switzerland and Sweden. We expect to conclude further agreements this year. The United Kingdom also played a major part in bringing about the adoption in Vienna last December of a new United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, which among other measures obliges member states to assist each other in confiscating the proceeds of drug trafficking.

54. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the proceeds received to date from the confiscation of the assets of drug traffickers.

**Mr. John Patten:** The courts have made confiscation orders totalling more than £3 million since section 1 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 came into force on 12 January 1987. The information held centrally does not at present distinguish revenue obtained from the payment of such orders from revenue obtained from payment of other monetary penalties.

## Police Forces (Co-operation)

22. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the procedures for consultation and co-operation between police forces and transport police.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I understand that there is extensive consultation and co-operation between police forces and the British Transport police. Senior officers of all forces are in regular contact discussing issues of mutual interest and planning joint operations. Assistance is also provided regularly to the British Transport police around the country by regular police forces and the British Transport police reciprocates.

## Community Radio

23. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the prospects for community radio.

71. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to widen choice for radio listeners.

**Mr. Renton:** I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). We have endorsed IBA proposals to award 20 community radio contracts. In due course, up to several hundred local and community radio stations would be possible under our proposals in the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s".

## Video Recording Act 1984

24. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the workings of the Video Recording Act 1984.

**Mr. Renton:** The Act is now fully in force, and was quickly effective against the so-called "video nasty". We have extended enforcement powers to local authority trading standards officers to strengthen its impact over the full range of material. I have discussed the working of the Act with the British Board of Film Classification and I am confident that the board is doing its job effectively. I have also discussed with representatives of the video trade what further action they might take to ensure that matters not directly covered by the Act, such as displays in shops and packaging material, might be improved.

## Passport Offices

25. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to increase the number of permanent staff in passport offices.

**Mr. Renton:** Passport department officials are in consultation with trade union representatives about staffing levels, pending a full review of staffing requirements which is to be undertaken following the completion of the current computerisation programme.

45. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the average times taken to process non-urgent passport applications at major passport offices; and what were the comparable times one year ago.

**Mr. Renton:** The current processing times for straightforward non-urgent postal applications at the six United Kingdom passport offices are shown in the table, together with those of a year ago. Urgent applications are given priority, and are not normally subject to delay.

*Average time between receipt of application and issue of passport (working days)*

| *Passport office* | *19 February 1989* | *21 February 1988* |
|---|---|---|
| London | 18 | 37 |
| Glasgow | 20 | 22 |
| Peterborough | 18 | 18 |
| Newport | 24 | 16 |
| Liverpool | 24 | 12 |
| Belfast | 3 | 3 |

## Broadcasting

26. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the date on which the Council of Europe convention on broadcasting will be open for signature.

**Mr. Renton:** We hope that the Council of Europe draft convention on transfrontier television will be agreed shortly and opened for signature within the next few months.

53. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions between the United Kingdom and other European countries on the attainment of Europeanwide standards and specifications relating to broadcasting technology and contents.

**Mr. Renton:** The United Kingdom is co-operating, through a EUREKA project, with a number of other European countries on the development of standards for high definition television. There is also a wide range of discussions on broadcasting specifications generally in the relevant international fora. We also hope to conclude agreement shortly on the Council of Europe convention on transfrontier television which, among other things, will provide minimum standards on taste and decency.

## Crime (Cumbria)

28. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Cumbria for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 show that recorded crime in the Cumbria police force area fell by 3 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending 30 September 1987. The change between the calendar years 1988 and 1987 will be similar.

## Wandsworth Prison

30. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the present position at Wandsworth prison following the recent dispute.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Prison officers returned to work on 9 February. Under the terms of the dispute settlement, local discussions led to agreement on revised shift patterns by 15 February. They were implemented on 19 February.

## Magistrates Courts

31. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the administration of the magistrates courts.

**Mr. John Patten:** I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 17 January, columns *140-41*.

52. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to invite local benches to submit representations to the Le Vay scrutiny of magistrates courts.

**Mr. John Patten:** Mr. Le Vay has already written to all magistrates courts committees in England and Wales, with copies to justices' clerks, indicating his willingness to consider any comments sent to him. It is open to any local bench to submit representations if it so wishes.

## Prisons (Hygiene)

32. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will request Her Majesty's inspector of prisons to carry out an unannounced inspection, together with a senior environmental health officer, of the kitchen and other facilities related to hygiene of a prison selected by that environmental health officer.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons has ready access to information and expertise which enables him to make proper assessments of hygiene standards in kitchens and other facilities during routine and unannounced inspections.

## Neighbourhood Watch

34. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes are now established in England and Wales.

**Mr. John Patten:** At the end of 1988 there were some 64,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales covering approximately three and a quarter million households.

## County Constabularies

35. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations on the allocation of extra police for the county constabularies for 1988-89.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend has received representations from hon. Members, from police authorities and from members of the public about the allocation of extra police officers for 1988-89 and for 1989-90.

## Entry Refusals

36. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refusals of entry were made at United Kingdom ports of entry in each quarter of 1988.

**Mr. Renton:** The information is given in the following table:

*Pasengers refused leave to enter the United Kingdom and removed in 1988*

| | *Number of persons* |
|---|---|
| First quarter | 3,955 |
| Second quarter | 4,475 |
| Third quarter | 6,064 |
| Fourth quarter | 5,884 |

## Paul Hill

37. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will facilitate the moving of Paul Hill of the Guildford Four to Wormwood Scrubs prison to ensure that the appropriate legal advice and preparation is available for his appeal; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Any request on these lines from Paul Hill's legal representatives would be carefully considered.

50. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will facilitate a further operation for Paul Hill to remove stones in the saliva gland and further ensure that the necessary after-care treatment is available.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Specific clinical information pertaining to individual prisoners is confidential and is not normally disclosed. Mr. Hill has received appropriate medical treatment and I have no information which suggests that his general medical condition is other than satisfactory.

78. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison moves Paul Hill has experienced since conviction; why they have been necessary; and what assessment he has made of the effects of these moves on the ability of Paul Hill's family and relatives to visit him.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I will write to the hon. Member.

### Firearm Certificates

38. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to review the procedures for police scrutiny of applicants for firearm certificates to determine their suitability.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 contains powers to impose further requirements relating to applications for the grant or renewal of a firearm certificate. In addition to the stringent criteria set out in section 27 of the Firearms Act 1968, such applications will, later this year, need to be accompanied by photographs of the applicant and be countersigned by a person of standing in the community who has known the applicant personally for at least two years. The countersignatory will be required to verify the personal details of the applicant and to declare that he knows of no reason why the applicant should not be permitted to possess a firearm.

### Scottish Broadcasting

39. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met with Scottish representatives of the broadcasting authorities; and what issues were discussed.

**Mr. Renton:** I am regularly in touch with the broadcasting authorities in order to discuss a wide range of broadcasting issues. On 27 and 28 February I met representatives from all the Scottish independent television companies in order to discuss the White Paper on broadcasting and other broadcasting matters.

### Safer Cities Programme

40. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in the safer cities programme.

**Mr. John Patten:** The safer cities programme is making good progress, with the first nine crime prevention projects either functioning or well on the way to becoming established. The Bradford and Wolverhampton projects have steering committees and locally recruited staff in place and are fully operational. We will establish seven more projects in the coming year and I have recently invited Bristol, Hull, Salford, Sunderland and Wirral to take part.

### Police Patrols

41. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to increase the number of uniformed policemen patrolling public places in towns and cities.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The deployment of police officers is a matter for chief officers of police but the increases in police establishments approved since May 1979 will have assisted them in allocating more officers to operational duties. My right hon. Friend announced on 30 January his approval of further increases in provincial force establishments amounting to over 800 extra police posts. The great bulk of these posts will be deployed by chief constables on patrol duties. At the end of 1988, 52,906 officers (of all ranks) were estimated to be deployed on patrol duties—this was 55·8 per cent. of strength. That is an increase of 0·8 per cent. on the previous year, which in turn had shown a gain of 2·9 per cent. over the year before. Information on the Metropolitan police is collected on a different basis. This shows that in 1988 some 1,600,000 man days were spent on street duty, an increase of 9 per cent. on 1987.

### Abortion

42. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given to the representations received on his decision not to direct the coroner to hold an inquest into the death of the Carlisle baby.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** All representations received were considered very thoroughly.

73. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase the maximum sentences available to those found guilty of performing abortions contrary to sections 57 and 58 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** No. Procurement of an abortion already carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

79. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now place in the Library the information provided by the coroner on the case involving the death of the Carlisle baby.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** No.

### Mentally Disturbed Prisoners

43. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to reduce the number of mentally disturbed people sent to prison.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We are preparing guidance to the courts encouraging the use of their powers under the Mental Health Act 1983 to divert mentally disturbed offenders from the penal system.

### Prisoners (Health)

44. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to increase the health prospects of the prison population.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** A number of measures which are under way or planned can be expected to have a significant effect on the health and well being of prisoners. They include a major programme of new building, refurbishment and environmental improvement and an increasing emphasis on preventive medicine and health education including specific initiatives in relation to AIDS, hepatitis B, and the risks from drug and alcohol misuse and smoking.

84. **Mr. George:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure the health of prisoners held in police cells.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The police have a duty of care to anyone held in their custody and I have no doubt that chief officers of police ensure that that duty is carried out responsibly. In accordance with the codes of practice issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the police must call a doctor if a prisoner appears to be physically or mentally ill.

### London Underground (Policing)

48. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers are currently deployed on policing the London Underground.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I understand from the commissioner that 60 officers have been attached to the British Transport police to help police the Underground. There are also 22 officers from the City of London force.

### Crime (Somerset and Avon)

49. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Somerset and Avon for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 show that recorded crime in the Avon and Somerset police force area rose by 1 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending 30 September 1987. Between the calendar years 1988 and 1987 there will be a small decrease.

### Probation Service

51. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many replies he has received to the consultation paper on the probation service.

**Mr. John Patten:** Some 150 interested organisations and individuals have commented on the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community".

### Guildford Four

55. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from legal representatives of the Guildford Four concerning moving them to London prisons prior to the Court of Appeal hearing.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** None.

### Crime (London)

56. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making against crime in Greater London.

**Mr. John Patten:** In the 12 months ending September 1988 there was a decrease of 1 per cent. in total recorded crime in the Metropolitan police district, compared with the corresponding period to September 1987. In particular motor vehicle theft decreased by 8 per cent., theft from the person decreased by 7 per cent. and residential burglary decreased by 3 per cent. These figures are an encouraging indication of the success of a range of crime prevention measures.

### Ministerial Talks

57. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the outcome of his recent talks with his counterpart in the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Mr. Hurd:** Our discussions focused on terrorism, drugs and immigration control. We took stock of the results of the regular co-operation between the police and other relevant services of the two countries and reinforced our commitment to develop that co-operation both bilaterally and within the European Community.

### White Collar Crime

58. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what police manpower resources are currently directed to clearing up white collar crime.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Chief officers of police decide in accordance with the needs of their area what manpower resources should be directed to the investigation of each particular type of crime.

### Mr. and Mrs. Calgar

60. **Mr. Hardy** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the refusal to allow Mr. and Mrs. Calgar to return to the United Kingdom together.

**Mr. Renton:** I have nothing to add to my letter of 2 February and earlier replies to the hon. Member's previous representations about this case.

### Foetuses

61. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to criminalise the supply of foetuses for other than medical or scientific purposes.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. The disposal of foetal material in Great Britain is closely regulated in accordance with the code of practice recommended in the report of the advisory group on the use of foetuses and foetal material for research (the Peel report 1972). There is no evidence that this code of practice is being disregarded.

### Prison Population

62. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

**Mr. Hogg:** At unlocking on Friday 24 February, 49,325 prisoners (The figures comprise returns from each regional office. Figures from the North region are only provisional.) were held in prison establishments in England and Wales. A further 196 prisoners were held in police cells.

### Deportations

63. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many spouses of British citizens have been ordered to leave the United Kingdom since May 1979.

**Mr. Renton:** I regret that this information is not available.

### Terrorists (Funds)

64. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about efforts to prevent leakage of public grants and funds to terrorist organisations.

**Mr. Hurd:** Although we have no evidence that this has been a problem in Great Britain the new provisions in the Prevention of Terrorism Bill will facilitate investigation of any case in which there are reasonable grounds to suspect such abuse. So far as Northern Ireland is concerned, policy on the payment of public funds to community groups, where there is evidence that such payments could directly or indirectly further the aims of a terrorist organisation, remains as set out in the reply I gave as the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to a question from the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) on 27 June 1985 at column *449*.

### Vietnamese Refugees

65. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the number of Vietnamese refugees accepted to date; and whether provision for Vietnamese refugees will be increased.

**Mr. Renton:** I refer my hon. Friend to the replies that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) on 2 February, at column *384* and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 23 February at column *755*.

### Crime (Nottinghamshire)

66. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Nottinghamshire for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 show that recorded crime in the Nottinghamshire police force area fell by 1 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending 30 September 1987. The change between the calendar years 1988 and 1987 will be similar.

### Mr. Ian Dunlop

67. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will as a matter of urgency review the case of Mr. Ian Dunlop, currently detained in Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield, with a view to his early release.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I am satisfied that there are insufficient grounds for Mr. Dunlop's early release on life licence. I have recently written to the hon. Member about this case.

### NACRO

69. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to meet the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders to discuss minimum standards in prisons.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I see representatives of NACRO from time to time to discuss a variety of subjects, but no date has yet been fixed for our next meeting.

### Crime (Thames Valley)

72. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in the Thames Valley for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office statistical bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 show that recorded crime in the Thames Valley police force area fell by 9 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending 30 September 1987. The change between the calendar years 1988 and 1987 will be similar.

### Electronic Tagging

74. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has considered on electronic tagging schemes in the United States of America.

**Mr. John Patten:** My noble Friend Lord Caithness reported to my right hon. Friend the outcome of his ministerial visit to the United States of America in 1987, in the course of which he looked at the use there of electronic monitoring. A large amount of published and unpublished American material on this subject has also been reviewed within my Department. Home Office officials visited the United States during the week beginning 13 February to make an up-to-date assessment of electronic monitoring services in operation.

### Football Membership Scheme

75. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Police Federation regarding the introduction of membership cards for football supporters.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with the Police Federation on this subject but my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport met them on 15 December. They have also had a meeting with officials.

### Crime (Essex)

76. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Essex for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 show that recorded crime in the Essex police force area fell by 2 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending 30 September 1987. The change between the calendar years 1988 and 1987 will be similar.

### Crime (Kent)

77. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Kent for 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 show that recorded crime in the Kent police force area rose by 2 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending 30 September 1987. The change between the calendar years 1988 and 1987 will be similar.

### Northumbria Police

80. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the current manning levels of the Northumbria police force; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend considered an application from the police authority for an additional 84 police posts for the Northumbria police in 1989-90. As announced on 30 January at columns *6-7*, he was able to approve 30 posts subject to the authority's confirmation of funding which has since been received; 800 posts were available for provincial forces for 1989-90 and demand exceeded this.

The Department has also received an application for 59 other posts in order to police the Tyne and Wear Metro rapid transit system. This proposal is under consideration.

### Chief Police Officers

81. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the officers of the Association of Chief Police Officers; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 15 December at column *708*.

### Motor Vehicles (Theft)

82. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the most recent figures for thefts of motor vehicles in England and Wales.

**Mr. John Patten:** It is planned to publish 1988 figures for all forces in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin in the week beginning 13 March. Figures for the 12 months ending 30 September 1988 were published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 36/88 and show that recorded thefts of motor vehicles in England and Wales fell by 6 per cent. compared with the 12 months ending September 1988.

### Parties

83. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to giving the police the power to enter houses without warrants where excessively long or noisy parties are being held.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** None. Police powers to enter private premises without warrant must be strictly limited. They are set out in section 17 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

### Juveniles (Court Attendance)

**Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to encourage courts as a general rule to require that parents of juveniles attend court with them.

**Mr. John Patten:** Courts already normally require parents to attend with their juvenile children who appear in court in criminal proceedings, but we are considering how even better parental attendance might be encouraged.

### Remand Prisoners

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure on the proportion of prisoners held in custody who are unconvicted awaiting trial; and what was the corresponding figure for the nearest available comparable date in 1979.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Untried prisoners in prison service establishments and police cells in England and Wales formed about 19 per cent. of the prison population on 31 December 1988 compared with about 9 per cent. on 31 December 1979.

### Race Relations

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has not yet given a response dealing with the merits of the proposals "Review of the Race Relations Act 1976: Proposals for Change" presented to him by the Commission for Racial Equality in 1985.

**Mr. Hurd:** The Home Office has discussed the Commission for Racial Equality's 1985 review of the Race Relations Act 1976 with the commission on several occasions.

### AIDS

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last 10 years immigration officers have refused passengers admission to the United Kingdom on any grounds directly or indirectly connected with AIDS, HIV infection, or suspected AIDS or HIV infection, including the failure to satisfy immigration officers that the passenger had funds available to meet the costs of medical treatment which might be necessary in consequence of such infection or disease.

**Mr. Renton:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 10 February to his earlier question on this subject at column *820*. The additional information which he now seeks is not available.

### Strychnine

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions there have been in each of the last three years on charges arising from the misuse of strychnine;

(2) what information his Department has concerning the criminal misuse of substances containing strychnine.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Home Office does not collect information about the criminal misuse of substances containing strychnine or about the number of prosecutions arising specifically from its misuse.

### "Broadcasting in the '90s"

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those organisations who submitted a response to the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s," Cm. 517; and which of those organisations favoured the auctioning of franchises.

**Mr. Renton:** We have so far received over 2,200 responses to the White Paper, a number of which propose some form of competitive tender procedure for licence allocation. Some expected responses are still outstanding, but we have it in mind in due course to place in the Library a list of the main organisations who have submitted comments.

### Television Licences

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances tenants or residents eligible for a concessionary television licence under the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcasting Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1988 may claim a refund on the £5 fee if they cease to be eligible for the licence.

**Mr. Renton:** A refund may be given if the concessionary licence was required for less than 28 days; if two licences had been issued, one of them unnecessarily; or on changing from a concessionary licence to a full licence.

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what authority local authorities may collect concessionary television licence fees from tenants eligible for such licences under the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcasting Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1988.

**Mr. Renton:** These arrangements have operated under long-standing agreements with local authorities, in the interests of licence holders and of keeping administrative costs down.

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy for the national television licence records office to collect fees for concessionary licences from persons in dwellings erected or converted for occupation by persons eligible under the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcasting Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1988 against a list of completed licence schedules and appropriate certificates from a local authority or housing association.

**Mr. Renton:** There are no plans to do so.

### Tape-recorded Evidence

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about tape recording police interviews with suspects.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to his question of 15 December at column *715*. We plan to lay the first order under section 60(1)(b) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 during the current parliamentary session. The order will require the tape recording of interviews in accordance with the codes of practice in areas specified in the order. We are discussing with the Association of Chief Police Officers the timing of the first order and which forces it should cover.

### Official Secrets Bill

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of officials in his Department at each grade working on the Official Secrets Bill.

**Mr. Hurd:** Work on the Bill falls mainly to six officials in my Department—one in grade 5, one in grade 7, one higher executive officer (development), one administration officer and two personal secretaries. Other officials assist as required.

### Absent Voting

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report progress on his consideration of the options for changing the law on absent voting.

**Mr. Hurd:** I have placed in the Library copies of a consultation paper on absent voting, together with a paper on associated costs, which the home Departments are issuing today to representatives of the local authorities, electoral registration officers and main political parties. This discusses possible ways of remedying certain difficulties regarding postal and proxy voting which arose during the 1987 general election.

### BBC Services for Doctors

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many doctors *(a)* are subscribing to and *(b)* have decoders to receive the British Broadcasting Corporation's night-time subscription service for doctors.

**Mr. Renton** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* I understand from British Medical Television that, so far, some 2,000 decoders have sent to doctors who have subscribed to the service and that there are some 13,000 subscription requests still to be processed.

### DNA Testing

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people over 18 years, but who had a positive DNA test result when they were under 18 years, are currently waiting for their application to enter the United Kingdom to be processed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many dependants of men already settled in the United Kingdom, having had positive DNA test results, are currently waiting for their applications to enter the

United Kingdom to be processed; and how many of these dependants have been waiting for *(a)* 12 months and *(b)* over 24 months.

**Mr. Renton** *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The information is not available in the form requested, and could not readily be obtained.

As regards the age of young applicants, applications for entry clearance as a child under paragraph 50 of the immigration rules must be made to a British post overseas before the child's 18th birthday. Any DNA evidence which is produced before the application is finally determined will, however, be taken into account, whether the tests were commissioned before or after the child's 18th birthday. Applications or reapplications for entry clearance lodged after a child has reached the age of 18 will normally fall to be considered under paragraph 52 of the rules.

The great majority of cases in which DNA evidence has been produced involve applications made to posts at Dhaka and Islamabad. How long an application will normally take to be processed will depend upon in which queue the application is placed. Waiting times at Dhaka and Islamabad in October 1988 were as follows:

| | *Months* |
|---|---|
| *Dhaka* | |
| Q1 | 3 |
| Q2 | 7 |
| Q3 | 7 |
| Q4 | 23 |
| *Islamabad* | |
| Q1 | 4 |
| Q2 | 11 |
| Q3 | 20 |
| Q4 | 20 |

Persons seeking admission under paragraphs 50 or 52 of the rules will be placed in whichever is the relevant queue under the following criteria:

Q1: persons with a claim to the right of abode; special compassionate cases.
Q2: children under 18 applying for the first time.
Q3: children over 18 applying for the first time.
Q4: reapplicants, whether over or under 18.

## SCOTLAND

### Charities

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will seek to introduce, as a compulsory requirement upon each charity in Scotland, registration with the registrar of friendly societies, together with a requirement to lodge annual accounts with the registrar;

(2) if he will seek to extend to the sheriff court jurisdiction, concurrent with the court of session, over matters concerning charities.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Scottish Home and Health Department issued a consultative memorandum last year on supervision of charities in Scotland. Among matters on which views were invited were the establishment of a register of charities and a requirement on charities to make publicly available copies of the annual accounts. Views were also sought on the possibility of the sheriff court having concurrent jurisdiction with the Court of Session on charitable matters. The responses to the memorandum are now under consideration.

### Forestry Commission

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Forestry Commission intends to review its broadleaves policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government's broadleaves policy is presently being reviewed. My right hon. and learned Friend will make a statement to the House when the review has been completed.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the areas to which the Forestry Commission's felling licence requirements do not apply.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Several types of felling are exempt from the felling licence requirements, of which the most important are when:

1. The felling is in accordance with an approved plan of operations under one of the Forestry Commission's grant schemes.
2. The trees are in a garden, orchard, churchyard or public open space.
3. The trees are all below 8 cm in diameter, measured 1·3 m from the ground; or in the case of thinnings, below 10 cm in diameter; or in the case of coppice or underwood, below 15 cm in diameter.
4. The trees are interfering with permitted development or statutory works by public bodies.
5. The trees are dead, dangerous, causing a nuisance or are badly affected by Dutch elm disease.
6. The felling is in compliance with an Act of Parliament.

Also, in any calendar quarter up to 5 cu m of timber may be felled by an occupier without a licence provided not more than 2 cu m are sold. Further information is given in the Forestry Commission's booklet "Control of Tree Felling"—a copy of which can be found in the Library.

### Farm Woodland Scheme

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the broadleaved component of applications so far submitted under the farm woodland scheme in Scotland, and of those which have been accepted, respectively.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received 160 applications, to date, containing proposals to plant approximately 1,700 hectares of land, of which almost 60 per cent. are identified for broadleaf trees. Twenty-four applications have so far been approved and approximately 80 per cent. of the approved planting area is identified for broadleaf trees.

### School Examinations

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the introduction of standard grade examinations and the consequent withdrawal of O grade examinations and traditional forms of examination in higher grade and certificate of sixth-year studies.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Eighty per cent. of pupils currently in their fourth year of secondary school in Scotland will be presented in one or more subjects at

standard grade this year. This is a most encouraging figure. Teaching materials selected and prepared by central support groups and core groups have now largely been distributed for all subjects in phases 1 to 3 and any remaining materials will be circulated during the current school year. Notes for principal teachers, a manual for headteachers and a revised brochure for pupils and parents have also been produced. Assistance to education authorities for equipping schools for standard grade, especially in science and technological subjects, has been included in capital expenditure allocations amounting to date to £6 million. A further £3·3 million will be available to education authorities for this purpose in 1989-90, an increase of one third on the sum notified to them last year as likely to be available. Details will be given to education authorities shortly.

In view of these developments, it is now appropriate to set firm dates for the withdrawal of certain O grade and traditional higher and CSYS examinations. The timetable will be as follows: as previously announced, the last O grade examinations in metalwork and woodwork will be held in 1989. The last O grade examinations in subjects covered in phases 1 and 2 of the standard grade development programme, will be held in 1991. The last O grade examinations in subjects included in phase 3 of the standard grade development programme will be held in 1992.

The last O grade examinations in subjects for which no standard grade is being developed will be held in 1992. Dates for the last O grade examinations in subjects included in the standard grade development programme after phase 3 will be announced in due course. In every case there will be a limited O grade examination in the immediately following year open only to those resitting the subject.

Pupils normally sit highers one or two years after O grade. Accordingly, the last traditionally higher grade examinations in subjects where the higher is being revised to articulate with standard grade will be held two years after the last O grade examination. Similarly, the last higher grade examination in subjects where the higher grade is being discontinued will be held two years after the last O grade examination except for metalwork and woodwork where the last higher grade examination will be held in 1990. Again, in every case there will be a restricted examination in the immediately following year for candidates resitting the subject.

The CSYS is normally taken one year after higher. Consultation has confirmed, however, that in some cases it will be as acceptable for candidates to proceed to revise CSYS from traditional higher as from revised higher. Accordingly, the last traditional CSYS examinations in English, French and Latin will be held in 1990. Dates for the withdrawal of other traditional CSYS examinations will be announced in due course. No resits are available for CSYS.

Details of these arrangements are set out in the table, along with a list of new courses which have been or are being developed or about the development of which consultation will take place.

*Withdrawal of O grades*

*Last examination 1989*
Metalwork
Woodwork

*Last examination 1991*
Arithmetic
Art and Design
Computing
Craft and Design
English
French
Home Economics
Latin
Mathematics

*Last examination 1992*
Agricultural Science
Anatomy, Physiology and Health
Biology
Chemistry
Economic History
Engineering
Gaelic
Geography
Geology
German
Hebrew
History
Horticultural Science
Italian
Modern Studies
Music
Navigation
Norwegian
Physics
Portuguese
Russian
Seamanship and Nautical Knowledge
Secretarial Studies
Spanish
Statistics
Swedish

*Last examination after 1992*
Accounting
Classical Studies
Economics
Greek
Religious Studies
Technical Drawing

*Withdrawal of traditional highers*

*Last examination 1990*
Metalwork[1]
Woodwork[1]

*Last examination 1993*
Art and Design
Craft and Design
English
French
Home Economics
Latin
Mathematics

*Last examination 1994*
Agricultural Science[1]
Anatomy, Physiology and Health
Biology
Chemistry
Economic History[1]
Engineering[1]
Gaelic
Geography
German
Hebrew[1]
History
Horticultural Science[1]
Italian
Modern Studies
Music
Navigation[1]
Norwegian[1]
Physics
Portuguese[1]
Russian
Secretarial Studies[1]

Spanish
Swedish[1]

*Last examination after 1994*
Accounting
Economics
Greek
Religious Studies
Technical Drawing

[1] Indicates subjects where no revised higher will be available.

*Withdrawal of traditional CSYS*

*Last Examination 1990*
English
French
Latin
Dates for other subjects have still to be set.

*New Courses Developed, in Process of Development, or to be considered for development*

*Standard Grade*

*Phase 1*
Science
Social and Vocational Skills

*Phase 2*
Contemporary Social Studies

*Phase 3*
Office and Information Studies
Physical Education
Technological Studies

*Later Phases*
Accounting and Finance
Drama

*Higher Grade*
Accounting and Finance
Classical Studies
Computing Studies
Drama
Management and Information Studies
Science (consultation stage only)
Technological Studies

*CSYS*
Accounting and Finance
Computing Studies
Craft and Design (consultation stage only)
Management and Information Studies
Music (consultation stage only)
Religious Studies
Technological Studies

## Public Expenditure

**Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the Scottish commentary on public expenditure.

**Mr. Rifkind:** My Department is issuing today "Public Expenditure to 1991-92: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme". I have, as in previous years, arranged for a copy to be sent to each Scottish Member. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

# EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

## Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Butcher:** Under the Department's office systems strategy, 600 staff in London—roughly half—are being provided with PCs, attached to a local area network. Most of these are now in place, and we are considering extending the provision. Consideration is also being given to making similar arrangements in the Department's other site, in Darlington, and to connecting the two networks.

The Department also has in place a communications strategy for Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools, under which all 450 inspectors in the field will be provided with the means of electronic communication with each other, and also with the centre.

The Department does not at present provide electronic information services to the public.

## Student Loans

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide calculations on the cost and savings of the top-up loans scheme, as illustrated in annexe E, page 43 of the White Paper "Top-Up Loans for Students," on the basis of *(a)* 90 per cent. take-up, *(b)* 100 per cent. take-up, *(c)* 90 per cent. take-up with an expansion of student numbers similar to that in the 1980s and *(d)* 100 per cent. take-up with an expansion similar to that in the 1980s.

**Mr. Jackson:** The table shows how the net PSBR effect would vary with alternative take-up assumptions, for the student numbers assumed in the White Paper. It would not be realistic to project into the future the expansion of student numbers that occurred over the 1980s because the demographic outlook is quite different.

*£ million, 1990 prices*

| | Take-up | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *80 per cent.* | *90 per cent.* | *100 per cent.* |
| 1990 | 103 | 123 | 144 |
| 1991 | 105 | 129 | 153 |
| 1992 | 103 | 128 | 154 |
| 1993 | 93 | 120 | 147 |
| 1994 | 78 | 106 | 133 |
| 1999 | 17 | 50 | 81 |
| 2004 | −31 | 4 | 40 |
| 2009 | −69 | −33 | 3 |
| 2014 | −162 | −137 | −113 |
| 2019 | −205 | −186 | −167 |
| 2024 | −227 | −210 | −194 |

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide calculations on the cost and savings of the top-up loans scheme as illustrated in annex E, page 43, of the White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students" on the basis of the *(a)* four and *(b)* five year courses which medical and dental students in particular have to pursue.

**Mr. Jackson:** The calculation of the costs and savings of the Government's proposals for top-up loans for students, as set out in annex E of Cm. 520, already takes account of the longer courses pursued by students of medicine, dentistry, and some other subjects.

### Universities (Scotland)

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet with representatives from Scottish universities concerning the future problem of university provision in Scotland.

**Mr. Jackson:** We have no plans for such a meeting. Although both my right hon. Friend and I regularly visit universities, including those in Scotland, the allocation of public funds towards general university provision is a matter for the University Grants Committee and, from 1 April, the Universities Funding Council established under the Education Reform Act 1988. The funding of the eight Scottish universities is done under standard criteria which allow for different course lengths and apply to all universities in Great Britain. Both bodies have a committee to advise on particular matters relating to Scotland.

### Advanced Supplementary Level Courses

**Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are taking advanced supplementary level courses in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** I have today announced the results of a survey carried out by my Department last autumn. This shows that over 30,000 students in England are now taking GCE advanced supplementary courses. About 27,200 of these students are in schools and provisional figures show a further 3,300 in further education colleges. About 13 per cent. of first year A-level students are now choosing to study one or more AS level courses.

The most popular AS level courses were general studies, with nearly 9,500 students, mathematics, with nearly 7,000 students, English with about 2,500 students, computing, with nearly 2,000 students, and French, with over 1,500 students.

About 1,200 schools and over 100 colleges have mounted AS level courses this year. This represents 44 per cent. of schools, and 38 per cent. of colleges, with A-level students.

The full results of the survey will be published in due course.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Litter

88. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to strengthen the law on litter.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** We are monitoring current experiments and pilot projects set up by the Tidy Britain group and others. We shall develop our policies accordingly, including the introduction of further legislation if appropriate.

### Inner-city Land (Clearance)

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the £67 million which is to be made available for the clearance of derelict inner city land will go to the north-west; and what are the proposed locations.

**Mr. Trippier:** Derelict land grant is available for reclamation of derelict land nationally, not just in inner city areas. Nearly a third of the national resources has been made available to the north west, including Merseyside, in 1989-90. Of this, £10·7 million will be devoted to schemes in the eight rolling programme areas of Salford Quays, Wigan, north east Lancashire, Barrow, Leeds/Liverpool canal corridor, Liverpool, Wirral and Ellesmere Port. The remaining resurces have yet to be allocated to specific projects, but priority will continue to be given to schemes which will contribute to the regeneration of the inner city areas.

### Aluminium

186. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, columns 202-04, he will identify the medical advisers who agreed the aluminium standard in drinking water treatment plants; and what was the limit they set.

**Mr. Moynihan:** The Department took advice from medical advisers on the staff of the chief medical officer. In formulating their advice they took note of the views of the committee on the medical aspects of the contamination of air, soil and water (CASW). Limits were set individually for each supply zone up to a highest three-monthly mean of 1,200 microgram per litre and an absolute maximum of 3,500 micrograms per litre.

### Water Testing

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any additional precautions have been taken or any additional testing undertaken, by water authorities, in the light of the mild winter weather and low water levels in reservoirs.

**Mr. Moynihan:** It is for water authorities to decide whether to take any additional precautions or to carry out additional sampling in the light of local circumstances.

### Enterprise Zones

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all enterprise zones and the dates tax exemptions or rates reliefs cease.

**Mr. Trippier:** The period for which each of the following areas is designated as an enterprise zone is ten years from the date when the designation took effect. The financial benefits of enterprise zone status end when the area concerned ceases to be an enterprise zone.

| *Name of enterprise zone* | *Date of designation* |
|---|---|
| Belfast | 21 August 1981 |
| Clydebank (City of Glasgow) | 18 August 1981 |
| (Clydebank District) | 3 August 1981 |
| Corby | 22 June 1981 |
| Dale Lane and Kinsley (Wakefield) | 23 September 1983 |
| Delyn | 21 July 1983 |
| Dudley | 10 July 1981 |
| Dudley (Round Oak) | 3 October 1984 |
| Glanford (Flixborough) | 13 April 1984 |
| Hartlepool | 23 October 1981 |
| Invergordon | 7 October 1983 |
| Isle of Dogs | 26 April 1982 |
| Langthwaite Grange (Wakefield) | 31 July 1981 |
| Londonderry | 13 September 1983 |

| *Name of enterprise zone* | *Date of designation* |
|---|---|
| Lower Swansea Valley | 11 June 1981 |
| Lower Swansea Valley Number 2 | 6 March 1985 |
| Middlesbrough (Britannia) | 8 November 1983 |
| Milford Haven | 24 April 1984 |
| North East Lancashire | 7 December 1983 |
| North West Kent (zones Numbers 1-5) | 31 October 1983 |
| North West Kent (zones Numbers 6 and 7) | 10 October 1986 |
| Rotherham | 16 August 1983 |
| Salford Docks/Trafford Park | 12 August 1981 |
| Scunthorpe | 23 September 1983 |
| Speke (Liverpool) | 25 August 1981 |
| Tayside | 9 January 1984 |
| Telford | 13 January 1984 |
| Tyneside | 25 August 1981 |
| Wellingborough | 26 July 1983 |
| Workington (Allerdale) | 4 October 1983 |

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will itemise all the costs of enterprise zones since their inception.

**Mr. Trippier:** The costs of the British enterprise zones to 1985-86 are contained in "EZ Information 1985-86", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. I expect to publish the next in this series of annual reports in the very near future.

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost per job created in enterprise zones once all costs are taken into account.

**Mr. Trippier:** The consultants commissioned by my Department to evaluate the enterprise zone experiment about mid-way through its life estimated the public cost per additional job within the enterprise zones to be £8,500. ("An evaluation of the enterprise zone experiment" by PA Cambridge Economic Consultants, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office December 1987.) This figure is liable to change over time as both the number of additional jobs and the public costs in the zones increase.

### Sport and Leisure Facilities

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he will be making to section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, including education departments via the Education Act 1944; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** It is our intention to enable local authorities to delegate their discretionary charging powers under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, if they so wish, to contractors who manage sports and leisure facilities set up under the same section. We are currently considering how to achieve this and what the wider implications of such an amendment would be.

### Owner-occupied Property (Repairs)

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government are making available extra funding to local authorities to cover amounts for repairs and maintenance on owner-occupied properties for those on low or reduced income.

**Mr. Trippier:** An additional £20 million of resources have been made available for 1989-90 to 29 local authorities (listed in my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 3 February, *Official Report*, columns *429-30*, to encourage the renewal of the private sector housing stock in selected areas. The authorities concerned are expected to steer a significant proportion of these additional resources towards owners on low incomes.

### Council House Sales

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial facilities are available to purchasers of system-built local authority housing.

**Mr. Trippier:** Tenants who want to buy system-built properties are entitled to the normal right-to-buy discount and, if necessary, for a mortgage from their council.

### Sewage Works (Derbyshire)

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sewage works in Derbyshire where effluent levels currently exceed the limits set by his Department; and whether he has any plans to alter such limits.

**Mr. Moynihan:** I have yet to receive the annual non-compliance reports for 1988 from the Yorkshire, Severn Trent and North West water authorities, whose areas include Derbyshire. When returns for all 10 authorities have been received, they will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Water announced on 7 December 1988 at column *199* that applications for temporary variations in discharge consent conditions will be considered for those sewage works where capital improvements are programmed for completion by March 1992. Subject to this condition, authorities may apply for temporary variations to the consent conditions for works which failed to comply in 1988.

### Assessment Planning

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to monitor the implementation of the Environment Assessment Planning (Town and Country Planning Assessment of Environmental Effect) Regulations 1988, implementing EC directive 85/337.

**Mr. Chope:** The Department receives copies of environmental statements submitted under the regulations relating to development proposals in England. In addition it keeps records of decisions by the Secretary of State under the regulations as to the need for environmental assessment and has asked local planning authorities to inform it when they give opinions under the regulations that environmental assessment is required.

### Landfill (Rixton)

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will request an explanation from Cheshire county council as to why his Department was not informed earlier than February that 2,500 drums of paint residues and pigments from the Chemstar plant had been landfilled at Rixton.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Cheshire county council, as the waste disposal authority, is the competent body with

regard to the licensing of waste disposal facilities. It is the council's responsibility to ensure that all facilities that it licences pose no risk to public health, water resources or the environment generally. There is no requirement for the council to inform this Department of wastes that it permits on to a landfill.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further tests have been carried out at the Rixton landfilled site following the recent discovery of dioxins in the ground at Chemstar.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** I am informed that Cheshire county council, the waste disposal authority, has carried out no tests for dioxin at the Rixton landfill site. I understand that it is in close touch with Tameside borough council in whose area the Chemstar plant is located.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of ash from the Luvella waste incinerator being dumped at Rixton; what was the quantity of this ash: at which sites the ash was dumped; and if his Department will take samples of this ash to test for the presence of dioxins.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** None. It is the responsibility of the waste disposal authority, Cheshire county council, to licence and monitor the Rixton landfill. If it perceives the need, it is the responsibility of the local waste disposal authority to arrange for any particular waste stream to be analysed.

## Air Pollution

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures exist to monitor air pollution in British cities.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The Department of the Environment monitors levels of air pollution in British cities through a number of research contracts, in some cases in conjunction with the appropriate local authorities. Further details are contained in the 11th edition of the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Some local authorities also carry out their own additional monitoring of selected pollutants.

## Local Government Councillors

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers he has to take action against local government councillors who receive financial or pecuniary benefit or advantage for their elected office.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** None.

It is an offence for a councillor who has not received a dispensation to speak or vote on any matter in which he or she has a pecuniary interest. Prosecution of such offences rests with the Crown prosecution service.

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what categories of councillors' expenses are deemed to be personal income; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Councillors may become entitled to attendance allowance, financial loss allowance, special responsibility allowance, and travel and subsistence allowance. Where these allowances are not to reimburse expenditure or loss incurred wholly, necessarily and exclusively in the performance of the councillor's duties, they may be treated as personal income for tax and social security benefit purposes.

## Cryptosporidia

**Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government will be taking any further steps in respect of cryptosporidia in water supplies.

**Mr. Howard:** Thames Water has been dealing with a problem relating to cryptosporidia in water supplies in the Oxford and Swindon area. As a precaution, Thames Water extended special sampling to other parts of its area and by the end of last week a number of the organisms had been identified intermittently at some other water treatment works. However, no link has been established between currently reported cases of cryptosporidiosis and drinking water supplies outside the Oxford and Swindon areas and the Department of Health has advised that there is no need for consumers to take any special precautions. Thames Water is taking action aimed at removing the organisms from these additional supplies and will continue with intensive sampling. They also propose to undertake an independently led review aimed at learning lessons from the experience. This information was announced in a press release by Thames Water last Saturday.

In view of the absence of information on cryptosporidia in water supplies, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, has decided to establish a group of experts under the chairmanship of Sir John Badenoch to advise on the subject. The group will consider the extent to which this organism may be present in water supplies, the monitoring methods necessary to detect it, the public health significance of its presence and whether any action is necessary.

## Bathing Waters

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of designated bathing waters were tested for the presence of enteroviruses during 1988; and what proportion complied with the European Community bathing water directive.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* Of the 380 waters identified under the EC bathing water directive in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, 164 were monitored for the enterovirus parameter and of these 42 per cent. met the directive's zero enterovirus standard. Monitoring for enteroviruses is required under the directive only if inspection of the bathing water indicates that they are present or if the quality of water has deteriorated. Enteroviruses are ubiquitous in the water environment and may arise not only from sewage but from birds and animals. In some circumstances it may, therefore, be impossible in practice to meet the zero standard. This is one of the issues likely to be considered in the review of the bathing water directive which has been proposed by the European Commission.

## Business Rate

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures, based on tables 1 to 5 of the Non-Domestic

Rating: Transition consultation paper published on 15 February, showing separately the effects of *(a)* the revaluation and *(b)* the introduction of a unified business rate.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* The information is set out in the tables. It must be emphasised that it is based on a preliminary sample survey of the effects of the revaluation of non-domestic properties and the introduction of a uniform business rate (UBR). The new valuations supplied for the sample of properties were best estimates, and not actual revaluations. The results therefore need to be interpreted with caution.

As in the consultation paper the tables are all in 1988-89 prices. They break down the aggregate figures, to show first the effect of introducing a uniform business rate with no revaluation and second the effect of the revaluation with the UBR in place. The tables given here exclude the effects of the transitional arrangements for the new system. Table 3, and part of table 5, of the consultation paper show the effects of the transitional arrangements, which will apply to the total changes in rate bills, and are not defined in a way which enables their effect to be disaggregated between the introduction of the uniform business rate and the revaluation.

Columns and rows may not sum due to rounding in these and the original tables.

*Table 1A*
*Amounts of overall increases and reductions in rate bills (excluding effect of transitional arrangements)*

| | *Aggregate reduction (−) increase (+) £ million* | *Net change on UBR £ million* | *Net change on revaluation £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *England* | | | |
| Gainers | −1,550 | −360 | −1,190 |
| Little change (less than ± 5 per cent.) | −4 | +41 | −45 |
| Losers | +1,550 | +315 | +1,235 |
| *Wales* | | | |
| Gainers | −40 | −3 | −39 |
| Little change (less than ± 5 per cent.) | — | — | — |
| Losers | +40 | +3 | +40 |

*Table 2A*
*Distribution of overall change in rate bills (excluding effect of transitional arrangements)*

| | *Change in rate bill: reduction (−) increase (+) £ million* | *Net change on UBR £ million* | *Net change on revaluation £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *England* | | | |
| *Reductions* | | | |
| 50 per cent. or more | −570 | −150 | −420 |
| 5 per cent. to 50 per cent. | −980 | −210 | −760 |
| *Little change* (less than ± 5 per cent.) | −4 | +41 | −45 |
| *Increases* | | | |
| 5 per cent. to 50 per cent. | +460 | +200 | +260 |
| 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. | +450 | +50 | +400 |
| 100 per cent. or more | +650 | +70 | +580 |
| *Wales* | | | |
| *Reductions* | | | |
| 50 per cent. or more | −12 | — | −11 |
| 5 per cent. to 50 per cent. | −30 | −3 | −27 |
| *Little change* (less than ± 5 per cent.) | — | — | — |
| *Increases* | | | |
| 5 per cent. to 50 per cent. | +18 | +2 | +16 |
| 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. | +16 | — | +15 |
| 100 per cent. or more | +8 | — | +8 |

Table 4A: *Possible change in rate bills by property type, England and Wales* (excluding effect of transitional arrangements)

| *Property Type* | *Overall reduction (−) increase (+) in rate bill per cent* | *Net change on UBR per cent* | *Net change on revaluation per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *England* | | | |
| Factories | −25 | −8 | −18 |
| Warehouses | −12 | −4 | −8 |
| Shops | +14 | −3 | +17 |
| Offices | +14 | +20 | −5 |
| Other properties | +7 | −3 | +10 |
| *Wales* | | | |
| Factories | −16 | −3 | −14 |
| Warehouses | −9 | +2 | −10 |
| Shops | +18 | 0 | +18 |
| Offices | +5 | +4 | +1 |
| Other properties | +6 | +1 | +5 |

Table 5A: *Projected changes in rate bills by region, England* (excluding effects of transitional arrangements.)

| *Region* | *Overall reduction (−) increase (+) £ million* | *Net change on UBR £ million* | *Net change on revaluation £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|
| North West | −310 | −160 | −150 |
| West Midlands | −200 | −20 | −180 |
| East Midlands | −130 | −70 | −60 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | −150 | −150 | 0 |
| Northern | −50 | −100 | +50 |
| East Anglia | +40 | +10 | +30 |
| South West | +130 | −20 | +150 |
| Inner London | +390 | +460 | −70 |
| Outer London | +50 | +80 | −30 |
| Rest of the South East | +230 | −10 | +250 |

## Rating Reform

**Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the estimate of the community charge his Department expects for the district councils in *(a)* Merseyside, *(b)* Greater Manchester, *(c)* Lancashire and *(d)* Greater London.

**Mr. Gummer:** The Government have made no estimates of future community charges. Illustrative figures were published on 23 June showing what the community charge would have been in each area had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities.

### Local Authorities (Finance)

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the losses sustained to date by individual local authorities from open and closed transactions involving interest rate swaps and other money market futures and option contracts.

**Mr. Gummer:** This information is not available from the regular financial returns which are made by authorities and we do not have full information from other sources for any individual authority.

I suggest my hon. Friend asks for details from councils engaging in this business who no doubt will want to be fully publicly accountable.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### EC Council Meeting

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues he expects to raise at the next European Community Council meeting.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Foreign Affairs Council. The next meeting will be on 20-21 March. The agenda is expected to include consideration of the way forward in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations, and the relationship between the Community and the Council of Europe. A ministerial meeting with the EFTA countries will be held in the margins. Measures to tackle EC fraud are expected to be discussed in ECOFIN on 13 March.

### Nuclear Disarmament

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom is party to any international agreement requiring the United Kingdom to be involved in nuclear disarmament negotiations.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Article VI of the non-proliferation treaty, to which the United Kingdom is a party, requires each of the parties to undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Our policy in respect of this article is contained in the answer given to the hon. Member by my hon. Friend the Minister of State (Mr. Waldegrave) on 8 December, at col. *316-17*.

### Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent trip to Japan, he had the opportunity to discuss with other foreign ministers or heads of state current progress on the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and plans for the first preparatory committee for the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference, to be held on 1 to 5 May.

**Mrs. Chalker:** On this occasion, no. However, we regularly take the opportunity to discuss with other governments the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and are actively pursuing with other states the parties' preparations for the first preparatory committee for the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to instruct the United Kingdom delegation to the first preparatory committee meeting, to be held on 1 to 5 May, for the 1990 fourth review conference of the non-proliferation treaty, to negotiate full observer status for the European proliferation information centre to attend the 1990 review conference.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We have not yet received any such request from the European proliferation information centre (EPIC). However, as a recognised non-governmental organisation, the EPIC was granted observer status at the 1985 non-proliferation treaty review conference. If similar rules of procedure are adopted at the 1990 review conference, there should be no objection to EPIC attendance as observers.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasion ministers or officials of his Department last raised the question of accession to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty by France and the People's Republic of China, respectively, with ministers or officials of those states.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 20 February by my hon. Friend the Minister of State at column *472*.

### Disarmament Conference

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department received any invitations to send delegates or observers to the conference on conventional and non-nuclear disarmament at the polytechnic of the south bank organised by the British Peace Assembly.

**Mrs. Chalker:** No.

### Sub-Saharan Africa

**Ms. Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total amount of official debt owed to the United Kingdom by each country in sub-Saharan Africa; and what proportion of their total official debt this represents.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Following the cancellation of £275 million of old aid debts for sub-Saharan Africa, remaining debt to ODA is insignificant. Debt owed to ECGD by sub-Saharan African countries as at 31 December 1988 was £1·868 billion (equivalent to about $3·25 billion at today's exchange rate). This amounts to around 4·5 per cent. of the $71·9 billion estimated in the IMF's October 1988 world economic outlook as sub-Saharan Africa's total long-term debt in 1988 to official creditors (including the international financial institutions except the IMF). Figures for debts owed to ECGD by individual countries are not published.

## TRANSPORT

### Bus Services (Rural Area)

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has received on the effect of the Transport Act 1985 on bus services in rural areas.

**Mr. Portillo:** Studies conducted for the Department's transport and road research laboratory indicated that the level of bus services in rural areas was broadly maintained following deregulation. In the English shire counties bus mileage increased by 18 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1987-88.

### Heavy Goods Vehicles (Drivers)

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods vehicle drivers have been *(a)* prosecuted and *(b)* convicted of offences arising out of breaches of Road Traffic Acts in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The number of HGV driver prosecutions arising from offences detected by traffic examiners for each of the last five years are as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of prosecutions* |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 6,530 |
| 1985 | 5,576 |
| 1986 | 6,721 |
| 1987 | 5,893 |
| 1988 | 6,895 |

Figures are not available for the number of absolute discharges.

**Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy regarding the ownership, financing and management of airports in the ownership or management of local authorities.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The policy is set out in paragraphs 9.15 and 9.16 of the White Paper "Airports Policy" of June 1985 (Cmnd 9542). Fifteen airports are now run by local authority-owned companies formed under the Airports Act 1986.

The Government would like to see the present local authority owners increasingly involve the private sector in the ownership, development and running of airports.

### M4 (Lanes)

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those sections of the M4 motorway served by (i) two lanes in each direction and (ii) three lanes in each direction; specifying the length to the nearest mile of (i) and (ii).

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The information for the M4 in England is as follows:

(i) Dual two-lane sections (11 miles)
Junction 1—Boston Manor
Junction 20—Junction 22[1]

[1] Includes Severn bridge

The section at Catherine hill (Junctions 20-21) is two lanes westbound and three lanes eastbound.

(ii) Dual three-lane sections (108 miles)
Boston Manor—Junction 4
Junction 4B—Junction 20

(iii) Dual four-lane section (1 mile)
Junction 4—Junction 4B (at M25 interchange)

The M4 in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to construct additional lanes on the M4 motorway.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We plan to widen the M4 to four lanes between the M25 and junction 8/9. There are also schemes in the trunk road programme to improve junctions 4 and 8/9.

The road programme is currently under review. We expect to make an announcement in the spring.

The M4 in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

### Roads (Hampshire)

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been Hampshire county council's bid for spending on roads each year since 1979 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, based on 1988-89 value.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Local highway authorities submit bids only for allocations for capital expenditure on roads. Details of Hampshire county council's bids are given in the following table:

| *Year* | *Bid in cash terms £ million* | *Bid in real terms[1] £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 10·086 | 18·815 |
| 1980-81 | 12·677 | 19·966 |
| 1981-82 | 13·592 | 19·488 |
| 1982-83 | 12·987 | 17·379 |
| 1983-84 | 14·562 | 18·638 |
| 1984-85 | 16·955 | 20·656 |
| 1985-86 | 18·645 | 21·552 |
| 1986-87 | 17·219 | 19·261 |
| 1987-88 | 17·806 | 18·919 |
| 1988-89 | 16·519 | 16·519 |
| 1989-90 | 19·426 | 18·501 |

[1] Conversion to 1988-89 prices using the GDP Deflator.

### Insulation Grants

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the three counties of Yorkshire by year, for the last five years the number and cost of providing insulation grants and other assistance for people living adjacent to *(a)* motorways and *(b)* airports and airfields; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to the statement on noise insulation on 6 February at columns *535-36*, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). The Department has no information on payments made or insulation provided by local airport management or operators. The information in connection with motorways is as follows:

*(a) Noise insulation for dwellings near motorways*

| | *Number of dwellings* | *Cost of grants or insulation provided* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *West Yorkshire £* | *North Yorkshire £* | *South Yorkshire £* |
| 1984-85 | 406 | 310,790 | — | — |
| 1985-86 | 540 | 421,864 | — | — |
| 1986-87 | 103 | 79,291 | 20,000 | — |

| | Number of dwellings | Cost of grants or insulation provided | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | West Yorkshire £ | North Yorkshire £ | South Yorkshire £ |
| 1987-88 | 16 | 1,132 | 31,300 | — |
| 1988-89 | 2 | 843 | — | — |

## Road Building (Yorkshire)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the road building work contracts within the three counties of Yorkshire during *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90 scheduled to cost over £1 million; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Trunk road improvement scheme contracts costing over £1 million in the counties of North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire are as follows:

*Completed during 1988-89*
A616 Stocksbridge to M1
A1 Wetherby Bypass
A629 Airedale, Section 1
A650 Airedale, Section 2
A65 Settle and Giggleswick Bypass
M62 Climbing Lane west of Junction 25

*Presently under construction*
A1 Dishforth Interchange

*Due to commence construction in 1989-90*
A65 Addingham Bypass
A650 Drighlington Bypass
A1 Improvement, Bramham to Wetherby (Subject to the completion of outstanding statutory procedures).

In addition work has been carried out in 1988-89 on four major maintenance contracts with a value of over £1 million. There are eight major maintenance contracts with a value of over £1 million planned for 1989-90.

Road building contracts on non-trunk roads are the responsibility of the local highway authorities.

## Stansted Airport

**Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the anticipated capital expenditure programme is for the development of Stansted airport to accommodate 8 million passengers a year, split between financial years.

**Mr. Peter Bottomely:** The Government do not hold this information. BAA plc is responsible for developing Stansted airport.

## Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley Bridge Bypass

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the amount already paid to contractors for the Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley bridge bypass and his estimate of the likely final claims; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The amount certified to date for payment to the contractor is £36,187,743.

The outstanding claims for additional payments remain commercial matters between the Department and the contractor until they have been settled.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the extraordinary or unexpected localised groundwork conditions encountered during construction of the Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley bridge bypass; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The main problems encountered reflect the particularly difficult and variable geology on the route of the bypass. The road crosses alternating layers of sandstone, shale and mudstones which are overlain by variable depths of glacial clays, sands and gravels, alluvium and industrial fill. In places erosion has produced over steepened slopes which have marginal stability and are prone to landslips.

In particular there were problems with the foundations to the eastern end of the Hayfield road viaduct, difficulties with the construction of the Western lane retaining wall, problems with the stability of the Carley lane embankment and the cutting slope at Silk hill, and greater than anticipated amounts of unsuitable material along the route of the bypass.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the report by Allott and Lomax, consultng engineers, into the performance of the consulting engineers employed on the Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley bridge bypass; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The report is not yet complete. We shall consider whether it should be placed in the Library at the appropriate time.

## Coastal Waters (Pollution)

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sanctions his Department has over the owners of foreign vessels which cause pollution within United Kingdom territorial waters.

**Mr. Portillo:** Where the owner of a foreign vessel has a registered office in the United Kingdom he may be prosecuted in United Kingdom courts and fined up to £50,000 of summary conviction; otherwise the Department notifies the relevant flag administration and asks it to consider prosecution. In addition the costs of the clean-up are recovered from the owners.

## Coal Imports

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list coal imports through the port of Sunderland for 1987 and 1988 by country of consignment.

**Mr. Portillo:** Her Majesty's Customs and Excise figures for imports of coal at Sunderland include imports at Seaham. Details by country of consignment for 1987 and for 1988 (provisional) are as follows:

*Coal imports at Sunderland (including Seaham)*

| Country of consignment | Thousand tonnes 1987 | 1988 |
|---|---|---|
| France | 4 | 2 |
| Belgium/Luxembourg | 13 | 17 |
| Netherlands | 113 | 166 |
| Federal Republic of Germany | 17 | 13 |
| Denmark | — | 2 |
| Portugal | — | 4 |
| Iceland | — | 6 |
| Norway | 2 | 13 |
| Sweden | 7 | 2 |
| USSR | 6 | 40 |
| Poland | 30 | 28 |
| Australia | 2 | — |
| Canada | — | 29 |
| United States of America | 1 | 27 |
| Colombia | 3 | — |

| Country of consignment | Thousand tonnes 1987 | 1988 |
|---|---|---|
| Venezuela | — | 69 |
| TOTAL | 198 | 418 |

### Ships (Registration)

**Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made since the memorandum of understanding signed with the Bahamas in June 1988, in negotiating similar arrangements with other states operating open registries to help ensure the availability to Her Majesty's Government of flagged-out British ships in the event of war.

**Mr. Portillo:** On 20 February exchanges of letters were completed between representatives of Her Majesty's Government and both the Republic of Liberia and the Republic of Vanuatu under which the Liberian and Vanuatuan Governments agree to allow British-owned ships on their registers, for which a contract of commitment exists, to be made available to Her Majesty's Government in the event of hostilities.

The contract of commitment is an agreement between Her Majesty's Government and the owner under which the shipowner agrees to make the named ships available to Her Majesty's Government in the event of hostilities and in return is guaranteed reinsurance by Her Majesty's Government against Queen's enemy war risks at that time. This would be carried out through one of the British war risks associations, with whom a revised agreement has recently been completed.

The Department will shortly be approaching British shipowners known to have ships on the two registers.

### Merseyrail

**Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will provide capital allocations and grant for the fire improvement works being undertaken on Merseyrail.

**Mr. Portillo:** I welcome this programme of works. I am making available capital allocations of £1·096 million to cover expenditure on certain items in this programme and I would be prepared to consider sympathetically applications for further such support in due course. In addition, I am making available grant of £316,000 to assist with expenditure in 1988-89.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Official Secrets Bill

Q49. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the number of Government officials at each grade working on the Official Secrets Bill.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave to a question by him earlier today.

### EC (Fraud)

Q60. **Mr. Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister what proposals she will submit to the European Council about the level of fraud in the European Community.

**The Prime Minister:** The form of any initiative on fraud at the Madrid European Council will be determined in the light of developments between now and then, notably the outcome of discussions on the Court of Auditors annual report at the Economic and Finance Council in March.

### Middle East

Q83. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she intends to seek an early meeting with the President of the United States of America to discuss the calling of a middle east peace conference, following the initiative in that regard in early 1988 by former Secretary of State George Shultz; and whether she will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** I have at present no firm plans for a further meeting with Mr. Bush. When I see him, I expect that we will wish to discuss the middle east.

### Concorde

Q127. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will use the occasion of the 20th anniversary today of the maiden flight of Concorde to convey her congratulations to those who designed and built her.

**The Prime Minister:** Yes. Concorde has been a remarkable and unique technical achievement and now has 11 years of successful operations with British Airways and Air France behind it. It remains the flagship of both airlines.

### Civil Service (Dispersal)

Q169. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the dispersal of Civil Service jobs to *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* other regions of Scotland.

**The Prime Minister:** Some 2,050 jobs were earmarked for Scotland under the dispersal programme announced in 1979. Almost all of these jobs are now in place including 1,330 with the Ministry of Defence and 600 with the Overseas Development Administration, and the commitment will be more than met when the Passport Office and the Ministry of Defence transfer further posts to Scotland in the first half of 1989. In addition, some 450 jobs will be created in Glasgow as a result of the recent Department of Social Security dispersal arrangements. Strathclyde region has attracted the majority of these jobs to date.

### Roads (London)

Q183. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what action the Government are taking to protect London from encroachment through road building.

**The Prime Minister:** We are promoting a range of appropriate measures to meet London's transport needs. These cover public transport and traffic management as well as road improvements.

Where improvements to the trunk road network are necessary and can be justified, the schemes are subject to environmental appraisals and statutory planning procedures.

### Relocation

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list those Departments which, in reviewing the location of their work, are considering the Chalfont drive site in Nottingham for relocation.

**The Prime Minister:** No. The policy announced by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 31 March 1988 at columns *610-11*, places on individual Departments the responsibility to review the location of their work in accordance with clear guidelines. They will consider a number of relocation sites offering easier labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Where appropriate, these will include areas such as Nottingham which are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies. Departmental Ministers will announce their own decisions on significant relocations, including their chosen venues.

### Separatist Movements

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the separatist movements in the European Community to which she made a general reference in her speech delivered at the Holiday Inn, Glasgow, on 3 February.

**The Prime Minister:** I was referring to those democratic political parties in the member states of the Community seeking fully independent national status for the areas that they claim to represent.

### Engagements

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**Mr. Favell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 March.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

### EEC Directives

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement explaining the procedures under which directives are classified as stemming from particular clauses of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act with particular reference to the criteria by which it is determined as to whether matters fall to be decided under *(a)* article 100 and *(b)* article 100a.

**The Prime Minister:** The Treaty article (or articles) on which EC legislation is based is proposed in the first instance by the Commission. It is for the Council to decide upon proposals for legislation, including their treaty base. Whether a proposal falls under article 100 or 100a is determined in accordance with the provisions of those articles.

## WALES

### MMR Immunisation

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* any preliminary figures for the uptake of MMR immunisation in each health authority in Wales during the first three months of the MMR being available.

**Mr. Grist:** Reports of MMR immunisation uptake at district health authority level are presently being analysed and the results will be available shortly. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

### Housing Associations

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list for each housing association in Mid Glamorgan *(a)* the number of allocations granted in 1988-89 for rehabilitation and new dwellings and *(b)* the bids made by each association for rehabilitation and new dwellings in 1989-90 and *(c)* the allocations granted for each association for 1989-90.

**Mr. Grist:** The information is shown in the tables:

| *Housing association* | *New build units* | *Rehabilitation units* |
|---|---|---|
| *(a) Allocations to housing associations for new schemes in Mid Glamorgan in 1988-89* | | |
| Cynon Taff | — | 51 |
| Corland | 37 | — |
| Merthyr health authority | 11 | 27 |
| Wales and West | — | 34 |
| SHAW | — | 10 |
| South Wales federated | — | 4 |
| Rhondda health authority | 26 | 35 |
| UKHT | 24 | 10 |
| Western permanent | 20 | — |
| Pontypridd and district | 20 | 6 |
| Hafod | 20 | — |
| *(b) Units bid for housing for Wales funding in 1989-90 in Mid Glamorgan* | | |
| Cynon Taff | 17 | 80 |
| Corland | 162 | — |
| Wales and West | 261 | 271 |
| SHAW | 150 | 163 |
| Rhondda health authority | 71 | 59 |
| UKGT | 6 | 46 |
| Western Permanent | 102 | 102 |
| Pontypridd and district | 34 | 20 |
| Hafod | 264 | 140 |
| Abbeyfields | 10 | 10 |
| Gwalia | 12 | — |
| Newydd | 100 | — |
| Baptist | 17 | — |
| New Era | — | 25 |
| Stoneham | — | 7 |
| South Wales federated | 5 | 63 |
| *(c) South Wales federated allocations to housing associations for new schemes in Mid Glamorgan in 1989-90* | | |
| Cynon Taff | 17 | 27 |
| Wales and West | 25 | — |
| SHAW | 25 | — |
| South Wales federated | — | 12 |
| Hafod | — | 10 |
| Abbeyfields | 10 | — |
| New Era | — | 5 |
| Merthyr | 32 | 10 |

This does not take account of any further allocations which will be made during the year.

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the grant made to each housing association in Mid Glamorgan in 1988-89; what the grant for each association will be in 1989-90; and what assessment he has made of the likely average increases in rent on new dwellings over those rents set for 1988-89.

**Mr. Grist:** The table shows the grant made to each housing association for new schemes in Mid Glamorgan in 1988-89:

| | £000 |
|---|---|
| Cynon Taff | 1,715 |
| Corlan | 1,258 |
| Merthyr HA | 1,197 |
| Wales and West | 780 |
| SHAW | 325 |
| South Wales Federated | 72 |
| Rhondda HA | 1,918 |
| Wales and West | 325 |
| United Kingdom HT | 1,045 |
| Western Permanent | 580 |
| Pontypridd and District | 775 |
| Haford | 600 |

It will not be possible to provide details of grants to housing associations in 1989-90 until the end of the financial year.

The setting of rents is a matter for the housing association concerned. Any change in rents will differ from property to property according to a wide range of variables. Average increases are not meaningful and no assessment has been made of them.

## Farm Woodland Scheme

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the broadleaved component of applications made so far under the farm woodland scheme in Wales; and what is the proportion in those which have been accepted.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The broadleaved component of all applications received is 76 per cent. Those applications which have been processed and approved so far have a broadleaved component of 94 per cent.

## National Botanical Garden

**Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial support he intends to make available for a Welsh national botanical garden based at Swansea; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** No such proposal has been put to me.

## Capital Allocations

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the capital allocations for each Welsh county and district for each year since 1981 and capital allocations hypothecated to particular services between 1981-82 and 1984-85.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The information requested is given in the tables. Capital allocations shown for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are provisional. Allocations form only part of local authority capital investment capacity. Gross spending provision (excluding provision for law and order services) for all district and county councils in Wales for 1989-90 is £4·50 million, an increase of 8·2 per cent. over 1988-89.

*Local authority capital allocations 1981-82 to 1989-90*

| *Local authority* | *1981-82 £'000s* | *1982-83 £'000s* | *1983-84 £'000s* | *1984-85 £'000s* | *1985-86 £'000s* | *1986-87 £'000s* | *1987-88 £'000s* | *1988-89 £'000s* | *1989-90 £'000s* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 3,528 | 4,018 | 3,788 | 3,245 | 3,242 | 3,567 | 3,938 | 2,710 | 2,774 |
| Colwyn | 2,590 | 3,862 | 3,127 | 2,675 | 2,595 | 2,360 | 2,831 | 2,250 | 2,365 |
| Delyn | 2,266 | 3,543 | 4,200 | 4,461 | 4,087 | 4,801 | 3,077 | 2,512 | 2,823 |
| Glyndwr | 1,393 | 1,957 | 2,656 | 1,770 | 1,986 | 1,983 | 1,903 | 1,809 | 1,616 |
| Rhyddlan | 1,861 | 2,464 | 2,597 | 2,077 | 1,972 | 2,265 | 4,211 | 4,192 | 2,995 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 5,767 | 6,480 | 5,357 | 5,724 | 5,399 | 7,936 | 7,717 | 5,921 | 7,080 |
| Carmarthen | 2,940 | 4,311 | 8,924 | 4,125 | 3,547 | 3,933 | 4,432 | 3,057 | 3,109 |
| Ceredigion | 2,728 | 4,381 | 5,135 | 3,316 | 2,755 | 3,158 | 3,494 | 2,858 | 2,868 |
| Dinefwr | 1,009 | 1,717 | 2,743 | 1,694 | 1,456 | 1,651 | 1,867 | 2,224 | 1,885 |
| Llanelli | 3,895 | 5,710 | 5,395 | 4,204 | 3,175 | 3,349 | 3,919 | 3,357 | 4,187 |
| Preseli | 2,007 | 2,699 | 4,663 | 4,170 | 3,282 | 2,891 | 3,306 | 3,267 | 2,590 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 1,428 | 2,825 | 4,443 | 3,439 | 2,978 | 2,803 | 5,067 | 3,287 | 2,196 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 5,265 | 12,111 | 12,176 | 8,315 | 6,727 | 10,197 | 12,870 | 8,629 | 10,983 |
| Islwyn | 3,474 | 5,692 | 5,899 | 5,130 | 5,625 | 9,324 | 8,209 | 7,681 | 4,439 |
| Monmouth | 2,110 | 3,563 | 5,176 | 4,026 | 3,942 | 3,854 | 4,157 | 2,703 | 2,779 |
| Newport | 8,357 | 13,750 | 11,038 | 7,996 | 8,418 | 9,713 | 9,262 | 7,642 | 6,928 |
| Torfaen | 3,441 | 5,329 | 5,266 | 4,696 | 4,665 | 6,253 | 7,000 | 6,311 | 5,319 |
| Aberconwy | 2,076 | 2,223 | 2,575 | 1,942 | 1,877 | 1,908 | 2,257 | 1,987 | 3,645 |
| Arfon | 3,583 | 3,810 | 4,207 | 3,356 | 2,692 | 2,761 | 3,411 | 3,750 | 3,210 |
| Dwyfor | 1,086 | 1,508 | 3,460 | 2,114 | 1,435 | 2,225 | 2,539 | 2,000 | 1,464 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,625 | 1,692 | 5,175 | 2,475 | 1,313 | 1,452 | 1,728 | 1,942 | 1,665 |
| Ynys Môn | 1,954 | 3,162 | 6,559 | 2,945 | 3,701 | 4,617 | 4,847 | 3,725 | 2,973 |
| Cynon Valley | 2,767 | 3,520 | 5,035 | 4,216 | 3,680 | 4,831 | 6,793 | 7,213 | 4,984 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 3,941 | 6,006 | 5,616 | 3,806 | 3,111 | 5,116 | 6,179 | 5,090 | 5,477 |
| Ogwr | 5,354 | 7,881 | 7,419 | 6,016 | 5,481 | 6,051 | 8,493 | 6,805 | 5,475 |
| Rhondda | 5,521 | 7,117 | 13,745 | 8,943 | 8,558 | 10,959 | 12,738 | 17,771 | 12,706 |
| Rhymney Valley | 5,162 | 7,770 | 6,856 | 5,766 | 6,238 | 8,544 | 10,648 | 10,131 | 6,595 |
| Taff Ely | 6,377 | 10,201 | 10,133 | 5,886 | 5,049 | 5,782 | 7,6[illegible]5 | 5,751 | 5,148 |
| Brecknock | 1,745 | 1,602 | 3,043 | 1,715 | 2,066 | 3,444 | 3,270 | 1,689 | 2,120 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,411 | 1,608 | 3,685 | 1,782 | 1,741 | 1,921 | 2,119 | 2,118 | 2,171 |
| Radnor | 889 | 1,497 | 1,758 | 1,108 | 970 | 1,109 | 1,426 | 1,187 | 1,042 |
| Cardiff | 17,029 | 19,559 | 24,792 | 19,551 | 15,924 | 19,094 | 21,060 | 17,933 | 15,289 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 5,082 | 5,730 | 7,776 | 4,687 | 3,903 | 5,224 | 5,981 | 4,517 | 4,031 |

| Local authority | 1981-82 £'000s | 1982-83 £'000s | 1983-84 £'000s | 1984-85 £'000s | 1985-86 £'000s | 1986-87 £'000s | 1987-88 £'000s | 1988-89 £'000s | 1989-90 £'000s |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Port Talbot | 2,262 | 2,489 | 2,674 | 2,315 | 1,899 | 3,509 | 4,389 | 3,843 | 3,544 |
| Lliw Valley | 3,486 | 4,569 | 4,447 | 3,782 | 3,155 | 3,692 | 4,069 | 3,638 | 3,608 |
| Neath | 2,165 | 5,239 | 4,802 | 2,779 | 3,123 | 3,731 | 4,417 | 3,978 | 3,512 |
| Swansea | 9,398 | 18,845 | 17,957 | 14,112 | 10,788 | 12,317 | 12,563 | 12,234 | 10,418 |
| Clwyd | 8,561 | 9,507 | 12,653 | 12,014 | 12,249 | 14,092 | 16,649 | 16,797 | 12,840 |
| Dyfed | 8,967 | 13,184 | 11,175 | 9,110 | 11,369 | 16,615 | 16,594 | 15,455 | 16,948 |
| Gwent | 20,677 | 29,506 | 24,855 | 21,437 | 13,000 | 17,582 | 21,466 | 18,479 | 24,019 |
| Gwynedd | 7,124 | 10,989 | 7,222 | 8,354 | 11,528 | 8,565 | 9,197 | 7,907 | 7,903 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 18,624 | 19,350 | 17,193 | 19,985 | 17,102 | 22,708 | 24,077 | 23,111 | 26,648 |
| Powys | 5,304 | 6,314 | 4,634 | 3,730 | 3,904 | 6,950 | 7,111 | 6,055 | 6,110 |
| South Glamorgan | 18,080 | 21,457 | 19,395 | 14,068 | 23,008 | 26,764 | 32,411 | 29,607 | 18,132 |
| West Glamorgan | 12,398 | 13,787 | 11,949 | 11,071 | 14,389 | 19,233 | 20,124 | 18,163 | 22,247 |
| Total districts | 136,972 | 200,440 | 234,297 | 170,359 | 152,455 | 188,325 | 213,983 | 189,570 | 150,841 |
| Total counties | 99,735 | 124,094 | 109,076 | 99,769 | 106,649 | 132,509 | 147,629 | 135,589 | 130,033 |
| TOTAL WALES | 236,707 | 324,534 | 343,373 | 270,128 | 259,104 | 320,834 | 361,612 | 323,286 | 300,810 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1981-82*

£ thousand

| Local authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other services | Urban programme | Total allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 229 | 0 | 2,520 | 685 | 94 | 3,528 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,610 | 980 | 0 | 2,590 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,350 | 590 | 326 | 2,266 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 47 | 0 | 1,000 | 346 | 0 | 1,393 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 850 | 1,011 | 0 | 1,861 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 43 | 0 | 3,230 | 1,881 | 613 | 5,767 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,030 | 870 | 40 | 2,940 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 37 | 1,740 | 934 | 17 | 2,728 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 850 | 159 | 0 | 1,009 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 85 | 1,950 | 1,476 | 384 | 3,895 |
| Preseli | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,740 | 267 | 0 | 2,007 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,140 | 213 | 75 | 1,428 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 241 | 0 | 4,010 | 385 | 629 | 5,265 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 312 | 0 | 2,280 | 674 | 208 | 3,474 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,850 | 260 | 0 | 2,110 |
| Newport | 0 | 702 | 0 | 6,500 | 545 | 610 | 8,357 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 34 | 0 | 2,890 | 359 | 158 | 3,441 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,420 | 656 | 0 | 2,076 |
| Arfon | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2,500 | 892 | 190 | 3,583 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 770 | 316 | 0 | 1,086 |
| Meirionydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,020 | 605 | 0 | 1,625 |
| Ynys Mon | 0 | 16 | 0 | 1,370 | 533 | 35 | 1,954 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,430 | 248 | 89 | 2,767 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 306 | 0 | 2,704 | 773 | 158 | 3,941 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 106 | 0 | 4,530 | 645 | 73 | 5,354 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 118 | 102 | 4,310 | 458 | 533 | 5,521 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 353 | 14 | 3,650 | 948 | 197 | 5,162 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 37 | 87 | 5,830 | 374 | 49 | 6,377 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,110 | 635 | 0 | 1,745 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 31 | 0 | 950 | 430 | 0 | 1,411 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 640 | 249 | 0 | 889 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 881 | 0 | 10,690 | 5,050 | 408 | 17,029 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,200 | 1,881 | 1 | 5,082 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 97 | 0 | 1,800 | 261 | 104 | 2,262 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,760 | 726 | 0 | 3,486 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,720 | 393 | 52 | 2,165 |
| Swansea | 0 | 320 | 0 | 6,674 | 2,067 | 337 | 9,398 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 3,874 | 325 | 97,618 | 29,775 | 5,380 | 136,972 |
| Clwyd | 3,521 | 3,499 | 585 | 0 | 623 | 333 | 8,561 |
| Dyfed | 2,743 | 4,792 | 578 | 0 | 725 | 129 | 8,967 |
| Gwent | 3,758 | 12,988 | 723 | 0 | 3,003 | 205 | 20,677 |
| Gwynedd | 2,271 | 2,685 | 413 | 0 | 1,536 | 219 | 7,124 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 8,609 | 6,167 | 1,122 | 0 | 2,517 | 209 | 18,624 |
| Powys | 2,269 | 2,338 | 303 | 0 | 394 | 0 | 5,304 |
| South Glamorgan | 2,559 | 13,898 | 692 | 0 | 632 | 299 | 18,080 |
| West Glamorgan | 5,050 | 3,623 | 765 | 0 | 2,956 | 4 | 12,398 |
| Total Counties | 30,780 | 49,990 | 5,181 | 0 | 12,386 | 1,398 | 99,735 |

| Local authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other services | Urban programme | Total allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Wales | 30,780 | 53,864 | 5,506 | 97,618 | 42,161 | 6,778 | 236,707 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1982-83*

| Local authority | Education £000 | Transport £000 | PSS £000 | Housing £000 | Other services £000 | Urban programme £000 | Total allocation £000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 13 | 0 | 2,873 | 784 | 348 | 4,018 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,342 | 1,520 | 0 | 3,862 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,681 | 1,135 | 727 | 3,543 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 100 | 0 | 1,581 | 276 | 0 | 1,957 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,273 | 1,191 | 0 | 2,464 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,616 | 1,592 | 1,272 | 6,480 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,823 | 484 | 4 | 4,311 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 52 | 3,635 | 693 | 1 | 4,381 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,278 | 239 | 200 | 1,717 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 100 | 3,104 | 772 | 1,734 | 5,710 |
| Preseli | 0 | 30 | 0 | 1,783 | 771 | 115 | 2,699 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,365 | 300 | 160 | 2,825 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,172 | 853 | 1,086 | 12,111 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,685 | 460 | 547 | 5,692 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,917 | 595 | 51 | 3,563 |
| Newport | 0 | 578 | 0 | 10,956 | 1,075 | 1,141 | 13,750 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,370 | 670 | 289 | 5,329 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,708 | 515 | 0 | 2,223 |
| Arfon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,936 | 417 | 457 | 3,810 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 6 | 0 | 1,119 | 383 | 0 | 1,508 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,289 | 403 | 0 | 1,692 |
| Ynys Mon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,471 | 681 | 10 | 3,162 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,830 | 552 | 138 | 3,520 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 25 | 0 | 2,885 | 2,418 | 678 | 6,006 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 113 | 0 | 6,197 | 1,037 | 534 | 7,881 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 212 | 0 | 5,546 | 681 | 678 | 7,117 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 236 | 0 | 6,211 | 934 | 389 | 7,770 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 5 | 55 | 7,020 | 3,121 | 0 | 10,201 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,283 | 319 | 0 | 1,602 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,292 | 276 | 40 | 1,608 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,376 | 121 | 0 | 1,497 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 997 | 0 | 13,607 | 4,100 | 855 | 19,559 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,812 | 895 | 23 | 5,730 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,842 | 647 | 0 | 2,489 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,078 | 491 | 0 | 4,569 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,118 | 762 | 359 | 5,239 |
| Swansea | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,760 | 7,397 | 688 | 18,845 |
| Clwyd | 4,016 | 2,750 | 184 | 0 | 2,314 | 243 | 9,507 |
| Dyfed | 3,726 | 6,545 | 720 | 0 | 1,705 | 488 | 13184 |
| Gwent | 4,211 | 22,370 | 1,163 | 0 | 1,700 | 62 | 29,506 |
| Gwynedd | 2,108 | 2,660 | 712 | 0 | 5,050 | 459 | 10,989 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 9,046 | 7,745 | 1,022 | 0 | 1,245 | 292 | 19,350 |
| Powys | 2,726 | 2,770 | 319 | 0 | 499 | 0 | 6,314 |
| South Glamorgan | 4,214 | 14,430 | 1,087 | 0 | 1,033 | 693 | 21,457 |
| West Glamorgan | 4,048 | 4,740 | 851 | 0 | 4,143 | 5 | 13,787 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 2,315 | 207 | 145,834 | 39,560 | 12,524 | 200,440 |
| Total Counties | 34,095 | 64,010 | 6,058 | 0 | 17,689 | 2,242 | 124,094 |
| Total Wales | 34,095 | 66,325 | 6,265 | 145,834 | 57,249 | 14,766 | 324,534 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1983-84*

| Local authority | Education £000 | Transport £000 | PSS £000 | Housing £000 | Other services £000 | Urban programme £000 | Total allocation £000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,922 | 462 | 404 | 3,788 |
| Colywn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,483 | 594 | 50 | 3,127 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,025 | 1,357 | 818 | 4,200 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,345 | 311 | 0 | 2,656 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,189 | 1,408 | 0 | 2,597 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,833 | 787 | 737 | 5,357 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8,160 | 652 | 112 | 8,924 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,478 | 657 | 0 | 5,135 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,334 | 211 | 198 | 2,743 |

| Local authority | Education £000 | Transport £000 | PSS £000 | Housing £000 | Other services £000 | Urban programme £000 | Total allocation £000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 82 | 3,745 | 984 | 584 | 5,395 |
| Preseli | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,526 | 477 | 660 | 4,663 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,804 | 274 | 365 | 4,443 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,236 | 843 | 1,097 | 12,176 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 90 | 0 | 5,215 | 415 | 179 | 5,899 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,643 | 472 | 61 | 5,176 |
| Newport | 0 | 60 | 0 | 9,137 | 1,331 | 510 | 11,038 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,370 | 621 | 275 | 5,266 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,006 | 569 | 0 | 2,575 |
| Arfon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,469 | 418 | 320 | 4,207 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 35 | 0 | 3,032 | 393 | 0 | 3,460 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,282 | 1,804 | 89 | 5,175 |
| Ynys Mon | 0 | 530 | 0 | 5,260 | 650 | 119 | 6,559 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,323 | 451 | 261 | 5,035 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 132 | 0 | 3,993 | 1,034 | 457 | 5,616 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 79 | 0 | 5,870 | 1,202 | 268 | 7,419 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 105 | 0 | 12,030 | 816 | 794 | 13,745 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 205 | 0 | 5,465 | 811 | 375 | 6,856 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 58 | 0 | 8,886 | 1,077 | 112 | 10,133 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,851 | 192 | 0 | 3,043 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,393 | 292 | 0 | 3,685 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,593 | 165 | 0 | 1,758 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 2,038 | 0 | 17,835 | 3,915 | 1,004 | 24,792 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,333 | 2,219 | 224 | 7,776 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1,982 | 377 | 265 | 2,674 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,992 | 410 | 45 | 4,447 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,892 | 419 | 491 | 4,802 |
| Swansea | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11,365 | 5,520 | 1,072 | 17,957 |
| Clwyd | 4,746 | 5,460 | 820 | 0 | 759 | 868 | 12,653 |
| Dyfed | 3,817 | 5,044 | 720 | 0 | 1,324 | 270 | 11,175 |
| Gwent | 5,430 | 16,199 | 1,040 | 0 | 1,565 | 621 | 24,855 |
| Gwynedd | 2,035 | 3,517 | 716 | 0 | 747 | 207 | 7,222 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 7,391 | 7,527 | 852 | 0 | 1,149 | 274 | 17,193 |
| Powys | 2,102 | 2,073 | 194 | 0 | 257 | 8 | 4,634 |
| South Glamorgan | 4,557 | 11,923 | 741 | 0 | 1,600 | 574 | 19,395 |
| West Glamorgan | 4,247 | 4,943 | 1,476 | 0 | 1,283 | 0 | 11,949 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 3,382 | 82 | 184,297 | 34,590 | 11,946 | 234,297 |
| Total Counties | 34,325 | 56,686 | 6,559 | 0 | 8,684 | 2,822 | 109,076 |
| Total Wales | 34,325 | 60,068 | 6,641 | 184,297 | 43,274 | 14,768 | 343,373 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1984-85*

£000

| Local authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other services | Special projects | Urban programme | Total allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,234 | 370 | 0 | 641 | 3,245 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,089 | 475 | 0 | 111 | 2,675 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,459 | 731 | 900 | 1,371 | 4,461 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,521 | 249 | 0 | 0 | 1,770 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 951 | 1,126 | 0 | 0 | 2,077 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,746 | 630 | 0 | 1,348 | 5,724 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,571 | 539 | 0 | 15 | 4,125 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,790 | 526 | 0 | 0 | 3,316 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,414 | 169 | 0 | 111 | 1,694 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 66 | 2,737 | 787 | 0 | 614 | 4,204 |
| Preseli | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,862 | 382 | 350 | 576 | 4,170 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,323 | 219 | 350 | 547 | 3,439 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6,238 | 674 | 0 | 1,403 | 8,315 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,499 | 332 | 0 | 299 | 5,130 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,599 | 378 | 0 | 49 | 4,026 |
| Newport | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6,554 | 734 | 0 | 708 | 7,996 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,002 | 497 | 0 | 197 | 4,696 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,635 | 307 | 0 | 0 | 1,942 |
| Arfon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,940 | 334 | 0 | 82 | 3,356 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,800 | 314 | 0 | 0 | 2,114 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,352 | 1,123 | 0 | 0 | 2,475 |
| Ynys Mon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,350 | 520 | 0 | 75 | 2,945 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,090 | 361 | 0 | 765 | 4,216 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,521 | 827 | 0 | 458 | 3,806 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,011 | 962 | 0 | 43 | 6,016 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7,468 | 653 | 0 | 822 | 8,943 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 240 | 0 | 4,412 | 649 | 0 | 465 | 5,766 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 20 | 0 | 4,999 | 862 | 0 | 5 | 5,886 |

| Local authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other services | Special projects | Urban programme | Total allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,321 | 154 | 0 | 240 | 1,715 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,548 | 234 | 0 | 0 | 1,782 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 976 | 132 | 0 | 0 | 1,108 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 1,881 | 0 | 12,557 | 3,132 | 0 | 1,981 | 19,551 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,080 | 1,375 | 0 | 232 | 4,687 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,586 | 302 | 0 | 427 | 2,315 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,220 | 328 | 0 | 234 | 3,782 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,064 | 335 | 0 | 380 | 2,779 |
| Swansea | 0 | 16 | 0 | 9,073 | 3,282 | 500 | 1,241 | 14,112 |
| Clwyd | 3,797 | 6,174 | 500 | 0 | 607 | 0 | 936 | 12,014 |
| Dyfed | 3,054 | 4,059 | 600 | 0 | 1,059 | 0 | 338 | 9,110 |
| Gwent | 4,344 | 14,418 | 850 | 0 | 1,252 | 0 | 573 | 21,437 |
| Gwynedd | 1,628 | 5,390 | 400 | 0 | 598 | 0 | 338 | 8,354 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 5,513 | 11,551 | 1,200 | 0 | 919 | 500 | 302 | 19,985 |
| Powys | 1,682 | 1,742 | 100 | 0 | 206 | 0 | 0 | 3,730 |
| South Glamorgan | 3,646 | 7,527 | 600 | 0 | 1,280 | 0 | 1,015 | 14,068 |
| West Glamorgan | 3,398 | 5,437 | 1,000 | 0 | 1,126 | 0 | 110 | 11,071 |
| Total districts | 0 | 2,157 | 66 | 125,592 | 25,004 | 2,100 | 15,440 | 170,359 |
| Total counties | 27,062 | 56,298 | 5,250 | 0 | 7,047 | 500 | 3,612 | 99,769 |
| Total Wales | 27,062 | 58,455 | 5,316 | 125,592 | 32,051 | 2,600 | 19,052 | 270,128 |

## EMPLOYMENT

### Child Employees

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many children below the age of 16 years have been identified by his inspectors as involved in illegal employment during each year since 1980.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Details of individual instances of illegal employment are not kept but convictions under section 1 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920, concerning the illegal employment of children since 1980 are as follows:

| Year | Convictions |
|---|---|
| 1981 | 4 |
| 1982 | 4 |
| 1983 | 3 |
| 1984 | 6 |
| 1985 | 6 |
| [1]1986 | 4 |
| [2]1986-87 | 9 |
| [3]1987-88 | [4]2 |

[1] January to March.
[2] April to March.
[3] April to March.
[4] Provisional.
*Note:* Some of these convictions may involve instances of multiple employment.

### Back-to-Back Operations

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will prosecute the Inter-Exec SM1 for running a back-to-back operation contrary to the Employment Agencies Act 1973; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lee:** The matter is being investigated and a decision will be made when investigations have been completed.

### Wages Councils

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young workers under 21 years of age were employed in trades covered by wages councils in each year 1985 to 1988, inclusive.

**Mr. Nicholls** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* No count is made of the number of young people under 21 in wages council trades. However, an estimate made in 1985 suggested a figure of around half a million.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Insolvency

87. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any proposals to seek to amend the Insolvency Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maude:** There are no plans to amend the Insolvency Act 1986 itself in the foreseeable future. Amendments to the insolvency legislation are included however in the Companies Bill. Part 7 of the Bill, which relates to financial markets, modifies certain parts of the Insolvency Act 1986. Section 323 of the Insolvency Act 1986, which deals with set-off in bankruptcy, is amended by part VIII of the Bill. In order to retain harmonisation rule 4.90 of the Insolvency Rules 1986, which deals with set-off in companies winding up, will also be amended, although this amendment will be effected by way of a change to the Insolvency Rules 1986 and not by the Companies Bill.

Additional minor amendments to the insolvency legislation will be considered when suitable legislative vehicles become available.

### Secured Loans

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evidence he has on the level of understanding among consumers of the concept of a secured loan.

**Mr. Maude:** The results of a survey published by the Office of Fair Trading last autumn showed widespread

lack of understanding of the concept of a secured loan; 44 per cent. of respondents claimed to have no idea of the difference between a secured loan and an unsecured loan and only 11 per cent. understood unprompted that a secured loan could result in the loss of the borrower's home.

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to make regulations under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 requiring advertisements for secured loans to carry a health warning.

**Mr. Maude:** As part of the review of the Consumer Credit (Advertisement) Regulations, it is proposed that advertisements for secured loans should include a warning of the risk of repossession in the event of default.

### Manufacturing Investment (North West)

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table, using 1979 at a value of 100, of investment in real terms in manufacturing in the north west for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maude:** No regional breakdown of manufacturing investment for 1987 and 1988 is yet available. The required information for the period 1979-86 is shown in the following table:

*Manufacturing investment in the North West, in constant (1980) prices, as a percentage of the 1979 level*

| Year | Per cent. |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 100 |
| 1980 | 89 |
| 1981 | 63 |
| 1982 | 58 |
| 1983 | 61 |
| 1984 | 68 |
| 1985 | 72 |
| 1986 | 62 |

*Source:* Annual Census of Production.

Since 1986, manufacturing investment in the country as a whole has risen sharply; and is predicted to rise even faster.

### Domestic Animals (Pelts and Skins)

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps his Department takes to licence and monitor the activities of hide and skin merchants concerned with rendering the pelts and skins of domestic animals.

**Mr. Alan Clark** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* My Department does not licence or monitor the activities of hide and skin merchants.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Explosives

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, *Official Report*, 23 January, column *396*, he will indicate the amount of explosives recovered from neutralised devices, the amount used in explosions; and the number of such terrorist explosions for each of the same years.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** The further information is not readily available in the exact form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available relates only to the number of explosions.

*Explosions recorded in RUC "N" division*[1]

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 40 |
| 1985 | 30 |
| 1986 | 29 |
| 1987 | 44 |
| 1988 | 51 |

[1] "N" Division includes the City of Londonderry.

### RPI Error Fund

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation of the retail prices index error fund; and if he will publish a table showing *(a)* those organisations which applied to the Department of Health and Social Security for funding and the outcome and amounts of any award and *(b)* those organisations which applied for funds under the scheme administered by the Northern Ireland voluntary trust and the outcome and amount of any award.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 3 May about the retail prices index error fund. On 9 May 1988 I announced that Northern Ireland would recieve £250,000 as its share of the fund and published the arrangements under which grants would be made. Applications were invited from voluntary organisations which resulted in the receipt of bids 10 times in excess of the amount available for distribution. The Department of Health and Social Services gave careful consideration to all applications which it received from regional organisations and grants were subsequently made having regard to the published criteria and to the Department's own strategic priorities. The list of those organisations which applied to the Department and the details of the awards made are voluminous, and I have therefore placed a copy in the Library.

The sum of £120,000 was allocated to Northern Ireland voluntary trust for disbursement to locally-based organisations. Details of the applications considered by Northern Ireland voluntary trust and the grants made by it to date have also been placed in the Library.

I am pleased to report that Northern Ireland is now also to receive a further £251,000 of the additional monies available from the retail prices index error fund which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Social Security announced on 9 February. Arrangements for the allocation of this sum will be finalised shortly.

### House Searches

**Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many house searches were carried out in Armagh during December 1988 and January 1989 by *(a)* the Army *(b)* police and *(c)* the Ulster Defence Regiment; in how many of the houses searched arms, ammunition or explosives were found; and whether there was reasonable suspicion in respect of each house searched or the occupants of each house searched:

(2) how many house searches were carried out by the *(a)* Royal Ulster Constabulary, *(b)* Army and *(c)* Ulster Defence Regiment in each of the Northern Ireland parliamentary constituencies during the year 1 January 1988 to 31 December 1988; whether there was reasonable suspicion in respect of each house searched, or the occupants of each house searched; and how many houses which were searched did not include arms, ammunition or explosives.

**Mr. Ian Stewart** *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I assume that the hon. Member is referring to searches under section 15 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. The only figures that are readily available relate to Northern Ireland as a whole. I understand that, in 1988, the RUC carried out 4,136 house searches in Northern Ireland under that section; information about finds as a result of those searches is not readily available. Army records indicate that they carried out 889 searches of houses and other premises under section 15 during that period, although that figure is subject to confirmation, but the majority of these were in conjunction with the RUC and are also counted in their figures. The figure for the Army includes searches by the UDR. Of these 889 searches, arms, ammunition, explosives, transmitters, scanning receivers or hides were found in 102 cases. Under section 15(2) of the Act it is a requirement that there should be reasonable grounds for suspicion that munitions are being held unlawfully in a private dwelling, or that there is a transmitter or scanning receiver there, and all searches are conducted on that basis.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Cost of Living

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an index for the cost of living for consumers based on the retail price index but excluding indirect taxes, including value added tax, excise duties and rates, for the calendar year 1979 to the calendar years 1986, 1987 and 1988 taking the value of the index as 1979 equals 100.

**Mr. Lilley:** The following is an estimate of movement in the RPI excluding VAT, excise duties and rates measured at December each year. Calendar year information is not readily available.

*December 1979 = 100*

| *Year* | *RPI* |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 100 |
| 1980 | 115 |
| 1981 | 127 |
| 1982 | 133 |
| 1983 | 140 |
| 1984 | 146 |
| 1985 | 154 |
| 1986 | 159 |
| 1987 | 167 |
| 1988 | 179 |

## ENERGY

### North Sea Oil

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the implications of the operation of the Single European Act for Her Majesty's Government's freedom to determine policy towards the North sea oil industry.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** As a result of the Single European Act, in determining its policy the United Kingdom must take appropriate account of articles 99, 100A, 100B, 118A and title VII of the EEC treaty.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Parkinson:** My Department does not currently use information technology (IT) for internal communications to any great extent. It is moving to a new headquarters building later this year, where a broadband cabling framework is being installed. This is using new technology which will provide internal communications by computer where cost effective.

While IT is widely used by my officials to collate and prepare information for the public, the IT systems do not provide direct public access to information, nor are there any plans to do so. However, my Department has an IT strategy which is approved by top management and which is subject to continual refinement, monitoring and review.

### Nuclear Materials (Licences)

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the applications for licences to ship nuclear materials which he has received from British Nuclear Fuels plc in the last six months, showing in each case the ports of departure and destination and the names of the vessels involved.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** It has been the standard practice of successive Governments not to make public the details of export licence applications.

### Gas

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any information as to which country in *(a)* the industrialised world and *(b)* the European Economic Community charges the highest prices for the supply of firm gas to large industrial users.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** The only information available on gas prices in all industrialised countries is published by the IEA and covers all supplies to industrial consumers. Of those countries who supplied data in 1987, Japan had the highest prices. In the European Community, prices were highest in Ireland.

## HEALTH

### Scientific Services

**Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff there were in the scientific services, broken down into the professional groups *(a)* medical consultant, *(b)* PTA/A top grade scientists, *(c)* other grades of PTA/A staff, *(d)* PTB/A MLSO staff and *(e)* radiographers in post in each December from 1984 to 1988.

**Mr. Mellor:** We do not collect routinely detailed information on staff in post at December. The information available as at 30 September each year is set out in the table.

*Table: Staff in the scientific services: England*
*As at 30 September each year*

*Whole time equivalents*[1]

| *Staff Group* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987*[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medical Staff[2] | 2,300 | 2,370 | 2,410 | 2,430 |
| Biochemists | 1,250 | 1,200 | 1,180 | 1,380 |
| Top Grade | 90 | 110 | 120 | 150 |
| Principal | 240 | 240 | 250 | 310 |
| Senior | 460 | 440 | 430 | 490 |
| Basic Post Probationer | 280 | 240 | 220 | 230 |
| Basic Probationer | 170 | 160 | 150 | 200 |
| SQOO[4] | [5] | [5] | 10 | [5] |
| Physicists | 700 | 720 | 770 | 790 |
| Top Grade | 60 | 70 | 70 | 70 |
| Principal | 190 | 200 | 220 | 240 |
| Senior | 270 | 290 | 280 | 260 |
| Basic Post Probationer | 100 | 90 | 80 | 90 |
| Basic Probationer | 70 | 90 | 110 | 130 |
| Other Scientists | 370 | 380 | 440 | 550 |
| Top Grade | 20 | 20 | 30 | 30 |
| Principal | 40 | 50 | 50 | 70 |
| Senior | 100 | 110 | 130 | 140 |
| Basic Post Probationer | 50 | 70 | 90 | 100 |
| Basic Probationer | 70 | 100 | 120 | 140 |
| SQOO[4] | 80 | 40 | 30 | 70 |
| Clinical Psychologists | 1,360 | 1,520 | 1,620 | 1,700 |
| Top Grade | 120 | 150 | 200 | 240 |
| Principal | 270 | 330 | 360 | 410 |
| Senior | 570 | 600 | 600 | 580 |
| Basic Post Probationer | 220 | 220 | 210 | 200 |
| Basic Probationer | 190 | 210 | 240 | 270 |
| SQOO[4] | [5] | [5] | 10 | 10 |
| Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers | 14,550 | 14,540 | 14,620 | 15,470 |
| Radiographers | | | | |
| Qualified | 7,750 | 7,990 | 8,140 | 8,250 |
| Helpers | 160 | 190 | 230 | 270 |

*Source:* Department of Health (SR7) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures independently founded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalent.

[2] Including consultants in pathology, radiology and radiotherapy.

[3] Due to occupation coding problems, the 1987 figures, for some regions and therefore for England are not strictly comparable with those for previous years.

[4] Precise grade not held centrally.

[5] Less than 5·0 whole time equivalents.

*Notes:*

The staff groups whose pay and conditions of service were negotiated in Committee A of the former Professional and Technical Staffs Council "A" before its demise in 1983 were Biochemists, Physicists, Other Scientists and Clinical Psychologists. Since 1983 pay of these groups has been the responsibility of the Scientific and Professional Staffs Council.

Trainee and Basic clinical psychologist grades were introduced with effect from 1 February 1987 in place of the former basic probationer and basic post probationer grades.

### Nursing Homes

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to prevent re-registration of any private residential home owner or private nursing home owner found guilty of ill treatment or abuse of residents.

**Mr. Mellor:** It is for local authorities and health authorities respectively to satisfy themselves, by making thorough inquiries, of the suitability of applicants for registration in relation to residential care homes and nursing homes. We have advised local authorities that, when making such inquiries they should inform the applicant that by virtue of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended) a conviction which would otherwise be "spent" would have to be declared.

The Department assists by acting as a channel of information between authorities about people who have had their registration cancelled and provides a consultancy service to authorities seeking information about applications in respect of homes with children and young people under age 18.

### Residential Homes

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will specify the number of residential homes *(a)* in the private sector, *(b)* owned by local authorities and *(c)* run by health authorities.

**Mr. Mellor:** Information on the number of residential care homes in the private sector and of those owned by local authorities for years prior to 31 March 1987 is published in "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes Year ending 31 March 1986" and "Homes and Hostels for Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People, at 31 March 1986"; copies of which are available in the Library. Provisional information as at 31 March 1987 is given in the table. Health authorities have no powers to run residential care homes.

*Number*[1] *of residential care homes at 31 March 1987: England*

| *Residential care homes* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Private registered homes | 7,559 |
| Homes owned by local authority[2] | 4,642 |

[1] Provisional. Includes homes for alcohol and drug misusers.

[2] Includes unstaffed homes and hostels.

### Trent Regional Health Authority

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospitals are involved within the Trent regional health area in the resource management initiative; and what information he has as to whether any will be joining the initiative in the next year.

**Mr. Freeman:** Pilgrim hospital in South Lincolnshire district health authority is one of the six pilot resource management sites. A decision on the next tranche of hospitals that will be joining the resource management initiative will be made shortly. Additional hospitals in Trent are expected to be involved.

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by district health authority the services provided within the Trent regional health authority; and what is their catchment area.

**Mr. Mellor:** District health authority services are the responsibility of the relevant regional health authority, in this case, Trent. The hon. Member may care to write to the chairman of Trent regional health authority to obtain the information that he seeks.

## Resource Management

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health into which hospitals he plans to introduce resource management initiatives; what are the provisional dates for this; and what consultancy firms will undertake the work.

**Mr. Freeman:** Future plans on the resource management initiatives were set out in the White Paper, "Working for Patients". It is planned to extend the RMI to the 260 main acute hospitals in England over a phased period starting with 20 sites in 1989-90. A decision on the first tranche of hospitals will be made shortly. Decisions on which consultancy firms to employ will be principally the responsibility of health authorities.

## NHS Nursing Homes

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the number of National Health Service nursing homes at present in operation in each of the following regions and the number of beds in each *(a)* East Anglia, *(b)* North East Thames, *(c)* North West Thames, *(d)* South West Thames and *(e)* South East Thames.

**Mr. Mellor:** We are aware of four.

| *Name* | *District health authority* | *Beds* |
|---|---|---|
| St. Olave's | Lewisham and North Southwark | 17 |
| Meadow Lodge | Brighton | 20 |
| Brownswood Road | Hackney | 22 |
| St. Leonard's | Hackney | 24 |

## Disabled People

**Mr Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking to ensure that severely physically disabled people do not remain in acute hospital beds, in an inappropriate setting for long-term care, because of a shortfall of alternative provisions.

**Mr. Mellor:** Responsibility for providing the most appropriate type of care for disabled people rests with health and local authorities. It is up to each authority to determine the level and pattern of services in their area in the light of local priorities and resources. The Department recently issued a Health Circular/Local Authority Circular, HC(88)43/LAC(88)14, and a Health Notice/Local Authority Social Services Letter, HN(88)26/LASSL(88)8, which drew attention to the need to promote the independence of disabled people and to use the acute, rehabilitation and continuing care services in an effective way.

**Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities have made use of their power to co-opt disabled people on to local authority committees under section 15 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

**Mr Mellor:** We do not hold this information centrally. The legislation to which the hon. Member refers is now reinforced by section 10 of the 1986 Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. The social services inspectorate is currently undertaking a monitoring exercise of the effect on social services departments of those sections of the 1986 Act so far implemented. This should provide some valuable information as to how local authorities are developing awareness of the rights of disabled people to be represented.

## Residential and Nursing Homes

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking to regulate and monitor the standards of care in residential care homes and nursing homes.

**Mr. Mellor:** I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 23 February at column *793*.

## Hospital Closures

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Northern regional health authority intends to close any hospitals or community health units as part of its re-organisation.

**Mr. Freeman:** I presume that the hon. Member is referring to proposals for re-organising the management arrangements for health services in Easington. There are no hospital closures involved. Acute psychiatric in-patient accommodation will be transferred from Winterton hospital to Cherry Knowle hospital, which will significantly improve access for patients from north Easington. Overall, the package increases expenditure on health care for the people of Easington.

## Patients (Travelling Distance)

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as a result of the proposed reorganisation of the Durham, Hartlepool and Sunderland health authorities, he envisages that there will be a general increase in the distance travelled by patients to and from centres for treatment.

**Mr. Freeman:** No. I understand that for all general hospital services there is no proposed change in the centre of treatment with the exception of mental illness services for the population of north Easington where the distance travelled will be significantly reduced.

## Children

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any estimate of the numbers and percentages of children being brought up in *(a)* once-married two-parent families, *(b)* two-parent families where the parents are married, but one parent is not the natural parent, *(c)* two-parent families where the parents are not married and *(d)* lone-parent families, distinguishing between widowers and widows, divorced, separated and never-married lone parents.

**Mr. Freeman:** I regret that not all the information requested is available. The numbers and percentages of dependent children in the different types of families in Great Britain in 1986 are estimated to be as follows:

| | *Number of dependent children thousands* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Dependent children in: | | |
| Married couple families (includes some cohabiting couples) | 11,500 | 87·6 |
| Lone mother families | | |
| Single | 310 | 2·4 |
| Separated | 340 | 2·6 |
| Divorced | 730 | 5·5 |
| Widowed | 120 | 0·9 |
| Lone father families | | |
| Single | 10 | 1·1 |
| Separated | 40 | |
| Divorced | 60 | |
| Widowed | 40 | |
| All dependent children | 13,140 | 100 |

*Source:* General household survey and labour force survey.
*Notes:*
1. Components do not add precisely to total, because of rounding.
2. A dependent child is one aged under 16 or from 16 to 18 and in full-time education or on one of the Government training schemes.
3. Adults with children are classified as lone parents if they did not describe themselves as either married or living together as married.

### Dentists

**Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current state of progress in the negotiations for a new contract for general dental practitioners; and whether he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor:** Following preliminary discussions with representatives of the dental profession, we are currently drawing up proposals for formal negotiations, which we hope to begin shortly.

### Tranquillisers

**Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of teratogenicity in babies born to women taking benzodiazepines.

**Mr. Mellor:** We do not hold this information.

**Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of people who have died from major convulsions following benzodiapine withdrawal; and who collects and holds such information.

**Mr. Mellor:** There is no central register of those people taking benzodiazepine or other drugs. We do not therefore know how many people who have died of major convulsions were also suffering from withdrawal symptoms from a particular drug or drugs.

**Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department issues any specific advice on the prescribing of benzodiazepines to the elderly.

**Mr. Mellor:** The Department funds the free distribution to all doctors of a number of independent publications which have included general guidance on the prescribing of benzodiazepines applicable to all patients. "Prescribers' Journal" and the "British National Formulary" have referred specifically to the elderly.

### Ambulance Service

**Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the various places where information on the number of patients whose stay in hospital is extended due to the non-availablility of ambulance services or other transport facilities is held.

**Mr. Freeman:** Such information is not collected centrally but may be available at individual hospitals.

### AIDS

**Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish "AIDS and Drug Misuse, part 2; a report from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor:** The advisory council's report was published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

We are grateful to the council for producing this report and welcome its advice. We are considering carefully those recommendations which are addressed to central Government. We will be giving this report a wide circulation to assist authorities in planning and delivering services, and to inform other interested agencies.

### Private Patients

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if decisions have been taken on the central reference lists of model charges for National Health Service private patients for the year from 1 April.

**Mr. Mellor:** From 1 April 1987 health authorities have been able to determine their charges for private patient facilities. Action is now in hand to enable them also to determine, from 1 April 1989, charges for overseas visitors liable to pay. The Health and Medicines Act enables those authorities choosing to set their own charges to do so on a commercial basis.

The central reference lists of model charges for private patients and overseas visitors are given in the tables. Model charges from 1 April 1989 are for in-patients 6·6 per cent. higher and for out-patients 7·2 per cent. higher than those for 1988-89. The figures take account of increased costs (including capital depreciation) and, as before, reflect the fact that private patients have shorter lengths to stay than NHS patients. As in previous years charges for overseas visitors are based on those for private patients.

Charges for amenity beds are increased in line with increased costs. It is intended that after 1989-90 no further reference lists will be produced.

*Central Reference List (Model Charges): 1989/90*
*In-Patients*

| | *Daily charges to private patients not paying consultant(s) separately and to overseas visitors* | | *Daily charges to private patients paying consultant(s) separately* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Single room* £ | *Other accommodation* £ | *Single room* £ | *Other accommodation* £ |
| *Class A* (Long-Stay Hospitals) | 99 | 90 | 93 | 85 |
| *Class B* (Psychiatric Hospitals) | 90 | 82 | 85 | 77 |
| *Class C1* (mainly Acute and other hospitals in non-teaching districts) | 152 | 138 | 143 | 130 |
| *Class C2* (Acute and other hospitals in non-teaching districts) | 181 | 164 | 170 | 155 |
| *Class D* (Hospitals in London teaching districts (other than hospitals in Classes A and B)) | 241 | 219 | 228 | 207 |
| *Class E* (Hospitals in provincial teaching districts (other than hospitals in Classes A and B)) | 194 | 177 | 183 | 167 |

*Central Reference List (Model Charges): 1989-90*
*Out-Patients*

| *Services Provided* | *Hospital Class A-E* £ | *Hospital Class F and G* £ |
|---|---|---|
| *Consultation* | | |
| 1. | | |
| i. Private Patients—for each attendance other than attendances associated with the procedures listed in paragraph 2-10 | 7·00 | 14·00 |
| ii. Overseas Visitors—a patient on each attendance at a hospital other than attendances directly associated with the procedures listed in paragraphs 4-12 | 14·50 | 23·00 |
| *Day Cases* | | |
| 2. | | |
| i. Private Patients—charges per day exclusive of charges for procedures listed in paragraphs 4-10 | 30·50 | 31·50 |
| ii. Overseas Visitors—charges per day exclusive of charges for procedures listed in paragraphs 4-12 | 30·50 | 31·50 |
| *For Overseas Visitors only* For the purpose of this item a day case is a patient who attends as a non-resident patient for investigation, treatment or operation and who occupies a bed without staying overnight. | | |
| *Day Patients* | | |
| 3. | | |
| i. Private Patients—charges per day exclusive of charges for procedures listed in paragraphs 4-10 | 35·50 | 37·00 |
| ii. Overseas Visitors—charges per day exclusive of charges for procedures listed in paragraphs 4-12 | 35·50 | 37·00 |
| *For overseas visitors only* For the purpose of this item a day patient is someone who attends regularly for a course of treatment without necessarily occupying a bed or staying overnight | | |
| *Pathology* | | |
| 4. For each request | 7 50 | 15·50 |
| *Radiodiagnosis, nuclear medicine and ultrasound* | | |
| 5. | | |
| i. Charges per Körner unit value (The units charged for each procedure are as listed at annex B of HC(88)11) | 9.00 per unit for first 6 units, 1·00 for each additional unit over 6 | 12·00 per unit for first 6 units, 1·25 for each additional unit over 6 |
| ii. CT scanning | 107·00 | 128·50 |
| *Radiotherapy* | | |
| 6. For treatment in any one day | 20·00 | 45·00 |
| *Physiotherapy and remedial gymnastics* | | |
| 7. For each attendance | 6·50 | 12·00 |
| *Occupational therapy* | | |
| 8. For treatment in any one day | 10·00 | 11·00 |
| *Other diagnostic procedures* | | |
| 9. | | |
| i. Audiometry | 5·50 | 5·50 |
| ii. Electrocardiography, for each testing session | 10·50 | 17·50 |
| iii. Electroencephalography, for each testing session | 38·50 | 83·50 |
| iv. Electromyography, for each testing session | 24·00 | 50·50 |
| *Use of operating theatre facilities* | | |
| 10. Use of operating theatre facilities: | | |
| i. For less than 10 minutes | 24·000 | 29·50 |
| ii. For 10 minutes to 30 minutes | 46·50 | 59·00 |
| iii. For more than 30 minutes | 70·00 | 88·50 |
| *Dialysis* (Overseas Visitors only) | | |
| 11. For Haemodialysis or intermittent peritoneal dialysis: | | |
| i. With training or routine at a hospital, per session. | 119·00 | 119·00 |
| ii. routine, at home—per session | 75·50 | 75·50 |
| iii. Minimal Care Unit—per session | 97·00 | 97·00 |

| Services Provided | Hospital Class A-E £ | Hospital Class F and G £ |
|---|---|---|
| For continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (including continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis)—per day. | 36·00 | 36·00 |
| *Supply of drugs and Medicines* (Overseas Visitors only) | | |
| 12. For the supply of a drug or medicine which is designed to eliminate, prevent the replication of, or in any way inhibit the mode of action of any Human Immunodeficiency Virus—for each quantity sufficient for one day's treatment. | 15·50 | 15·50 |
| *Amenity beds (Private Patients only)* | | |
| For accommodation in a single room—£14·50 per day. | | |
| For accommodation in a small ward with two or more beds—£7·00 per day. | | |

### Food Poisoning

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on food poisoning attributed to chickens and eggs in the 12 months to December.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** *[pursuant to his answer 23 January 1989, c. 409]:* In 1988 a total of 24 outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning associated with the consumption of chicken were reported to the Public Health Laboratory Service. In 1987, the same number (24) of such outbreaks were reported. Provisional data show that the 24 outbreaks in 1988 involved over 600 people whereas in 1987 the same number of outbreaks involved around 400 people.

### Mid-Essex Health Authority

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce hospital waiting lists in the Mid-Essex health authority area.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* All regional health authorities have been asked to take action to reduce waiting times for hospital treatment as part of the Government's waiting list initiative. A total of £194,300 has been made available to the Mid-Essex health authority from the waiting list fund in 1987-88 and 1988-89, and will enable them to treat an additional 794 in-patients and day cases from the waiting lists. The regional health authority also proposed to allocate funds to the district from the 1989-90 waiting list fund.

### Drug Reactions

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he proposes to increase the penalties on companies failing to report serious adverse drug reactions.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* Any such change would require amendment to the Medicines Act 1968 and I have no plans for this at present.

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many companies failed to report serious adverse drug reactions to the Committee on Safety of Medicines or licensing authority since 1972; and what penalties were imposed;

(2) if he will list the penalties which can be imposed under the Medicines Act on a company failing to report serious adverse drug reactions.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* Because information on suspected under-reporting is held on files relating to specific products and containing full licensing information, a count of all possible instances of under-reporting since 1972 cannot be made without disproportionate cost. However, we believe the number to be very small. The vast majority of licensed medicinal products are subject to EC directives. Where, in such cases, there has been a breach of the licensing conditions under the Medicines Act and there is concern about safety, quality or efficacy, the licensing authority can suspend, revoke or vary a product licence, subject to the procedures laid down in the Act. In the case of medicinal products not subject to EC directives, such action can be taken whether or not there is a concern. Other options available to the licensing authority, where appropriate, include giving oral or written admonition to the chairman or managing director of the pharmaceutical company as well as requiring a written undertaking by the company that it will observe the licensing conditions in future.

### Residential Care

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider establishing an independent inspectorate to monitor and assess the quality of residential and nursing care.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 23 February at columns *794-95*.

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of Government spending on community care is allocated to residential care.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* Residential care is funded by local authorities and not directly by central Government, other than through contribution made by social security benefits which are, of course, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. About half of local authority service expenditure on the personal social services goes on residential care.

### Physically Disabled People

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will consider including information on the development of community care provision for people with physical disabilities in his annual report to Parliament under section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, when implemented;

(2) if he will consider proposing amendments to section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to include people with physical disabilities.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* No. Section 11 of the Act requires that an annual report be laid before Parliament containing information about the development of health and social services in the

community for people with mental illness or mental handicap, and about the numbers of such people who are receiving treatment in hospital. Section 7 provides for the identification of people discharged from hospital after treatment of six months or more for a mental disorder, and for the assessment of their needs for welfare services. We accepted the need to include these particular provisions when the Bill was going through Parliament, but are not convinced that a similar need arises for other types of disability.

### Community Care

**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he is taking to ensure that people with progressive disabilities are not discharged from acute hospital beds without appropriate community support services.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* A circular "Discharge of Patients from Hospital" is being issued to health and local authorities this week. Health authorities are asked to ensure that patients are not discharged until appropriate arrangements for after-care have been made with social services departments, primary health care teams and others. Health notice/local authority social services letter, HN(88)26/LASSL(88)8 which was issued by the Department last November also emphasised the need for co-operation between the relevant agencies to ensure that services for people with disabilities were planned before discharge.

### Staff (West Midlands)

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he will list by district health authority for the West Midlands region for the past five financial years the numbers of permanent and contract staff employed by category; and what in each year was the cost by category;

(2) what, in each of the past five financial years, was the number of agency staff employed by category or job-title in each of the West Midlands district health authorities by name; what was the cost by category each year; and what proportion this represented of permanent staff in each category.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* Information about individual district health authorities is best obtained from the relevant regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority who should be able to provide much of the information requested.

### General Practitioners

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the general practitioner list size that corresponds to the average number of night visits, new registrations and age of patients used to work out general practitioners' pay in the examples contained in the document "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract".

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* The assumptions referred to are based on the average general practitioner's list size in England which is 2,020.

## THE ARTS

### Business Sponsorship

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on progress on the business sponsoring incentive scheme in the Doncaster area of South Yorkshire.

**Mr. Luce:** Figures for South Yorkshire are not available. However, latest figures for Yorkshire as a whole show that 75 companies, 57 of which are first-time sponsors, have supported the arts under the scheme. Over £1 million in new money has been generated, nearly £700,000 in new sponsorship which has been matched by over £332,000 in Government awards.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his office and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Luce:** The introduction of information technologies in my Department is undertaken within an overall strategy for information technology which covers the Office of Arts and Libraries, the Cabinet Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service. This group of Departments has about 120 computers, and a large proportion of them is connected to the Government offices, Horse Guards road, local area network. A total of eight are, or will shortly be, installed in the Office of Arts and Libraries.

The introduction of this equipment has facilitated communications within and between Departments, and has assisted the preparation of information in response to wider inquiries.

### Victoria and Albert Museum

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many *(a)* administrative and *(b)* curatorial staff are currently employed at the Victoria and Albert museum.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 15 February 1989]:* There are currently 750 staff employed at the Victoria and Albert museum. A total of 125 staff are in administrative grades and 171 are in curatorial grades A-G. The remaining staff are in the following groups:

Museum Warders
Museum Technicians
Secretarial
Scientists
Photographers
Professional and Technology
Graphics
Office Services

## CIVIL SERVICE

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his office, and the provision of information

to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Luce:** The introduction of information technology (IT) in the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (OMCS) is subject to an IT strategy. This includes a directive that installed IT equipment should be capable of attachment to a local area network (LAN), with the objectives of improving internal communications and information management.

LANs have been installed in five buildings, the largest of which now has about 100 connected computers. My office and the press office are on this LAN.

The press office was one of the first contributors to the recently announced Central Office of Information news distribution service, which is designed to speed the provision of information to the news media. The OMCS deals mainly with other Government Departments and public bodies. It has few direct dealings with the public.

Future plans incude the provision of communications between LANs, better information retrieval using the latest indexing software, and desk-top publishing.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Pensioners

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of all pensioners receive a state additional pension; what is the average amount received; and what is the average amount of state additional pension received by those retiring now.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** As at 31 March 1988, approximately 20 per cent. of all pensioners were in receipt of state additional pension; the average weekly amount received net of guaranteed minimum pension was £2·96 (men), and £2·42 (women on their own contributions). The average weekly payments to men aged 65 and women aged 60 (on their own contributions) were £4·72 and £3·13 respectively.

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give *(a)* the overall increase in pensioner incomes in real terms between 1979 an 1986 by quintile group and *(b)* the overall increase in pensioner incomes in real terms between 1983 and 1986 by quintile group.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The real terms increase in pensioners' average total income by quintile is as follows:

| | *Percentage increase* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *1979-86* | *1983-86* |
| 5 (highest quintile) | 27 | 8 |
| 4 | 20 | 4 |
| 3 | 21 | 3 |
| 2 | 23 | 4 |
| 1 (lowest quintile) | 20 | 2 |

### Elderly People (Expenditure)

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much public expenditure on the elderly has increased since 1978-79.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Public expenditure on the elderly was £8·6 billion in 1978-79, and has risen to about £23 billion in 1988-89. This represents a real terms increase of 22 per cent. A total of 51 per cent. of benefit expenditure goes to the elderly.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the social fund allocation for his Department's offices in Doncaster for the next two financial years.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 6 February 1989 at columns *628-35*.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each of his Department's offices in Cornwall total expenditure on *(a)* social fund grants and *(b)* social fund loans from 11 April 1988 to 31 January 1989 or 28 February 1989.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Such information is available from the details in the Library.

### Family Support

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *295*, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the increase in the proportion of expenditure on families with children since 1981-82.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The number of lone parent families increased slightly as a proportion of families with children over the period (from 12 per cent. in 1981 to 14 per cent. in 1987. (*Source:* General Household Survey)) but, in addition, the proportion of lone parent families dependent on benefit has increased at a much greater rate. In 1981 about 45 per cent. of lone parents were claiming supplementary benefit, but in 1986 this had risen to about 60 per cent.

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy on the distribution of expenditure on families with children between lone-parent families and others.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The social security system aims to target help on families in need rather than simply allocate expenditure according to family types. It recognises that need may arise in different kinds of circumstances, some of which may require special help. The distribution of expenditure between one-parent and two-parent families will, therefore, be affected by the numbers who meet the conditions attached to the benefits concerned.

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update, to the most recent year for which figures are available, the answer given to the then hon. Member for Kensington of 1 July 1986, *Official Report*, column *405*, showing expenditure on one-parent benefit, national assistance/supplementary benefit and housing benefit in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1986; and if he will include expenditure on family income supplement/family credit as appropriate.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information requested is set out as follows:

*Benefits paid to lone parents* — *Great Britain* — *£ million*

| | *1960-61* | *1970-71* | *1980-81* | *1985-86* | *1988-89 (estimated outturn)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expenditure in cash terms | | | | | |
| One parent benefit | — | — | 61 | 134 | 174 |
| Supplementary benefit Income Support[1] | 20 | 90 | 640 | 1,240 | 1,850 |
| Housing benefit[2] | — | — | 50 | 400[4] | 740 |
| Family Income Supplement/Family Credit | — | — | 30 | 60 | 180 |
| Expenditure at 1988-89 prices[3] | | | | | |
| One parent benefit | — | — | 96 | 152 | 174 |
| Supplementary benefit Income Support[1] | 170 | 430 | 1,010 | 1,410 | 1,850 |
| Housing benefit[2] | — | — | 80 | 450 | 740 |
| Family Income Supplement/Family Credit | — | — | 50 | 70 | 180 |

[1] National assistance in 1960-61.
[2] Local authority rebates scheme for 1980-81; information for 1970-71 is not available.
[3] Converted to constant prices using the retail prices index.
[4] Revised figure following reinterpretation of data.

### Benefit Changes

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) of 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *710-11*, if he will re-calculate the figures to show the cumulative effects on public expenditure of the changes to national insurance benefits since 1981-82.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** It is not possible to carry out the recalculation requested other than at disproportionate cost. Many artificial assumptions would need to be made, rendering any answer speculative, and much of the underlying data could be obtained only by extensive and costly investigation.

### Income Support

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on the effects of denying young people income support; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Our arrangements for 16 and 17-year-olds are working well. Over 413,000 young people are now in the youth training scheme where they receive a weekly training allowance of £29·50 in the first year and £35 in the second.

Those who cannot work or go onto the youth training scheme, such as the severely disabled or lone parents, can claim income support. Others who are waiting for a youth training scheme place, but either have no home or cannot live at home, can claim income support for a limited period. Income support for a limited period may also be payable where there would otherwise be unavoidable severe hardship.

We have received a number of representations about benefits for young people. Most recently my hon. Friend met my noble Friend Baroness Faithfull and representatives of various organisations involved with young people. I met representatives of the Church of England Children's Society and officials have met with representatives of the Association of County Councils and the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities. They have also met with representatives of organisations which provide emergency accommodation for young people who are homeless.

In addition we have received letters and copies of reports from various organisations representing the interests of young people.

### Supplementary Benefit

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of income support, who were claimants of supplementary benefit before April 1988, have lost some or all of their transitional protection as a result of mortgage interest rate increases.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* Precise information is not available. The estimated number of claimants who pay mortgage interest and whose transitional protection has ceased or reduced, for any reason, is 140,000.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Scientists

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many scientists he has employed both on a full-time and contract basis for each year since 1979 in *(a)* ADAS and *(b)* AFRC; and what estimates he has for each year until 1994.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** The number of permanent staff in scientific grades employed in the agricultural development and advisory service of my Department in the years requested is given in the table. Forecasts of staff in post in these grades for future years are not available. So far as AFRC is concerned the staff are not directly employed by my department but we do spend considerable sums with the AFRC on commissioned research (1987-88 £44·2 million).

| | [1] *1979* | [1] *1980* | [1] *1981* | [1] *1982* | [1] *1983* | [1] *1984* | [1] *1985* | [1] *1986* | [1] *1987* | [1] *1988* | *1989* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chief Scientific Officer<br>Deputy Chief Scientific Officer<br>Senior Principal Scientific Officer | 14 | 28 | 29 | 23 | 21 | 21 | [2]— | — | — | — | — |
| Grade 7 (Principal Scientific Officer)<br>Senior Scientific Officer<br>Higher Scientific Officer<br>Scientific Officer<br>Assistant Scientific Officer | 1,226 | 1,358 | 1,341 | 1,326 | 1,268 | 1,288 | 1,292 | 1,234 | 1,124 | 1,169 | 1,110 |

[1] Figures at 1 April for all years except 1989—1 February.
[2] From 1985 these grades are included in unified Grades 4-6 and cannot be separately identified.

### Foxes

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what work has been undertaken by the agricultural development advisory service relating to predation by foxes upon lambs and other farm animals; whether any such work has been published; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his similar question on 18 January 1989 at column *24*.

### Woodlands

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number and related area of woodland grant scheme applications and acceptances, respectively, which have been eligible for storm supplement in the present financial year.

**Mr. Ryder:** The information relating to the woodland grant scheme is given in the table:

| | *Number* | *Area (hectares)* |
|---|---|---|
| Applications received | 565 | 4,586 |
| Applications approved to date | 246 | 1,181 |

In addition, a further 909 hectares of restocking have been approved for the special supplement under other Forestry Commission grant schemes. The closing date for receipt of applications for the supplement is 31 March 1989.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 3 March 1989*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### POLICE

**Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for reports from the appropriate chief constables, for the most recent five years for which figures are available, as to how many police officers were allocated to duties in *(a)* Derby, *(b)* Preston, *(c)* Darlington, *(d)* Slough, *(e)* Luton and *(f)* Gloucester;

(2) how many assaults on police officers have been recorded, for the most recent five years for which figures are available, in *(a)* Derby, *(b)* Preston, *(c)* Darlington, *(d)* Slough, *(e)* Luton and *(f)* Gloucester.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The available information on police strength is as follows. Information on assaults on police officers is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

*Police manpower*

| | *Strength as at 31 December*[1] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
| Derby division | 545 | 545 | 545 | 547 | 544 |
| Preston division | 307 | 304 | 367 | 367 | 366 |
| Darlington sub-division | 136 | 143 | 154 | 150 | 160 |
| Slough sub-division | 181 | 175 | [1]185 | [2]146 | 146 |
| Luton division | 291 | 291 | 294 | 299 | 300 |
| Gloucester sub-division | 207 | 208 | 220 | 227 | 245 |

[1] In all cases the police area extends beyond the boundary of the town.

[2] Part of the Slough sub-division was transferred to Windsor resulting in a lower establishment and strength at Slough.

### Pet Animals

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower 9 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *353*, he has now completed his consultations regarding the European convention for the protection of pet animals; and if the United Kingdom will sign the convention, without any reservations on Article 10 on surgical operations.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** No. Consultations on this convention are continuing.

### Criminal Offences

**Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list all new criminal offences enacted since 1979; if he will give details of the maximum penalty for each new criminal offence enacted since 1979; and if he will list all criminal offences abolished by legislation since 1979;

(2) how many criminal offences were *(a)* created and *(b)* abolished by legislation between 1974 and 1979.

**Mr. John Patten:** We maintain no running record of criminal offences created or abolished. The information requested could be extracted from the statutes themselves only at disproportionate cost.

### Poll Cards

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to making it a statutory requirement for official poll cards to be issued for parish and community council elections; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Poll cards have to be issued at all parish and community elections where, as is the case with the great majority of such elections, they are combined with the poll for another election. Consideration was given, at the time of the making of the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules 1986, to making a poll card mandatory at all parish and community elections, but this would have obliged parishes and communities to meet relatively substantial costs even where they felt they could not afford to.

### Grants (Cumbria)

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if his Department has made any grants directly to Cumbria county council between 1974 and 1979;

(2) what grants his Department made directly to Cumbria county council since 1985.

**Mr. Hurd:** My Department paid specific grant contributions to Cumbria county council during the period 1974 to 1979 towards the costs incurred by the council in funding the police, magistrates' courts and probation services in the county as well as civil defence provision and has continued to do so in all subsequent years. Grant has been paid at the rate of 80 per cent. of eligible expenditure for the magistrates' courts and probation service and 50 per cent. for the police service until the financial year 1986-87 and 51 per cent. thereafter. Civil defence expenditure has been grant aided either 75 per cent. or 100 per cent. throughout the period depending on the nature of the expenditure.

### Entry Clearance

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the case of Miss FR whose fiancé, Mr. JNA (reference A421085/2(S)) has applied for entry clearance.

**Mr. Renton:** Mr. JNA's application was referred to the Home Office by the entry clearance officer in Islamabad so that an interview could be arranged with Miss FR. The interview was carried out on 9 January 1989 at Manchester airport and a report of the interview was sent to the entry clearance officer in Islamabad on 24 February. His decision is awaited. As I undertook in my letter of 15 November to the hon. Member, I shall inform him of the outcome as soon as a decision has been reached.

### Forensic Science Service

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many professional staff left the

Home Office forensic science service, other than on retirement on age grounds in each of the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The number of scientific staff (including professional and technical grades) leaving the forensic science service, other than on retirement on age grounds were as follows:

| | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Resignations:* | | | |
| ASO | 24 | 12 | 12 |
| SO | 10 | 10 | 19 |
| HSO | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| SSO | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| | 44 | 26 | 37 |
| Transfer | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Medical retirement | 1 | 1 | — |
| Total | 50 | 30 | 38 |

## Prisoners (Ethnic Background)

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prisoners held on remand in jails in Nottingham, London and Tyneside are from an ethnic minority; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* The latest readily available information is given in the table. Prisoners remanded in custody by courts in Nottinghamshire are normally received into Leicester and Lincoln prisons together with prisoners from Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire; remand prisoners from Tyne and Wear are normally received into Durham prison and Low Newton remand centre together with those from Cleveland, Cumbria, Northumberland and North Yorkshire.

*Remand prisoners held in specified Prison Service establishments on 30 June 1988: by ethnic origin and type of remand*

*Percentage*

| *Establishment and type of prisoner* | *White* | *Minority ethnic origins* | *Not recorded refused* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Leicester and Lincoln:* | | | | |
| Untried | 88 | 10 | 2 | 100 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 94 | 5 | 1 | 100 |
| *London:*[1] | | | | |
| Untried | 56 | 37 | 6 | 100 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 76 | 20 | 4 | 100 |
| *Durham and Low Newton:* | | | | |
| Untried | 90 | 1 | 9 | 100 |
| Convicted unsentenced | 93 | — | 7 | 100 |

[1] Brixton, Feltham, Holloway, Latchmere House, Pentonville, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs.

# EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

## Schools Inspectorate

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the results of the inspection of Skegness grammar school, Lincolnshire, and Audenshaw high school, Tameside, by Her Majesty's inspectors.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** There have been no formal reporting inspections of these schools in the recent past. In accordance with their normal practice for dealing with statutory proposals affecting schools, Her Majesty's inspectorate provided me with professional advice on the educational merits of the schools' proposals to become grant-maintained based on their knowledge of the schools concerned, including knowledge gained through recent visits. As with advice on other statutory proposals involving schools this advice was provided in confidence. I took account of it in my recent decisions to approve the proposals for grant-maintained status from these schools.

## Grants and Loans

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the names of the non-statutory organisations and bodies in receipt of grant or loans from his Department in 1988-89, stating in each case the amount, whether a grant or loan and the brief purpose of making the grant or loan.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** My Department makes grants to a wide variety of bodies. In addition to capital grants and loans to voluntary aided schools; grants to non-maintained special schools and establishments for the handicapped; direct grants to nursery schools; grants to city technology colleges; and grants to the Royal College of Art, Cranfield institute of technology and to grant-aided colleges, the following bodies are in receipt of grants in 1988-89;

*Youth Service*

Grants are paid in support of the headquarters activities of national youth organisations and for youth service provision to the following bodies:

*Provision in 1988-89*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Army Cadet Force Association | 4,260 |
| Association of Jewish Youth | 25,740 |
| Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland | 24,900 |
| Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services | 9,500 |
| Birmingham Young Volunteers | 25,960 |
| Boys' Brigade | 39,737 |
| Briars Residential Centre | 33,446 |
| British Council of Churches | 24,000 |
| British Deaf Association | 13,200 |
| British Red Cross Society | 9,960 |
| British Trust for Conservation Volunteers | 29,280 |
| British Youth Council | 152,000 |
| Broadless Trust | 31,177 |
| Campaigners | 15,240 |
| Catholic Youth Services | 43,900 |
| Church Army | 28,847 |

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Church Lads' Brigade and Church Girls' Brigade | 9,060 |
| Church of England Board of Education | 42,240 |
| Community Trusts | 10,000 |
| Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work | 251,000 |
| Council for Environmental Education | 40,880 |
| Covenanters | 5,040 |
| Duke of Edinburgh's Award | 67,920 |
| Endeavour Training | 29,520 |
| Fairbridge Drake Society | 27,960 |
| Forest Schools Camps | 1,680 |
| Frontier Youth Trust | 12,660 |
| Girl Guides Association | 99,848 |
| Girls' Brigade | 21,060 |
| Girls' Venture Corps | 24,120 |
| Greater Manchester Youth Association | 20,000 |
| Horse Rangers Association | 1,860 |
| Inter-Action | 49,780 |
| International Voluntary Service | 4,800 |
| Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade | 5,640 |
| JMB Development Training | 6,000 |
| Kielder Adventure Centre | 34,843 |
| Leaving Home Project | 25,000 |
| Lubavitch Foundation | 5,160 |
| Methodist Association of Youth Clubs | 114,280 |
| National Association of Boys' Clubs | 175,410 |
| National Association of Muslim Youth | 20,280 |
| National Association of Young People's Counselling and Advisory Services | 48,000 |
| National Council for Voluntary Youth Services | 145,000 |
| National Federation of 18+ Groups | 33,300 |
| National Federation of Gateway Clubs | 39,600 |
| National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs | 84,480 |
| National Organisation for Work with Girls and Young Women | 40,460 |
| National PHAB | 52,020 |
| National Youth Bureau | 552,000 |
| National Youth Choir | 2,040 |
| National Youth Orchestra | 4,680 |
| National Youth Theatre | 42,780 |
| New Treatment Church of God | 10,800 |
| Ocean Youth Club | 21,990 |
| Outward Bound Trust | 220,980 |
| Quaker Home Service | 33,860 |
| Rathbone Society | 25,560 |
| Reform Synagogues of Great Britain | 7,920 |
| Royal Society for the Protection of Birds | 4,500 |
| Sail Training Association | 5,700 |
| St. John Ambulance Brigade | 9,480 |
| Salvation Army | 12,960 |
| Scout Association | 65,820 |
| Sea Cadet Association | 11,640 |
| SPLASH | 3,900 |
| Union of Maccabi Associations | 26,686 |
| United Kingdom Federation of Jazz Bands | 7,080 |
| United Reform Church | 61,460 |
| West Central | 12,100 |
| Woodcraft Folk | 10,740 |
| Young Christian Workers | 19,860 |
| Young Men's Christian Association | 559,822 |
| Young Men's Association of Wales | 28,750 |
| Young Women's Christian Association | 90,821 |
| Youth Clubs United Kingdom | 255,360 |
| Youth Hostels Association | 43,480 |

*Adult Education*

Grants are made for the provision of courses for adults by long-term residential colleges, university extra-mural departments and the Workers' Educational Association, and to various national associations for educational services for adults:

*Provision in 1988-89*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Long Term Residential Colleges | [1]1,610,000 |
| University Extra-Mural Departments | [1]6,152,020 |
| Workers' Educational Association | [1]2,801,940 |
| *National Associations* | |
| Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit | 2,466,000 |
| British Chess Federation | 37,300 |
| British Theatre Association | 14,200 |
| Educational Centres Association | 6,300 |
| National Association of Women's Clubs | 27,100 |
| National Federation of Community Organisations | 25,950 |
| National Federation of Women's Institute | 15,600 |
| National Institute of Adult Continuing Education | 118,925 |
| National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (REPLAN) | 1,159,000 |
| National Union of Townswomen's Guilds | 13,940 |
| National Women's Register | 5,840 |
| Pre-Retirement Association | 73,595 |
| Trades Union Congress | 787,028 |
| Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education | 289,000 |
| University of the Third Age | 2,400 |
| Workers' Educational Association (National Office) | 56,705 |
| Workers' Educational Association (In-Service Training) | 54,850 |

[1] Academic year.

*Other bodies*

Grants are paid in respect of specified educational services for the following bodies:

*Provision in 1988-89*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Bristol Exploratory | 5,000 |
| British Academy | 5,578,000 |
| British Association for Early Childhood Education | 9,410 |
| British Association for the Advancement of Science: Young Investigators | 30,000 |
| British Association for Teachers of the Handicapped | 24,000 |
| British Association for the Education and Welfare of the Visual Handicapped | 5,000 |
| British Association for Irish Studies | 5,400 |
| British Physics Olympiad | 5,000 |
| British Universities Film and Video Council Ltd. | 150,000 |
| Careers Research Advisory Centre | 15,760 |
| Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges | 1,941,430 |
| Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research | 395,000 |
| City Technology Colleges Trust | 90,000 |
| Christian Education Movement | 35,000 |
| Community Service Volunteers School Advisory Service | 50,792 |
| Conference for Higher Education, Art and Design (Germinations Art Exhibition) | 5,000 |
| Council for Education in World Citizenship | 38,000 |
| Council for Pre-Vocational Education | 110,500 |
| Craft, Design and Technology: Wolff Olins Design Dimension | 25,000 |
| Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service | 789,860 |
| Educational Disadvantage Projects: | |
| National Out of Schools Alliance | 10,000 |
| National Council for Mother Tongue Teaching | 10,000 |
| Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service | 11,900 |
| Commission for Racial Equality | 18,712 |
| Project Fullemploy—Windsor Fellowship Scheme | 2,000 |
| Commonwealth Institute Artists and Craftspeople in Education Project | 720 |
| Industrial Society | 15,000 |
| European Schools | 2,443,000 |
| European School Culham | 462,000 |
| European University Institute | 1,182,000 |

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Family Welfare Association: Educational Grant Advisory Service | 20,000 |
| Fun Promotions: Alcohol and Drug Education | 10,000 |
| Further Education Unit | 3,354,000 |
| Industry Matters | 4,000 |
| International Baccalaureate Office | 16,490 |
| International Musician Seminar (Music Master Class) | 4,000 |
| Joint United States-United Kingdom Educational Commission | 300,000 |
| League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers | 472,470 |
| Leicester University Centre for Teaching and Development in Social and Moral Education | 4,500 |
| National Academic Recognition Centre | 10,903 |
| National Association for Gifted Children | 20,000 |
| National Association of Governors and Managers | 20,000 |
| National Bureau for Handicapped Students | 32,000 |
| National Children's Bureau | 39,000 |
| National Choral Competition: Music for Youth | 51,271 |
| National Committee for Mathematical Contests | 5,000 |
| National Congress for Language in Education | 1,000 |
| National Council for Educational Technology | 4,554,000 |
| National Council for Vocational Qualifications | 1,500,000 |
| National Foundation for Educational Research | 15,000 |
| National Sub-titling for the Deaf | 16,000 |
| Pre-School Playgroup Association | 153,000 |
| Polytechnics Central Admissions System | 31,745 |
| Primary Education Study Group | 1,000 |
| Professional, Industrial and Commercial Updating Programme (PICKUP) | 1,610,000 |
| Project Trident | 20,500 |
| Radio One: Alcohol and Drug Education | 10,000 |
| School Curriculum Awards | 10,000 |
| School/Industry Understanding: | |
| Understanding Industry | 17,500 |
| Royal Society of Arts Industry Matters Initiative | 20,000 |
| Schools Curriculum Industry Partnership | 28.250 |
| Standing Conference on Education for International Understanding | 6,000 |
| Standing Conference on Schools Science and Technology | 43,000 |
| Teaching as a Career Unit | 375,000 |
| UK-EEC Education Information Centre | 50,000 |
| United Kingdom Centre for European Education | 18,500 |
| United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs | 110,000 |
| Voluntary Sector Consultative Council | 119,276 |
| World Organisation for Early Childhood Education | 1,000 |

## Single European Act

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the impact that the Single European Act will have on his Department's operation of domestic policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** Education does not fall within the scope of the original EEC treaty and the Single European Act has not altered that situation. The Act will therefore have no direct impact upon the operation of domestic education policy. But the Government actively support co-operation between the member states in education matters, and we expect that the completion of the single European market will, over time, influence the demands made upon the education service by the employment sector.

## Special Educational Needs

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will describe the arrangements which he will require for funding additional teaching hours in respect of a child transferred at age 11 years with a statement of special educational needs to a grant maintained school, where such funding would otherwise have been provided centrally by the local education authority;

(2) what will be the continuing responsibility of a local education authority to provide additional staff or material resources in respect of pupils with statements of special educational needs after a school attains grant mantained status;

(3) whether he will outline the methods and criteria by which he will resolve disputes between a grant maintained school and the local education authority over the allocation of resources in respect of a child which the school considers to be in need of formal assessment of special educational needs, but where the authority considers that the school is failing to perform their educational duties satisfactorily.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Local education authorities have responsibility under the Education Act 1981 for the assessment of children in their area who have, or may have, special educational needs which require the LEA to determine the special educational provision necessary to meet those needs. In such cases the LEA is required to make a statement specifying the special educational provision and to make such provision available. This duty extends to pupils placed in grant-maintained schools. Where a pupil with a statement is placed in a grant-maintained school, it will be for the authority to make available any additional resources required.

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will outline the arrangements which will be made to ensure that a pupil at a primary school with a statement of special educational needs is effectively reviewed by the local education authority prior to transferring to a grant maintained secondary school.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Local education authorities have a duty under the Education Act 1981 to review at least annually statements they have made for pupils with special education needs. This means that all such children will be reviewed in their last year of primary school, regardless of whether they will be transferring to a grant-maintained secondary school.

## School Expeditions

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set up a central fund administered by his Department to assist grant maintained schools with remissions of costs incurred on school expeditions, where it is no longer legally possible to make formal charges to parents, such a fund to match the remissions proposed in such circumstances by the local education authority.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Grant-maintained schools will receive in annual maintenance grant funding at the level they could have expected from their former maintaining authority, including an apportionment of the authority's central costs. This will include an apportionment of any provision made by the authority for remission of costs incurred on school expeditions.

## Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy not to regard it as an adverse factor, in deciding upon an application for grant maintained status, that the school in question accepts children from the ages of 11 to 14 years only, coming from a locally maintained primary school and proceeding to a locally maintained upper school with age range 14 to 19 years.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** All secondary and middle-deemed secondary schools are eligible to apply for grant-maintained status irrespective of age range. My right hon.

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will outline the methods and criteria by which he will resolve disputes between the apportionment of expenditure on a defective roof at a grant-maintained school where the governors consider that the defect is an inherent problem of construction requiring capital expenditure and the local education authority consider it to be a maintenance responsibility.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Both maintenance and capital expenditure at a grant-maintained school will be the responsibility of the school governing body; the local education authority will not be involved. Grant-maintained schools will be able to apply to the Department for capital grant at 100 per cent. to cover approved capital expenditure, including expenditure on major structural repairs. My right hon. Friend will consider bids for capital grants from grant-maintained schools on their merits in the light of the resources available.

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will outline the methods and criteria by which he will resolve disputes between a grant-maintained school and the local education authority if the authority were to change the catchment areas of the primary schools feeding the grant-maintained school to that school's disadvantage.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The admissions arrangements for a grant-maintained school will be as agreed with my right hon. Friend and included in the school's articles of government. They will not normally be affected by admissions arrangements for primary schools.

## Schools (Opting Out)

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the advantages he has identified for schools which opt out of local education authority control.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Grant-maintained schools will be free to manage themselves as they think best within the law. Parents will enjoy enhanced influence over their conduct. Greater diversity within the maintained education system will lead to healthy competition, and thereby foster higher educational standards all round. My right hon. Friend has already approved proposals from three schools to become grant-maintained. Many more are following in their footsteps.

## Teachers' Pay

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to those sections of the recent report of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay which deal with remuneration and morale in the profession.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend announced on 16 February, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), *Official Report* columns *323-24*, that he proposed to accept in full the recommendations contained in the second report of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions.

## National Curriculum (Foreign Languages)

**Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which modern foreign languages he proposes to specify for inclusion in the national curriculum.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** I am proposing to make an order, jointly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, under section 3(2)(b) of the Education Reform Act 1988 specifying two groups of modern foreign languages for the purposes of the national curriculum. Initially this order will apply to the requirement that pupils in key stage 3—aged approximately 11 to 14 years old—should study all the national curriculum foundation subjects, including a modern foreign language, for a reasonable time. That requirement was the subject of a commencement order made on 6 February 1989 which comes into force in England for most such pupils on 1 August 1989. My right hon. Friend is to make a commencement order bringing that requirement into force for pupils in Wales on 1 August 1989 for the core subjects, and on 1 August 1990 for the other foundation subjects including the modern foreign language.

The first group of languages will consist of the working languages of the European Community (Danish, Dutch, French, German, modern Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), and maintained schools will be required to offer pupils the opportunity to study at least one of these. The second group will include non-EC languages (Arabic, Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, Urdu). Maintained schools will be allowed, but not required, to offer one or more of these in addition to those in the first group, as the national curriculum modern foreign language. The order will not restrict the choice from among the languages a school offers.

The order does not affect the provision of second and subsequent modern languages, or classical languages, which remains at schools' discretion outside the national curriculum.

I have today issued for consultation a draft of the order and of an accompanying circular. Copies have been placed in the Library. I am inviting comments from bodies representing local authorities, schools, teachers, churches, language professions, pupils with special educational needs, ethnic minority groups, industry and commerce, and others, by 14 April. Subject to the outcome of the consultations, I expect to publish the final circular and make an order around the end of April, to come into effect on 1 August 1989.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is undertaking parallel consultations in Wales.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Statistical Services

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister what action will be taken following the recent reviews of the Government statistical services; and if she will place copies of the reviews in the Library.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government are considering the report of the review established last summer on Government economic statistics. An announcement of the Government's conclusions and publication of the report will take place shortly.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Forth:** As part of the Department's agreed IT strategy a number of developments are taking place which will facilitate internal communications in the Department. These include:

- a programme, now virtually complete, to replace aging telephone exchanges with modern digital equipment;
- an electronic mail pilot currently serving 1,000 staff;
- a data communications network linking some 2,000 computer terminals to central computers;
- increasing use of FAX, with machines being installed at the rate of one a week.

Future plans include the use of videoconference facilities and public access to DTI databases containing company and export information, security and data protection withstanding.

### Domestic Accidents

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many accidents to children occurred in the home in each year since 1978 involving *(a)* cleaning products, *(b)* internal glass doors and *(c)* cookers, excluding hot plates, rings and hobs.

**Mr. Forth** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* National estimates of the number of accidents to children involving cleaning products, glass doors and cookers, excluding hot plates, rings and hobs are shown in the table. These estimates are based on accident details provided by the 20 participating hospitals in the home accident surveillance system and evaluated by the research section of the consumer safety unit. Information prior to 1980 is not available in this form.

| *Year* | *Cleaning products* | *Glass doors*[1] | *Cookers* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1980 | 7,000 | 15,000 | 3,600 |
| 1981 | 11,500 | 15,600 | 3,400 |
| 1982 | 11,300 | 13,000 | 2,700 |
| 1983 | 10,000 | 13,500 | 2,400 |
| 1984 | 10,000 | 15,000 | 2,400 |
| 1985 | 8,000 | 12,000 | 2,600 |
| 1986 | 8,200 | 9,700 | 2,400 |
| 1987 | 7,800 | 9,600 | 2,400 |

[1] The figures for glass doors include internal and outer doors as the accident data does not distinguish between them.

### Labelling

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to regulate products bearing eco labels in the light of current European Commission proposals for the introduction of a pan-European label; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth** *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* None.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Private Members' Bills

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Lord President of the council if he will name the most recent Bill introduced under the private Members' procedures which received Royal Assent without having bee allocated any additional time by the Governnent of the day and which had a division of either Second or Third Reading; and if he will indicate the date upon which that Royal Assent was given.

**Mr. Wakeham:** The House divided on the Third Reading of the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Rear Seat Belts by Children) Bill on Friday 13 May 1988. Royal Assent was given to the Bill on Tuesday 28 June 1988.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Lawyers

**Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Attorney-General, how many *(a)* Queen's Counsel, *(b)* junior counsel and *(c)* solicitors are currently practising in Northern Ireland.

**The Attorney-General:** There are 31 Queen's counsel and 285 junior counsel practising in Northern Ireland. 1,210 solicitors hold practising certificates.

### Immigration

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will give details of current times from application to hearing of an appeal against refusal of entry clearance for applicants appealing at different places in the Indian sub-continent.

**The Attorney-General:** Statistics about the time taken to complete individual appeals are not available. Neither are any statistics available on the time taken by the immigration appellate authorities to process appeals from different parts of the Indian sub-continent once they arrive at the appellate authorities' offices in London. It is, however, estimated that the current time taken from application to the hearing of appeals against refusal of entry clearance for appliants appealing at different places in the Indian sub-cpontinent is as follows:

(a) From receipt of the notice of appeal lodged at posts in the Indian sub-continent to preparation of the

entry clearance officer's explanatory statement and despatch of the papers to the appellate authorities in London:

| | *months* |
|---|---|
| Dacca | 2-5 |
| Islamabad | 3 |
| Karachi | 1-3 |
| New Delhi | 2-3 |
| Madras | 1 |
| Bombay | 3 |
| Calcutta | 1 |

(b) From receipt of the notice of appeal by the appellate authorities in London to despatch of the appeal papers to both parties' representatives in the United Kingdom: 4-8 weeks.

(c) From receipt of papers by both parties' representatives to the issue by each party of a certificate of readiness to proceed: this is in the hands of the parties, and times vary from a few weeks to several months. If no response is received within nine months the appeal is automatically listed for hearing.

(d) From certification of readiness to proceed to the hearing date: up to 6 weeks, but longer where the parties request adjournments.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Short Bros.

**Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made with the privatisation of Short Bros. plc.

**Mr. Tom King:** I have now received six preliminary proposals from interested parties for the purchase of the company. I have asked two of these to submit final proposals by 30 April 1989. These are Bombardier Inc. and a joint proposal from GEC/Fokker. I am considering whether a further proposal should also be included.

### Land Acquisition and Compensation

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how often the powers embodied in the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1973, article 9, have been used in each year since it came into force; and what were the total reductions in cash terms in each of those years or, if more convenient, financial years.

**Mr. Ian Stewart** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but the number of such cases in any year resulting in reductions are thought likely to have been very few.

## WALES

### NHS Staff

**Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of ancillary staffs employed in the National Health Service in Wales as of 30 September 1988, excluding nurse auxiliaries; *(b)* the number of whole-time equivalents in Wales; *(c)* the average hours of ancillary staffs by grade, together with average pay by grade; and *(d)* the average hours of part-time ancillary staffs by grade and average pay, broken down by male and female for each of categories *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)*.

**Mr. Grist:** The information requested is shown in the table.

*NHS Ancillary staff (excluding Nurse auxiliaries)*

*(a)* 12, 461[1]

*(b)* Total whole time equivalents

| *Male* | *Female* |
|---|---|
| 2,951 | 6,166 |

9,117

*(c)* and *(d)*:

| *Grade* | *Average hours worked*[2] | | | | *Estimated average gross weekly earnings (£ per week)*[2] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Full-time* | | *Part-time* | | *Full-time* | | *Part-time* | |
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* |
| *Non Supervisors and chargehands* | | | | | | | | |
| Scale A | 44·7 | 40·7 | 27·8 | 24·5 | 131 | 113 | 75 | 67 |
| B | 45·8 | 40·9 | 33·6 | 26·5 | 134 | 116 | 92 | 69 |
| C | 45·4 | 42·6 | [3]— | 29·4 | 154 | 135 | [3]— | 92 |
| D | [3]— | [3]— | [4]— | 25·1 | [3]— | [3]— | [4]— | 81 |
| *Supervisors* | | | | | | | | |
| Scale I | 44·3 | 41·3 | [3]— | 28·3 | 148 | 136 | [3]— | 92 |
| II | 46·3 | 41·3 | [4]— | 33·3 | 169 | 145 | [4]— | 109 |
| III | 46·9 | 42·6 | [3]— | [3]— | 169 | 130 | [3]— | [3]— |
| IV | 46·2 | [3]— | [4]— | [3]— | 170 | [3]— | [4]— | [3]— |

[1] As at September 1988.
[2] For the last full week of the 1987-88 financial year, grades containing small numbers of staff are not shown.
[3] Numbers of staff in these grades are too small to provide reliable figures.
[4] Not applicable—no staff in grade.

## TRANSPORT

### Roads (Hampshire)

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been Hampshire county council's allocation for spending on roads each year since 1979 expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* real terms and *(c)* as a percentage increase or decrease on each previous year.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The present capital allocation system was introduced under the Local Government

Planning and Land Act, 1980 and commenced in 1981-82. The previous system, called loans sanctions, is not comparable with the present system. Figures for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are therefore not included. Details of Hampshie county council's capital allocation for roads are given in the following table.

| Year | Cash terms | | Real terms[1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Capital allocation | Percentage increase/ decrease on previous year Per cent. | Capital allocation £ million | Percentage increase/ decrease on previous year Per cent. |
| 1981-82 | [2]10·828 | — | [2]15·525 | — |
| 1982-83 | [2]12·206 | 12·7 | [2]16·334 | 5·2 |
| 1983-84 | 13·632 | 11·7 | 17·448 | 6·8 |
| 1984-85 | 15·760 | 15·6 | 19·200 | 10·0 |
| 1985-86 | 15·550 | −1·3 | 17·974 | −6·4 |
| 1986-87 | 15·650 | 0·6 | 17·506 | −2·6 |
| 1987-88 | 13·650 | −12·8 | 14·503 | −17·1 |
| 1988-89 | 11·020 | −19·3 | 11·020 | −24·0 |
| 1989-90 | 10·880 | -1·3 | 10·362 | −6·0 |

[1] Converted to 1988-89 prices using GDP deflator.
[2] Figures also include a very small amount for public transport.

### Roads (West Sussex)

**Sir Peter Hordern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the capital allocation for roads in West Sussex in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The information requested is given in the following table:

| Year | Capital Allocation for Roads (£ million) |
|---|---|
| 1985-86 | 8·300 |
| 1986-87 | 8·370 |
| 1987-88 | 7·200 |
| 1988-89 | 7·460 |
| 1989-90 | 3·300 |

The figure for 1989-90 reflects the reduction in the county's TSG programme as four major schemes—A24 improvements at Farthings hill and Dial Post, A264 Horsham northern bypass and A272 Cuckfield bypass—open to traffic and expenditure on them tails off.

### Roads (Shire Counties)

**Sir Peter Hordern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the capital allocation for roads in each of the shire counties at the latest convenient date.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The 1989-90 roads capital allocations for the shire counties were included in my reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 16 February 1989 at columns *287-90*.

### Lichfield-Redditch Line

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will now announce his decision on the application by the British Rail board and West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive for approval of a scheme to electrify the Lichfield-Redditch cross-city line.

**Mr. Portillo:** No proposal has been submitted for approval. I understand that British Rail is doing further work on the case. If the case for electrification is financially robust, we shall be happy to approve it.

### Settle-Carlisle Line

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with how many groups he is in negotiation about the future of the Settle to Carlisle railway; and when he expects to make an announcement on the future of the line.

**Mr. Portillo:** My right hon. Friend is not negotiating with anyone, but British Rail is actively considering whether the line could be run by the private sector were he to decide to give consent to withdrawal of British Rail passenger services. My right hon. Friend will make a statement when he has fully considered all the evidence.

### Guards (Statistics)

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to gather statistics on the number of guards on *(a)* British Rail trains, *(b)* London Regional Transport buses and *(c)* London Regional Transport underground in 1978, 1984 and the latest year available.

**Mr. Portillo:** No. This is a management matter for the operators.

### Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley Bridge Bypass

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if Government normal accountancy controls have identified any differences or defects with the contract for the Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley bridge bypass, as raised in his answer to the hon. Member for Stretford, 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *775*.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* We are continuing with our investigations. The final account has not yet been submitted.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Capital Gains Tax

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact the changes in capital gains taxes in the Finance Act 1988 have had on the level of activity on the stock exchange.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** I am not aware of any evidence that the changes in capital gains taxes in the 1988 Finance

Act have had a significant impact on stock market activity over any period of time since their announcement in the 1988 Budget.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Brooke:** The Treasury uses a range of information technology equipment including word processors, micro and mainframe computers and electronic networks and mail.

The equipment supports a variety of activities including econometric modelling, public expenditure monitoring and control, Civil Service pay and records systems, management information, text production and internal communications.

It is also used in the production and publication of a range of documents including the Public Expenditure White Paper and Supply Estimates. Along with other departments, the Treasury has begun sending information electronically to the media.

### Payroll Giving

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many people are now making contributions under the payroll giving scheme; what is the total amount given to charity; and what is the cost to the Exchequer;

(2) what is the percentage of taxpayers who are in the payroll giving scheme.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** It is estimated that about 100,000 employees are currently participating in the payroll giving scheme. This represents about 0·5 per cent. of all income taxpayers. Information on the amount of donations is only available for 1987-88, the first year of the scheme, when about £1 million was donated. The level of donations is expected to be substantially higher in 1988-89. The cost of the income tax relief in 1987-88 was about £300,000.

### Business Expansion Scheme

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total cost so far of business expansion tax relief for 1988-89; and what was the cost in previous years of the scheme.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** A forecast of £100 million for the cost of relief for the business expansion scheme in 1988-89 was published in the Government's expenditure plans, 1989-90 to 1991-92, (Chapter 21), but no information is yet available centrally from official sources to provide a reliable estimate. The estimated cost of relief for earlier years is as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1983-84 | 50 |
| 1984-85 | 75 |
| 1985-86 | 85 |
| 1986-87 | 95 |
| 1987-88[1] | 120 |

[1] provisional

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much tax relief has gone to the business expansion scheme on residential property; and what his estimate is of the full year cost of tax relief.

(2) what is his estimate of the cost of business expansion scheme tax relief on residential property in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** No information on the cost of the business expansion scheme tax relief for investments in residential property is yet available centrally from official sources. Costs in 1989-90 and 1990-91 will depend on take-up.

### Tax Fraud (Scotland)

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many investigators are employed by the Inland Revenue to detect fraud in Scotland relating to income tax, allowances and corporation tax; what is the sum recovered in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what number of staff he expects to be employed on this work in each of the next three years.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** There are currently 287 staff units directly engaged on tax investigation work in Scotland. In 1987-88 they brought in tax, interest and penalties totalling £68·91 million. The Inland Revenue will continue to keep the number of investigators in Scotland under review.

### Premium Bonds

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed in running the premium bond system.

**Mr. Lilley:** The number of people employed in running the premium bond system as at 1 February 1989 was 1,292.

### War Stock

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost of distributing dividends to those who hold £10 or less of 3½ per cent. war stock.

**Mr. Lilley:** I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Inland Revenue (Staff)

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what are the current shortages of staff as against entitlement in the Inland Revenue for each grade in *(a)* London and *(b)* the south-east;

(2) what is the current rate of turnover of staff in each grade of the Inland Revenue in *(a)* London and *(b)* the south-east;

(3) what is the establishment in each grade of the Inland Revenue; how many are in post in each grade; and what is the pay scale for each grade.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* The information, in relation to the main grades, is as follows:

| | 1 Per cent. Annual Resignation London | 2 Per cent. Annual Resignation South East | 3 Shortfall (−) or Surplus (+) of staff in London | 4 Shortfall (−) or Surplus (+) of staff in South East | 5 Complement National | 6 Staff in post National | 7 Pay Scales £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Tax Office Grades* | | | | | | | |
| Inspector (Fully Trained) | 11·4 | 7·3 | −63 | −32 | 2,536 | 2,320 | 8,460-33,819 |
| Inspector (General Group) | 4·2 | 4·4 | −99 | −66 | 5,324 | 4,940 | 8,458-27,087 |
| Technical Trainee | | | 70 | 70 | 450 | 900 | 8,460-14,595 |
| Tax Officer (Higher Grade) | 16·4 | 7·5 | | | | | |
| | | | −41 | −42 | 9,982 | 9,960 | 6,543-11,688 |
| Tax Officer | 12·8 | 12·9 | 76 | 166 | 14,082 | 14,520 | 4,160-8,737 |
| Revenue Assistant | 20·9 | 20·3 | −99 | −107 | 11,502 | 11,062 | 3,633-6,679 |
| Others | 12·1 | 11·9 | −23 | 5 | 2,805 | 2,951 | — |
| Total | 13·9 | 12·3 | −179 | −6 | 46,681 | 46,653 | — |
| *Collection Office Grades* | | | | | | | |
| Collector (Higher Grade) and above | 1·4 | 1·6 | −8 | −1 | 888 | 873 | 10,788-30,357 |
| Collector | 12·3 | 1·7 | −55 | 3 | 2,337 | 2,232 | 6,453-11,688 |
| Assistant Collector | 22·5 | 10·9 | 49 | 58 | 3,844 | 4,189 | 4,019-8,737 |
| Revenue Assistant | 27·7 | 26·1 | −74 | −78 | 1,598 | 1,233 | 3,633-6,679 |
| Others | 17·9 | 12·2 | −10 | −5 | 545 | 498 | — |
| Total | 17·0 | 9·2 | −98 | −23 | 9,212 | 9,025 | — |
| *Valuation Office Grades* | | | | | | | |
| Professional Staff | 15·1 | 10·1 | −86 | −21 | 2,209 | 1,991 | 4,835-33,819 |
| Valuation Technician and above | 4·4 | 2·9 | −30 | −11 | 1,447 | 1,362 | 6,242-16,860 |
| Valuation Clerk | 17·7 | 21·8 | 10 | −5 | 1,358 | 1,333 | 4,019-8,182 |
| Revenue Assistant | 26·9 | 46·4 | −12 | −1 | 1,064 | 1,004 | 3,633-6,242 |
| Others | 17·0 | 4·0 | 3 | 2 | 456 | 477 | — |
| Total | 14·5 | 16·4 | −115 | −36 | 6,534 | 6,167 | — |
| *Administration Group Grades* | | | | | | | |
| Higher Executive Officer and above | 4·9 | 2·5 | −20 | −6 | 1,677 | 1,641 | 10,434-33,819 |
| Executive Officer | 7·1 | 6·4 | −20 | −10 | 1,391 | 1,351 | 6,134-10,755 |
| Administrative Officer | 9·2 | 6·1 | −5 | −2 | 915 | 907 | 3,873-7,555 |
| Administrative Assistant | 22·4 | 29·8 | −2 | 3 | 590 | 596 | 3,523-6,081 |
| Others | 12·5 | 12·1 | −5 | −3 | 990 | 980 | — |
| Total | 8·4 | 8·8 | −52 | −18 | 5,563 | 5,475 | — |
| Departmental Total | 13·6 | 11·6 | −444 | −83 | 67,990 | 67,320 | — |

*Notes*

1. *Columns 1-4* "London" and "South East" in these four columns refer to the Inland Revenue's four London regions and south east region rspectively.

2. *Columns 1-2* These columns give annualised resignation rates based on actual resignations during the nine months April-December 1988 inclusive. The annualised rates have been reached by simple extrapolation. Final outturn figures for the year ending 31 March 1988 are likely to differ, at least at the margin.

3. *Columns 3-6* These columns show the position at 1 January 1989.

4. *Column 7* This column shows the current minimum and maximum points of the relevant national pay scales. It excludes London weighting (currently £1,750 inner London, £1,000 intermediate area and £725 outer London) and local pay additions of £600 payable to certain grades (up to EO and equivalent levels), primarily in specific locations on the London periphery but outside the London weighting areas. It also excludes, where applicable, further payments attainable for sustained high performance. The pay ranges shown for the more senior grades in each group exclude pay ranges applicable to the senior open structure (grades 1, 2 and 3).

5. The figures in columns 1-6 refer to permanant staff. In addition, at 1 January 1989 the Department employed some 1,300 casual staff, of whom about 350 were in the London regions and 250 in south east region. These to some extent offset shortages of permanent staff.

## Tax Thresholds and Income Tax

**Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate the income tax thresholds and respective rates of income tax for each financial year since 1959-60 for the United Kingdom; if he will provide similar information available to him for the Isle of Man; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The main thresholds and rates in the United Kingdom and the Isle of Man for every fifth year since 1959-60 are given in the tables. Complete information on all personal reliefs, allowances and rates of income tax in the United Kingdom 1959-60 to 1988-89 is published in The Taxes Acts, volume 2 (Income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax), tables A-N. Information on income tax rates and thresholds in the Isle of Man is published in The Isle of Man Tax Amendment Acts.

*Income tax thresholds and rates in the United Kingdom, 1959-60 to 1969-70*

| Year | Personal allowance | | Earned income relief | Standard[1] rate | Reduced rates | small income: | | Marginal Small income: | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Single £ | Married £ | | per cent. | £ per cent. | Limit £ | Fraction | Limit £ | Fraction |
| 1959-60 | 140 | 240 | $\frac{1}{4}$ of earned income up to £4,005<br>$\frac{1}{4}$ of next £5,940 of earned income maximum relief: £1,550 | 38·75 | 60 @ 8·75<br>150 @ 21·25<br>150 @ 31·25 | 300 | $\frac{7}{9}$ | 405 | $\frac{2}{3}$ |
| 1964-65 | 200 | 320 | as above | 38·75 | 100 @ 20·00<br>200 @ 30·00 | 450 | $\frac{7}{9}$ | 680 | $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| 1969-70 | 255 | 375 | as above | 41·25 | 260 @ 30·00 | 450 | $\frac{7}{9}$ | 710 | $\frac{1}{2}$ |

[1]Surtax was charged up until 1972-73, details of rates and thresholds are published in table N, volume 2 of the Taxes Acts.

*Income Tax Thresholds and Rates in the United Kingdom, 1974-75 to 1988-89*

| Year | Personal allowance | | Rates of income tax | | Rates and thresholds of investment income surcharge[1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Single £ | Married £ | Taxable income £ | Rate Percentage | Invest £ | Rate Percentage |
| 1974-75 | 625 | 865 | 1— 4,500 | 33 | | |
| | | | 4,501— 5,000 | 38 | 1—1,000 | Nil |
| | | | 5,001— 6,000 | 43 | 1,001—2,000 | 10 |
| | | | 6,001— 7,000 | 48 | Over 2,000 | 15 |
| | | | 7,001— 8,000 | 53 | | |
| | | | 8,001—10,000 | 58 | | |
| | | | 10,001—12,000 | 63 | | |
| | | | 12,001—15,000 | 68 | | |
| | | | 15,001—20,000 | 73 | | |
| | | | Over 20,000 | 83 | | |
| 1979-80 | 1,165 | 1,815 | 1— 750 | [2]25 | | |
| | | | 751—10,000 | 30 | 1—5,000 | Nil |
| | | | 10,001—12,000 | 40 | Over 5,000 | 15 |
| | | | 12,001—15,000 | 45 | | |
| | | | 15,001—20,000 | 50 | | |
| | | | 20,001—25,000 | 55 | | |
| | | | Over 25,000 | 60 | | |
| 1984-85 | 2,005 | 3,155 | 1—15,400 | 30 | | |
| | | | 15,401—18,200 | 40 | | |
| | | | 18,201—23,100 | 45 | | |
| | | | 23,101—30,600 | 50 | | |
| | | | 30,601—38,100 | 55 | | |
| | | | Over 38,100 | 60 | | |
| 1988-89 | 2,605 | 4,095 | 1—19,300 | 25 | | |
| | | | Over 19,300 | 40 | | |

[1] Investment income surcharge was abolished in 1984-85.
[2] Reduced rate of income tax.

*Income tax rates and thresholds in the Isle of Man, 1959-60 to 1988-89*

| Year | Personal allowance | | Earned income allowance | Tax rates[1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Single £ | Married £ | | Taxable income £ | Rate per cent. |
| 1959-60 | 200 | 350 | quarter of earned income up to £1,200 one fifth of excess (maximum £460) | 0-250 | 11·25 |
| | | | | 251-500 | 00·15 |
| | | | | 501-750 | 18·75 |
| | | | | over 750 | 22·50 |
| 1964-65 | 225 | 425 | as above | 0-250 | 10·00 |
| | | | | 251-500 | 15·00 |
| | | | | over 500 | 21·25 |
| 1969-70 | 275 | 525 | quarter of earned income (maximum £600) | as for 1964-65 | |
| 1974-75 | 550 | 850 | quarter of earned income (maximum £900) | all taxable income: 21·25 | |
| 1979-80 | 1,040 | 1,645 | quarter of earned income (maximum £1,100) | all taxable income: 20·50 | |
| 1984-85 | 1,690 | 2,880 | quarter of earned income (maximum £1,550) | all taxable income: 20·00 | |

| Year | Personal allowance Single £ | Married £ | Earned income allowance | Tax rates[1] Taxable income £ | Rate per cent. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 3,600 | 7,200 | suspended | 0-6,000 | 15 |
| | | | | over 6,000 | 20 |

[1] Plus Surtax on sliding scale 4·16–30 per cent. on income over £2,500 (top rate at £20,000).

### Workplace Nurseries

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the estimated receipts to the Exchequer from the taxation of workplace nurseries.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 27 February at column *27.*

### Income Tax

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage of income tax payers in the United Kingdom who receive an income tax return form requiring them to give details of their income subject to tax under schedule E in accordance with PAYE; and if he has any e plans to increase the number of recipients following computerisation of the Inland Revenue.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* The Inland Revenue issues returns to all taxpayers who they think might pay too much or too little tax in the absence of a return. Taxpayers whose main source of income is subject to tax under schedule D are sent returns annually. Taxpayers whose man source of income is subject to tax under schedule E in accordance with PAYE are sent returns on a selective basis dependent on the complexity of their tax affairs. In 1988-89 16·3 per cent. of PAYE taxpayers were issued with a return. There are no plans to change the Inland Revenue's practice on the issue of returns as a result of computerisation.

## SCOTLAND

### Companies

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the companies who have established a productive or service capacity in Scotland and are still operating over the past 10 years.

**Mr. Lang:** The information requested is not available.

### Salmon

**Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to control the establishment of freshwater cages for salmon smolt rearing in lochs to prevent pollution and the threat to indigenous salmon from escapees; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Fish farming in Scotland is already subject to a number of different authorisation and control procedures. These include provisions contained in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 which provide for control over the establishment of cages for salmon smolt rearing in Scottish freshwater lochs. Powers also exist in the Control of Pollution Act 1974 for the control of water pollution. My hon. Friend, the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment in Scotland, in his answer to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) on 10 January 1989 at column *555,* announced that we will seek powers to ensure that discharges from fish farms can be controlled as trade effluents by river purification authorities.

The most important measures of protection for wild salmon stocks are good husbandry practice in fish farms and hatcheries and the measures, which the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland administers, under the diseases of fish legislation. My right hon. and learned Friend commissions a wide range of research on salmonid and other freshwater fish and on fish cultivation, including studies of diseases and interaction between wild and farmed stock, with the co-operation of fish farming organisations and other interests. Further studies, including work on the genetic diversity of salmon stocks, are under consideration.

### Potato Marketing Board

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the representations that he has received on the future of the Potato Marketing Board.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

### Ministerial Letters

**Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time taken by each of his Ministers to reply to letters sent to them by right hon. and hon. Members.

**Mr. Rifkind:** An ad hoc survey conducted within my Department during a representative period in 1988 showed an average response time of 23 days.

### Recreation Projects

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the leisure and recreation projects for which capital consent has been granted to district councils for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** Capital consents are not normally issued specifically for leisure and recreation projects. Leisure and recreation is one of 19 services within the general services programme for which a block consent is issued taking into account local authorities' proposals for capital expenditure on all these services.

### Capital Allocations

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the capital allocation for general services for each district council in 1988-89; and for 1989-90.

**Mr. Lang:** The information is as follows:

£ thousand

| | Allocations issued on 22 February 1988 for 1988-89 | Allocations issued on 24 February 1989 for 1989-90 |
|---|---|---|
| Berwickshire | 220 | 350 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 220 | 270 |
| Roxburgh | 280 | 350 |
| Tweeddale | 160 | 200 |
| Clackmannan | 380 | 350 |
| Falkirk | 1,400 | 1,400 |
| Stirling | 600 | 600 |
| Annandale and Eskdale | 290 | 320 |
| Nithsdale | 430 | 400 |
| Stewartry | 140 | 210 |
| Wigtown | 200 | 240 |
| Dunfermline | 1,000 | 900 |
| Kirkcaldy | 900 | 950 |
| North East Fife | 500 | 500 |
| Aberdeen City | 2,000 | 2,100 |
| Banff and Buchan | 580 | 540 |
| Gordon | 350 | 350 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 400 | 500 |
| Moray | 380 | 500 |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 75 | 79 |
| Caithness | 290 | 250 |
| Inverness | 550 | 550 |
| Lochaber | 230 | 300 |
| Nairn | 120 | 95 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 620 | 540 |
| Skye and Lochalsh | 200 | 200 |
| Sutherland | 250 | 340 |
| East Lothian | 500 | 620 |
| Edinburgh City | 2,500 | 2,000 |
| Midlothian | 500 | 1,100 |
| West Lothian | 1,500 | 1,400 |
| Argyll and Bute | 650 | 700 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 360 | 300 |
| Clydebank | 1,200 | 1,500 |
| Clydesdale | 600 | 500 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 430 | 600 |
| Cumnock and Doon Valley | 350 | 770 |
| Cunninghame | 900 | 1,000 |
| Dumbarton | 1,000 | 1,300 |
| East Kilbride | 300 | 470 |
| Eastwood | 200 | 160 |
| Glasgow City | 4,200 | 4,400 |
| Hamilton | 790 | 1,115 |
| Inverclyde | 1,000 | 900 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 700 | 650 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 800 | 700 |
| Monklands | 1,850 | 2,000 |
| Motherwell | 1,850 | 1,850 |
| Renfrew | 1,200 | 1,300 |
| Strathkelvin | 750 | 1,200 |
| Angus | 600 | 1,000 |
| Dundee City | 1,750 | 1,700 |
| Perth and Kinross | 850 | 1,000 |

## Epidural Anaesthetics

**Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health board the total number of women receiving epidural analgesia during childbirth each year over the past five years; the total number excluding those giving birth by caesarean section, receiving epidural analgesia during childbirth each year over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the provision of epidural anaesthetics.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The information requested is not held centrally. The administration of epidurals to patients is a matter for the clinical judgment of the consultants involved.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Nairobi (Pensions)

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on behalf of the Kenya local authorities superannuation fund consultative committee regarding pension provision for former employees of Nairobi city council.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** The Kenya local authorities superannuation fund (KLASF) consultative committee has made representations on behalf of former Nairobi city council employees on a regular basis over a number of years. The committee would like Her Majesty's Government to agree that KLASF pensioners should qualify for pension supplements under United Kingdom pension increase legislation. Eligibility for these supplements is limited to those who served the Crown in public service under an overseas Government and for whom Her Majesty's Government, through the Secretary of State, had accepted a special responsibility, generally because it recruited or appointed them. The committee has been told on many occasions that we are unable to redefine our criteria to include local government pensioners.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table indicating the 10 industries which have had a significant increase in the labour force over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lee:** Between September 1978 and September 1988, the most recent 10-year period for which figures are available, the largest increase in employees in employment in Great Britain were observed in the following industries:

| | Number | per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Business Service | +636,000 | +83 |
| Other Services | +326,000 | +66 |
| Hotels and Catering | +274,000 | +31 |
| Sanitary Services | +170,000 | +65 |
| Banking and Finance | +155,000 | +36 |
| Recreational and Cultural Services | +116,000 | +28 |
| Medical and Other Health Services | +96,000 | +8 |
| Wholesale Distribution | +93,000 | +11 |
| Repair of Consumer Goods and Vehicles | +57,000 | +28 |
| Education | +54,000 | +4 |

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been out of work in the Denton and Reddish constituency for more than 12 months, 18 months and two years, respectively.

**Mr. Lee:** In January 1989, the numbers of unemployed claimants in Denton and Reddish constituency who had been unemployed for more than 12 months, 18 months and two years were 1,250, 937 and 791, respectively.

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the fall in unemployment for the county of Cumbria and the number of registered job vacancies for each year from 1985.

**Mr. Lee:** The table shows the average number of unemployed claimants each year since 1985 in Cumbria, the change each year, and the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres. The changes in the unemployment count shown are slightly affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and the change in coverage from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations for those people aged under 18 years.

*Unemployment and unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in Cumbria*

| *Year* | *Unemployed Claimants (Average over 12 months)* | *Change Compared with Previous year* | *Unfilled Vacancies (Average over 12 months)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1985 | 23,079 | 1,376 | 1,329 |
| 1986 | 23,062 | −17 | 1,538 |
| 1987 | 20,275 | −2,787 | 1,871 |
| 1988 | 16,839 | −3,436 | 1,830 |

## Health and Safety (Leaflets)

**Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the titles and code numbers of the 10 most issued Health and Safety Executive leaflets published by his Department and indicate which of these leaflets has been issued in translation and in which languages.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The 10 most popular health and safety leaflets are:

| *Number and Title* | *Categorisation No.* |
|---|---|
| 1 Working with VDUs | IND/G 36 L |
| 2 Mind How You Go | IND/G 21 |
| 3 Reporting on an Injury of a Dangerous Occurrence (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) | HSE 11 |
| 4 Reporting a Case of Disease—A Brief Guide to RIDDOR | HSE 17 |
| 5 Report That Accident (RIDDOR) | HSE 21 |
| 6 Law on Health and Safety at Work: Don't Wait Until an Inspector Calls | HSE 16 |
| 7 Protecting Your Health | IND/G 62L |
| 8 Passive Smoking | IND/G 63 L |
| 9 Writing a Safety Policy Statement | HSC 6 |
| 10 [1]Hazard and Risk Explained | IND/G 64 L |
| Introducing COSHH | IND/G 65 L |
| Introducing Assessment | IND/G 67 L |

[1] A pack of three leaflets on the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH).

None of these leaflets have been issued in translation.

## Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Lee:** The Employment Department group has implemented a range of measures to facilitate both internal communications and the provision of information to the public, including electronic mail, video-conferencing, Prestel, facsimile transmission and job and training opportunities accessed by terminals.

The Group's information technology strategies, which are being devised to assist the achievement of business and policy objctives, will influence future plans.

## Underpaying

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom in the latest available year.

**Mr. Nicholls:** In 1988 the average fine imposed by the courts on employers in the United Kingdom who were prosecuted for wages council offences and where the charges included failing to pay the statutory minimum was £328.

## Rating Reform

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the report of the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee on the implications for the index of the abolition of domestic rates; and if he accepts the report's recommendations.

**Mr. Fowler:** The report is being published today and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library. I have decided to accept all its recommendations. They will start to take effect in April when the community charge comes into operation in Scotland.

# DEFENCE

## Heliborne Forces

**Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessments he has made of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's ability to match the Warsaw pact threat from heliborne forces.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The potential of Warsaw pact forces to conduct offensive operations and NATO's ability to counter them are subject to continual assessment. Details of such assessments are classified.

## TGWU (Representations)

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations about defence he has received from the Transport and General Workers Union; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** No recent representations about defence policy have been received from the Transport and General Workers Union. The TGWU does, however,

make representations over the conditions of service and related issues of its members employed in the Ministry of Defence; these are handled in accordance with the normal Civil Service consultative procedures.

### Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many obsolete nuclear warheads have been scrapped by Her Majesty's Government as a consequence of the NATO Montebello agreement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None. The nuclear warheads removed from the NATO European stockpile since the Montebello NPG meeting have all been owned by, and disposed of by, the Unites States Government.

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further information he has on United States proposals to build new, and upgrade existing, nuclear vaults at their bases in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on 7 February at column *655*.

### Nuclear Submarines

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans he has for the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 9 May 1988 at column *2*.

### Leyland/DAF

**Sir Ian Gilmour:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has held concerning assurances to be given in respect of potential claims against Leyland/DAF arising from the failure of any vehicles to meet the specifications set by his Department, prior to any possible flotation of the company.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** None; the company's contractual commitments would be unaffected by any change in ownership.

### Imber

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the exclusion of members of the public by his Department from the village of Imber and surrounding lands.

**Mr. Neubert:** The village of Imber and surrounding lands lie within the danger area of Salisbury plain training area, west. This area has been permanently closed to the public since a public inquiry in 1961 on the ground of public safety because of the danger from unexploded ordnance, metal fragments, wire entanglements and open trenches. However, public access is granted by the roads crossing the area on a maximum of 50 days in each year and special church services are held in Imber village once each year in September.

**Mr. Cohen:** To as the Secretaruy of State for Defence, what representations he has received since 1979 regarding the continued use of the village of Imber and surrounding lands by the armed forces.

**Mr Neubert:** Retrieving and searching through all the relevant records dating back to 1979 could be done only at disproportionate cost. However, those records which are readily available indicate that recently there have been no representations to the Department regarding the continued use of Imber village and the surrounding land.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what powers he holds the village of Imber and surrounding lands.

**Mr. Neubert:** The Secretary of State for Defence holds land for defence purposes under the Defence Act 1842 and subsequent relevant legislation.

### Military Lands

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for increasing the land used for his Department on or near Salisbury plain.

**Mr Neubert:** No additional land is at present being purchased for the Salisbury plain training area although it remains our policy to acquire suitable land which becomes available. We also seek to make better training use of our existing freehold land by changes in present agricultural tenancy arrangements, and one such proposal in the Erlestoke area is at present under consideration.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all of the byelaws made by his Department under the Military Lands Act 1892 that are presently in force and place a copy of each set of byelaws in the Library.

**Mr. Neubert:** I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my hon. Friend, the Member for Kettering Mr. Freeman), on 18 May 1988 at column *509* and on 29 July 1988 at column *577-8*. The following byelaws have been made subsequently and remain in force:

The Lydd Camp and Lydd Ranges Byelaws, 1988
Royal Air Force Edzell Byelaws, 1988
Royal Air Force Welford Byelaws, 1988
Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton and Merryfield Airfield Byelaws, 1988

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list any byelaws made by his Department under the Military Lands Act 1892 that are proposed but are not yet in force and place a copy of each of these proposed byelaws in the Library, together with relevant maps.

**Mr. Neubert:** Currently, no byelaws have been made which are not yet in force.

### Spearfish

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he proposes to ensure that the Spearfish torpedo procurement is subjected to competitive tendering.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** A number of companies have expressed interest in participating in the forthcoming Spearfish torpedo main production order. We plan to issue invitations to tender to all interested companies later this year with a view to awarding the prime contract in 1990. We will announce the issue of the ITT in the MOD contracts bulletin to stimulate the maximum possible competition at sub-contractor level.

## Service Quarters (Woolwich)

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the 67 married quarters and civilian houses in the Woolwich area which he expects to offer for sale in the open market during the next 15 months.

**Mr. Neubert:** I shall write to the hon. Member.

## Woolwich Arsenal

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out *(a)* the establishment levels, and *(b)* the actual strength in each case of the main grades employed by the directorate general of defence quality assurance at Woolwich arsenal.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** At the end of February 1989 the directorate general of defence quality assurance employed 1,135 staff at the Royal arsenal, Woolwich, against a ceiling level of 1,250. The breakdown of the main grades was as follows:

| | *Staff strength* | *Staff ceiling* |
|---|---|---|
| Grades 3-6 | 14 | 14 |
| Professional and technical grades | 275 | 327 |
| Scientific grades | 145 | 152 |
| Executive grades | 59 | 61 |
| Administrative grades | 214 | 228 |
| Support grades | 45 | 45 |
| Other non-industrial grades | 85 | 91 |
| Industrial grades | 298 | 332 |

## Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out *(a)* the establishment levels, and *(b)* the actual strengths in each of the main grades employed at the atomic weapons research establishment, Aldermaston.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** It has been the policy of successive Governments not to reveal details of the staff employed at the atomic weapons establishment for reasons of national security.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Household Incomes

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside, (Mr. Blunkett), *Official Report*, 2 February, columns *359-60*, how many female-headed households, and what proportion of all female heads of households, fall into each band of equivalent income.

**Mr. Gummer:** Based on data contained in the Family expenditure survey, the distribution of female-headed households into bands of equivalent and actual net income is given below. A total of 26 per cent. of households in the sample are headed by females.

| | *Under 75* | *75-100* | *100-150* | *150-200* | *200-250* | *250-300* | *300-350* | *350-400* | *400-500* | *500+* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Net Income Range (£ per week)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female headed households in each band, as a percentage of all female headed households[1] | 43 | 15 | 17 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Number of female headed households (000's) | 2,810 | 780 | 885 | 555 | 310 | 160 | 75 | 55 | 45 | 15 |
| *Equivalent Net Income Range (£ per week)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female headed households in each band, as a percentage of all female headed households[1] | 10 | 29 | 34 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Number of female headed households[1] | 500 | 1,460 | 1,710 | 585 | 350 | 205 | 100 | 60 | 45 | 30 |

[1] Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

## Rating Reform

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each metropolitan county *(a)* the average rate per person and *(b)* the average community charge.

**Mr. Gummer:** Rates are a tax on property. The relevant measure of an average rate bill is the payment per property. An average per person, including children, would have little meaning. I have therefore provided in the table the average rate bill per household and the average illustrative community charge in each of the areas referred to. These figures are based on 1988-89 budgeted expenditure levels and are consistent with those published on 23 June 1988.

*Illustrative average community charge and rate bill in 1988-89*

| | *Average Rate Bill per property* | *Average Community Charge* |
|---|---|---|
| Greater Manchester | 466 | 254 |
| Merseyside | 512 | 268 |
| South Yorkshire | 405 | 286 |
| Tyne and Wear | 408 | 272 |
| West Midlands | 549 | 232 |
| West Yorkshire | 380 | 263 |

## Owner-occupiers (Grants)

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision has been made for owner-occupiers in need of repairs or maintenance to receive grants for such work from local authorities; and whether the system will operate on *(a)* a means-tested grant, *(b)* aid and *(c)* a loan basis.

**Mr. Trippier:** Part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Bill provides for a system of grants towards the cost of the repair and improvement of owner-occupied property, subject to a test of an applicant's resources. Details of the proposed test are given in the consultation

paper "Renovation Grants: Proposed Test of Resources" published by my Department on 9 January 1989, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision has been made for extra funding for local authorities in order that they may fulfil their obligation to owner-occupiers as outlined in the Housing Act 1988.

**Mr. Trippier:** Provision for local authority housing capital expenditure is decided annually in the light of the Government's overall expenditure priorities. Discussion son the 1990-91 public expenditure plans are at an early stage, and will take account of the provisions in the Housing Act 1988 and in the Local Government and Housing Bill, which reforms the home improvement grant system.

## Ozone Layer (Conference)

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the agenda for the forthcoming London conference on depletion of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere.

**Mr. Ridley:** The information requested is as follows:

SUNDAY 5 MARCH

10.00-10.30 Opening Ceremony with Keynote Address by His Excellency President Moi of Kenya.

11.00-12.10 Session 1: 'Setting the Scene'
The history of CFCs and halons.
Ozone layer science: the history; the current state of knowledge; the dangers to human and other life.
Speakers will include:
Dr. Maurice Verhille, Atochem, France.
Dr. F. S. Rowland, University of California.
Mr. Joseph Farman, British Antarctic Survey.
Dr. Robert Watson, NASA.
Dr. Mohammad Ilyas, University of Science of Malaysia.

12.10-12.45 Ministerial Discussion I
An opportunity for delegations to comment on the issues addressed during the Conference or to make brief statements.

14.15-15.15 Ministerial Discussion II

15.15-16.30 Session 2: 'The Response of World Industry'
Existing alternatives; new alternatives; conservation and recycling; the retailer's point of view; developing country aspects.
Speakers will include:
Dr. Peter Wallenberg, President, International Chamber of Commerce.
Dr. Archie Dunham, Group Vice President, Du Pont.
Mr. Denys Henderson, Chairman, ICI.
Dr. Kenji Sekido, Chief Engineer, Semiconductor Group, NEC
Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, Chairman, J. Sainsbury plc.
Sr. Alvaro Umana, Minister of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Costa Rica.

16.30-18.00 Ministerial Discussion III

18.30-20.00 Reception for all Delegates

MONDAY 6 MARCH

10.00-11.15 Session 3: 'Shared Awareness'
The implications of the Montreal Protocol process for signatories and non-signatories; the particular needs of developing countries and how to tackle them.
Speakers will include:
Mr. Kaj Barlund, Environment Minister, Finland.
Dr. Liu Ming Pu, Environment Commissioner, China.
Lic Patricio Chirinos, Minister of Ecology, Mexico.
Dr. R. Baxter, Chairman, Electrolux UK.
The Hon. W. Winegard, Minister for Science and Technology, Canada.

11.15-13.00 Ministerial Discussion IV

14.30-17.00 Ministerial Discussion V

17.00-18.00 Session 4: 'Our Common Purpose'
Synthesis of previous sessions and discussions; the way ahead.
Speakers will include:
The Rt. Hon. G. Palmer, Deputy Prime Minister and Environment Minister, New Zealand.
Dr. Istvan Lang, Secretary General, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
His Excellency Mr. Shridath Ramphal, Secretary General to the Commonwealth.
Dr. Martin Holdgate, Director General IUCN: Conference Rapporteur.

19.30 Dinner for Heads of Delegations.

TUESDAY 7 MARCH

10.00-11.00 Summing up by Chairman, the Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP.
Adoption of Final Message
Closing Ceremony
End of Conference

11.30-12.30 United Kingdom Press Conference.

Throughout Sunday 5 March and Monday 6 March there will be:
"Surgeries': an opportunity for delegates to meet and raise detailed questions with scientists and industrial experts.
Ozone layer protection exhibition.
Programme of video films

## Conservation (Cumbria)

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what financial assistance his Department has given to Cumbria county council for conservation measures since 1985; and for what specific purpose;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report*, the grants his Department gave to Cumbria county council for conservation measures between 1974 and 1979.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** A total of £5,883,990 in national parks supplementary grant has been allocated to Cumbria county council during the period 1985-86 to 1988-89. The corresponding figure for the period 1974-75 and 1978-79 is £2,556,699. In addition, conservation matters are reflected in the needs assessment of local authorities' rate support grant allocation. Authorities are free to determine their own priorities within the total sums available.

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants his Department has given to organisations in Cumbria for conservation measures, other than to Cumbria county council, since 1985.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** No direct grants have been paid.

## Land Reclamation (Cumbria)

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report*, the grants for land reclamation made to Cumbria county council between 1974 and 1979.

**Mr. Trippier:** Between 1974 and 1979 derelict land grant was paid to Cumbria county council as follows:

| Year | Grant paid |
|---|---|
| 1973-74 | n/a |
| 1974-75 | 277,532 |
| 1975-76 | 172,966 |
| 1976-77 | 289,032 |
| 1977-78 | 22,937 |
| 1978-79 | 205,824 |

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants have been made to Cumbria county council for land reclamation schemes since 1985.

**Mr. Trippier:** Since 1985 derelict land grant has been paid to Cumbria county council as follows:

| Year | Grant paid |
|---|---|
| 1984-85 | 3,463,669 |
| 1985-86 | 4,664,620 |
| 1986-87 | 1,435,692 |
| 1987-88 | 4,181,261 |
| 1988-89 | [1]2,800,000 |

[1] Estimate.

### Housing Associations

**Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now institute a code of conduct for the running of housing associations with standards which reflect equal opportunities, social justice, and a high level of service.

**Mr. Trippier:** The Housing Act 1988 gave the Housing Corporation the power to issue guidance to registered housing associations on the management of their housing. The corporation has powers to enforce such guidance, which it recently issued under the title "The Tenants' Guarantee". The document has received the statutory approval of my right hon. Friend and came into effect on 15 January. The 1988 Act also gave the Commission for Racial Equality the power to issue a code of practice on race relations in the field of rented housing. I understand that the Commission expects to consult on proposals shortly.

### Satellite Dishes

**Sir Geoffrey Finsberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether satellite dishes require planning permission in *(a)* conservation areas and *(b)* any other areas.

**Mr. Howard:** The General Development Order 1988 allows a single satellite dish to be installed without planning permission on or within the curtilage of any house provided the dish neither exceeds 90 cm in diameter nor projects above the highest point of the roof. The order allows up to two dishes on blocks of flats and commercial buildings, subject to conditions on size and siting, but in conservation areas, national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty this permission applies only to licensed code operators and not to the general public. Full details are in planning policy guidance note 8, a copy of which is in the Library. We are reviewing permitted development rights for telecommunications in the light of technological advances.

### Association of Councillors

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has *(a)* met the Association of Councillors since August 1988, *(b)* any plans to meet the Association of Councillors to discuss the Widdicombe report and *(c)* what representations he has received from the Association of Councillors since the publication of the Widdicombe report.

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* Neither I, nor my right hon. Friend have met the Association of Councillors to discuss the Widdicombe report, and we have no plans to do so. We have received a number of representations from the association since publication of the Widdicombe report in June 1986, including comments on that report, and on the Government's White Paper on the conduct of local authority business (Cm 433). The association has recently written to Ministers seeking representation on the three working groups which have been established with the local authority associations on the code of conduct and register of members interests, standing orders, and councillors' remuneration.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Pensions

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proportion of all pensioners have no income from any source other than from state benefits;

(2) what is his estimate of the numbers of pensioners with savings of *(a)* less than £500, *(b)* less than £1,000, *(c)* less than £3,000, *(d)* less than £6,000, *(e)* less than £10,000, *(f)* less than £20,000 and *(g)* £20,000 or over.

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the percentage of pensioners having an income below 80 per cent. of average earnings; and what was the corresponding figure in 1979.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** In 1986 just under 20 per cent. of all pensioner tax units[1] received income only from state benefits, compared with 24 per cent. in 1979.

I regret that information on levels of pensioner savings is not available in the form requested. In 1986 however approximately 70 per cent. of pensioner tax units[1] had income from savings.

In 1986 approximately 85 per cent. of pensioner tax units[1] had a total gross income below 80 per cent. of average male manual earnings. The corresponding figure in 1979 was 88 per cent.

[1] A pensioner tax unit is a single person of pensionable age, or a married couple where the man is of pensionable age.

*Source:* Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

### Fraud

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many investigators are employed by his Department in Scotland in the detection of fraud; what was the sum recovered in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what number of staff he expects to be employed on this work in each of the next three years.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** There are 344 such investigators. In 1987-88 benefit savings achieved on anti-fraud work amounted to £196 million in Great Britain, of which £18·16 million was in relation to Scotland. The levels of

staff over the next three years will remain fairly constant subject to procedural changes and the actual levels of fraud activity found.

### Disability Benefit

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons are receiving disability benefit in the Doncaster and Mexborough areas of South Yorkshire during the present financial year; and how many were receiving it in 1978-79 and 1983-84.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The only information available was given in my reply to the hon. Member on 22 February at columns *676-78*.

### Household Income

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures in the same manner as the 1986 family expenditure survey, tables 27 and 31, for inner London showing *(a)* the proportion of households whose gross normal weekly income falls into various income bands and *(b)* the source of income.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** It is not possible to provide information for inner London as the sample size is too small to allow statistically reliable estimates.

### Occupational Pensions

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to respond to the report of the Occupational Pensions Board on the subject of the protection of pensioners in mergers and takeovers.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** When he published the report by the Occupational Pensions Board called "Protecting Pensions" on 1 February, my right hon. Friend announced at columns *295-96* that we were launching a three-month consultation exercise on the basis of the report. Future decisions will be taken in the light of responses to the consultation exercise.

### Housing Benefit

**Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to postpone the closing date for receipt of applications for housing benefit transitional payments.

**Mr. Scott:** In view of the number of applications for housing benefit transitional payments which continue to be received and to ensure the maximum take-up of these awards, we have decided to extend the closing date for receipt of applications by a full three months from 31 March 1989 to 30 June 1989. We have also decided to set the same date of 30 June 1989 as the cut-off date for receipt of applications for income support transitional payments which are being paid by the central unit in Glasgow to certain former supplementary benefit recipients who were disentitled to income support last April.

### Families with Children

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of total Government support for families with children, at constant prices, in each year since 1970.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information available is as follows:

*£ million*

| | *Cash* | *Real (1988-89 prices)* |
|---|---|---|
| 1974-75 | 1,855 | 7,246 |
| 1975-76 | 2,169 | 6,743 |
| 1976-77 | 2,604 | 7,155 |
| 1977-78 | 2,426 | 5,855 |
| 1978-79 | 3,092 | 6,741 |
| 1979-80 | 3,640 | 6,790 |
| 1980-81 | 3,965 | 6,245 |
| 1981-82 | 4,675 | 6,703 |
| 1982-83 | 5,400 | 7,226 |
| 1983-84 | 6,140 | 7,859 |
| 1984-85 | 6,600 | 8,114 |
| 1985-86 | 7,210 | 8,334 |
| 1986-87 | 7,620 | 8,523 |
| 1987-88 | 8,206 | 8,719 |
| 1988-89 | 8,579 | 8,579 |

*Note*

Benefits include child benefit, one parent benefit, child tax allowances, additional personal tax allowance (lone parent) family income supplement, family credit, maternity grant, maternity allowance, statutory allowance, social fund and supplementary allowance, income support and housing benefit (including rate rebates) paid to one-parent families and to people looking after elderly persons.

## HEALTH

### Food Poisoning

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in England and Wales have in the last five years suffered from food poisoning where the source of the illness has been attributed to the consumption of raw milk.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 9 February at column *808*.

### Overseas Visitors

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are made through the National Health Service for the emergency and routine health care of visitors to the United Kingdom who stay *(a)* less than six months and *(b)* six months or more.

**Mr. Mellor:** Under the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations, visitors who have resided in the United Kingdom for less than one year normally have to pay for hospital treatment. Some visitors and some services are exempted and no charge is made for treatment at a hospital accident and emergency department, casualty department, or dental and ophthalmic emergency department.

Visitors may use general medical services at any time but practitioners have discretion to accept them as private or as National Health Service patients.

### Goat's Milk Cheese

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding health problems associated with goat's cheese, if they referred to British or imported varieties; and if they were from pasteurised or unpasteurised milk.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Confirmed reports to the public health laboratory service show that in England and Wales there have been two incidents of health problems associated with goat's cheese. In 1980, salmonella typhimurium was isolated from an imported soft goat's cheese. It is not known whether the milk used was pasteurised. In 1988 there was a case of listeriosis associated with the consumption of a United Kingdom-produced goat's milk cheese. In this case, the milk was heated beyond pasteurisation temperature during the manufacturing process.

### Cryptosporidia

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the response of the Swindon health authority to the possible threat to the public water supply in the Swindon area from the oganism cryptosporidia.

**Mr. Freeman:** Swindon health authority's examinations for cryptosporidia organisms of stool specimens submitted by hospitals or general practitioners, of children under 10 years of age, have identified about 10 positive cases per year. By the end of the second week of January 1989 it was apparent that an unusually high number of positive cases was being found, a common source was sought and screening was extended.

On 14 February the Thames water authority was contacted, and a distribution map of water sources was immediately supplied from which the health authority was able with additional information from the Oxford health authority, to correlate the cases with water supplies from the Farmoor treatment works. The evidence was passed to the water authority on 17 February. On 20 February the water authority, in conjunction with the Swindon and Oxford health authorities, advised the public to take precautionary measures including the boiling of water for one minute before use by young children under two and immuno-compromised people.

### Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Counsellors

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the district health authorities within the Trent regional health authority who employ full-time specialist sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia counsellors.

**Mr. Freeman:** Nottingham health authority employs one specialist nurse counsellor on sickle cell disease and plans to extend the service to thalassaemia in June 1989. Elsewhere in the region counselling on both sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia is provided by the relevant clinician haematologist, geneticist, obstetrician or paediatrician, or the patient's practitioner.

### NHS Spending

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total Health Service expenditure per head of population in England and Wales for each of the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** The total health service expenditure per head of population in England in 1986-87 was £339 and in 1987-88 was £371. Information about health service expenditure in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

### National Health Service Beds

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of staffed National Health Service beds in England and Wales per 1,000 people.

**Mr. Freeman:** During the financial year 1987-88, there were on average 6·3 available National Health Service beds per thousand population in England. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

### Wakefield Family Practitioners Committee

**Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice his Department has given to the Wakefield family practitioners committee on the consultative procedure to consider the strategic statement prepared by that body; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the length of time allowed for individuals and organisations to consider the proposals in the strategic statement published by the Wakefield family practitioners committee.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Department issued guidance to family practitioners committees in April 1988 on the preparation of strategic statements. Family practitioners committees were not given detailed instructions on consultation procedures but were asked to arrange appropriate local consultations before submitting their statements to the Department by 30 September 1988.

### Ambulance Staff

**Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish the report commissioned by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security in 1981, and submitted in 1985, on serving ambulance staff; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce an extensive health strategy for ambulance staff.

**Mr. Freeman:** We intend giving the contents of the final report of the working party on the problems of long serving ambulance men and women careful consideration when it is submitted to Ministers. This will include a decision about publication, and any action to be taken upon any recommendations relating to the health of ambulance staff.

### Friarage Hospital, Northallerton

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has already been spent on the first phase of the development of the Friarage hospital, Northallerton; and what is his latest estimate of the start date for the next phase and of the cost of phase II and phase III.

**Mr. Freeman:** Construction of phase I of the development of Friarage hospital was completed in September 1986 at a total cost, including fees and equipment, of £8·5 million. The latest estimate the Department has on phase II is a start date of May 1989 at a total cost of £4·3 million and for phases III and IV together a provisional start in 1992-93 at a total cost of £7·1 million.

My hon. Friend may, however, wish to contact the Northallerton health authority for the latest information available.

### Mowbray Grange Hospital, Bedale

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to visit the Mowbray Grange hospital at Bedale.

**Mr. Freeman:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for a visit.

### Artificial Limbs

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the budgets for the artificial limb service in 1989 and 1990.

**Mr. Freeman:** These are the matters for the disablement services authority, to which the right hon. Member may care to address questions.

### London Ambulance Service

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to improve *(a)* the response times to emergency calls and *(b)* the general punctiliousness of the London ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** Detailed questions relating to the management of the London ambulance service should be addressed to the managing authority, the South West Thames regional health authority. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the authority, Mrs. Julia Cumberlege.

## ENERGY

### Acid Rain

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the proportion of *(a)* private and *(b)* business electricity accounts received by consumers which will represent the cost of stopping emissions of acid rain from power stations; and as to when this charge will commence.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The Central Electricity Generating Board's successor generating companies will endeavour to recover the costs of flue gas desulphurisation plant through their contracts, which are a matter for commercial negotiation between the generators and their customers.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Electromagnetic Radiation

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies his Department has undertaken to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on plant life.

**Mr. Ryder:** None.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies his Department has undertaken to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on animal life.

**Mr. Ryder:** None.

### Potatoes

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of the representations that he has received on the future of the Potato Marketing Board.

**Mr. Ryder:** Representations received from interested organisations and individual producers on the proposals set out in the consultation paper on future potato market policy are being treated as confidential. However, the Potato Marketing Board, the National Farmers Union, the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the Potato Processors Association and the potato growers action group have made their views public, and copies of their representations have been placed in the Library.

### Research

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates or figures he has for additional funds from industry and non-governmental agencies being available for near market research for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

**Mr. Ryder:** My Department does not collect figures on total Research and Development expenditure by the agriculture and food industries. Private sector expenditure at public sector research and development agencies covering these sectors was £10·8 million in 1987-88 and £12·6 million in 1988-89.

### Strychnine

**Dr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether his Department has any information relating to human fatalities resulting from strychnine poisoning from agricultural and related uses;

(2) what controls exist on the stockpiling, or sale of substances containing strychnine;

(3) whether any restrictions or licensing arrangements are placed on individuals who use substances approved by his Department for agricultural use which contain strychnine;

(4) what evidence his Department has of the incidence of fatal poisoning of wild animals or birds by substances containing strychnine;

(5) whether his Department has instituted any proceedings within the last three years in respect of the misuse of strychnine;

(6) what information his Ministry has concerning the poisoning of animals either deliberately or accidentally by the misuse of substances containing strychnine;

(7) what guidance his Ministry issues on the purposes for which strychnine is considered to be an appropriate substance;

(8) if he will list those substances approved for use by his Department which contain strychnine;

(9) what information his Department has about the incidence of poisoning of domestic pets by substances containing strychnine; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ryder:** The sale of strychnine is controlled by the poisons rules, 1982. As a pesticide the substance also falls within the scope of part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act, 1985 and the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 (COPR) which allow its use.

The Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act, 1927 allows the placing of poison against small ground vermin, where it is necessary in the interests of public health, agriculture, or the preservation of other animals, domestic or wild, or for the purpose of manuring the land. Its only permitted use in agriculture, under the Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962 is to control moles.

MAFF guidance reflects the above and advises that strychnine hydrochloride and strychnine sulphate, but not strychnine alkaloid, are suitable for use in mole control.

In the last three years there have been no known cases of harm to people arising from agricultural and related uses of strychnine.

The use of all pesticides is prohibited unless the conditions of a Ministers' consent are followed. The latest consent to use (C)(i)) was published in the gazettes on 20 January 1989. The conditions applicable to the use of strychnine require employers to provide instruction and guidance to employees; forbid use unless the user has had adequate instructions and guidance in the safe, efficient and humane use of the pesticide and is competent for the duties to be performed; and places on the user the obligation to the take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of people and creatures and to safeguard the environment. We expect all farmers to keep proper records of all the pesticide treatments they apply.

Inexcusably, strychnine has been used illegally in attempts to kill birds of prey, foxes, badgers and victims have included pets and working dogs. In the last three calendar years the number of cases in England of abuse of pesticides involving strychnine identified by the Minister's wildlife incident investigation scheme were 10 in 1986, seven in 1987, and eight in 1988. Of these, the number of cases involving harm to wildlife were three in 1986, three in 1987 and two in 1988 and the numbers affecting dogs were seven in 1986, four in 1987 and six in 1988.

The agricultural departments investigate such cases thoroughly. With the advent of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, in the last three calendar years my Department initiated one successful prosecution. This was taken under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. We urge the public to provide evidence, and at the earliest opportunity, as without it prosecutions cannot be undertaken.

Strychnine has been tightly controlled since before the Control of Pesticides Regulations came into effect and is subject to the general statutory requirement that it should be used safely. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food issues sales authorities for England. Farmers are allowed to buy only enough for one treatment at a time. Contractors and certain organisations are allowed to buy enough for foreseeable needs. Stockpiling of strychnine by users should not occur.

Storage for immediate use by users is controlled under the Control of Pesticides Regulations and only skilled users of the substance are authorised.

## Bees

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what EEC assistance, in the form of cheap intervention sugar for feeding bees in winter, the bee industry has received for each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** There has been no EC assistance in the United Kingdom in the form of cheap intervention sugar for feeding bees in winter, but over the last 10 years the amounts shown have been paid as a denaturing premium for white sugar for feeding to bees, and as an aid to beekeepers associations for the purchase of feeding sugar or for improvement programmes.

| *Year* | *Denaturing premium* £ | *Aid to beekeepers associations* £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 5,670 | — |
| 1980 | 36,817 | — |
| 1981 | — | 98,284 |
| 1982 | — | 81,912 |
| 1983 | — | 88,806 |
| 1984 to 1988 | — | — |

## Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** My Ministry has an IT strategy comprising a wide range of projects and investments over the next five years. Some aspects of the strategy, particularly those related to the introduction of integrated office support systems, will make positive contributions to the improvement of internal communications. The strategy is reviewed annually primarily to ensure that it continues to represent good value for money and remains consistent with business objectives and priorities. However, that review process also examines current technical strategies and policies in light of amongst other things, the opportunities offered by new proven technology.

## Suckler Cow Premium

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present level of the suckler cow premium; what is the maximum level permitted under current European Community rules; and when he expects to make an announcement of its future level.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** The rate of suckler cow premium applicable in the United Kingdom in the 1988 scheme year was £33.40 per head. The maximum rate of paremium payable in 1989 under revised Community rules is £46.18 per head. The Government are currently considering what rate of premium should apply in the United Kingdom and will make an announcement in good time before the start of the 1989 scheme year on 15 June.

## Hens

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of *(a)* laying flocks and *(b)* breeding flocks of hens in England and Wales.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** At the June 1988 agricultural census the number of holdings in England and Wales with laying fowls was 34,099. The number of holdings with breeding fowls was 10,118.

Very small holdings, which make only occasional returns, are excluded from these figures.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* breeding flocks and *(b)* laying flocks of hens he intends to monitor for salmonella in the next (i) three months and (ii) year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I shall shortly be introducing secondary legislation under the Animal Health Act 1981 requiring owners or persons in charge of breeding, rearing or laying flocks and hatcheries to monitor their flocks for salmonella and to make records of the results of monitoring available on request to my officials. Positive identifications of salmonella are compulsorily reportable under the Zoonoses Order 1989. This obligation will extend to any positive test results in the course of monitoring.

## Poultry (Salmonella)

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each of the 17 measures he has taken to control salmonella in poultry since December 1988; which powers he has used to take these measures; and whether he has created new regulations, in each case.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** The measures, many of which are already in operation, which have been taken to achieve our objective of reducing to an absolute minimum the problem of salmonella are as follows:

(1) Powers have already been taken by means of an order under the Animal Health Act 1981 to stop the supply of products from protein processing plants where salmonella is found

(2) The rate of inspections of protein processing plants by MAFF officials was doubled in December 1988 from 10 days to 20 days in every year.

(3) An amendment to the Diseases of Animals Protein Processing Order 1981 is to be introduced requiring protein processors to take samples from each day's production and notify MAFF of the results.

(4) New more rigorous licensing controls are being introduced under the Importation of Processed Animal Protein Order 1981 for animal protein imported from those countries with a poor record of salmonella-contaminated exports.

(5) The Zoonoses Order 1989 (made under section 29 of the Animal Health Act 1981), which came into operation on 1 March, provides for the compulsory slaughter where necessary of laying flocks in which salmonella has been confirmed. Compensation will be paid as required under provisions of the Act.

(6) Another order will be made shortly under section 1 of the Animal Health Act 1981 providing for the compulsory bacteriological monitoring of all poultry laying flocks.

(7) Following on from the requirements to monitor further measurees will be introduced under the Animal Health Act 1981 covering the registration of breeding and laying flocks and the registration and monitoring of hatcheries.

(8) Restrictions are being imposed under the powers in the Zoonoses Order 1989 on sales of eggs for human consumption when invasive salmonellae are found in laying flocks and restrictions will be imposed on sales of poultry and hatching eggs when invasive salmonella are found in breeding flocks.

(9) Provisions on compulsory cleansing and disinfection of laying houses are to be applied where disease has been isolated.

(10) There will be new statutory requirements for the hygienic handling of eggs. The powers will be taken in the order covering registration of breeding and laying flocks and hatcheries.

(11) Present control measures applicable to rodents will be strengthened under the new statutory requirements on monitoring to further minimise the risk of spread of salmonella.

(12) An education campaign in the hygienic handling of food in the home is underway.

(13 to 16) Codes of practice have already been introduced for:

commercial laying flocks
poultry breeders and hatcheries (poultry health scheme members)
poultry breeders and hatcheries (non-members)
broilers

(17) Guidelines for the control of salmonella in the production of final feed for livestock have been introduced, to be followed shortly by a more detailed code of practice; there will also be a similar code for the production of animal protein.

None of these changes requires new primary legislation. New secondary legislation has already been introduced in respect of items 1 and 5 and will be required for items 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11 which will be introduced as soon as possible.

## Press Releases

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many times in 1988 he consulted outside organisations about the content of press releases prior to their publication; and if he will make a statement.

(2) which organisations he consults prior to publishing press releases; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Normally, outside organisations are only advised on the content of Ministry press notices in advance when the notice refers to specific actions involving the organisation(s) concerned.

## Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to alter the number of persons employed by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service on research and development.

**Mr. Ryder:** The outcome of my noble Friend's consultations with industry on the funding for near-market research will be an important factor in determining the future staffing levels of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service on research and development. I shall keep the House informed of decisions taken to adapt our research facilities and staffing to the policy on near-market research.

## Gleadthorpe Farm, Warsop

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what level of establishment he plans to maintain at Gleadthorpe Farm research establishment near Warsop, Nottinghamshire; and what plans he has to ensure that the work it does into poultry research will continue.

**Mr. Ryder:** The future level of establishment at experimental husbandry farms will depend on the extent to which industry takes up the funding of near market research. My noble Friend will be having further consultations soon concerning this matter with the organisations concerned.

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, and Food if he will give permission for journalists to visit Gleadthorpe Farm research establishment.

**Mr. Ryder:** Journalists wishing to visit Gleadthorpe EHF or other Agricultural Development and Advisory Service establishments should, in the first instance, put their request to the Ministry's press office. All such requests are looked at sympathetically.

### Food Additives

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether his Department has a comprehensive list of all food additives including flavourings and colours at present in use in Britain;

(2) if he will provide an estimate of the number of food additives including flavourings and colours at present in use in Britain.

**Mr. Ryder:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 24 February 1989 at column *853*.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Visas (Eastern Europe

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that there will be sufficient consular provisions for the summer of 1989 to cater for expected visa requests from proposed visitors from eastern Europe to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office operates a programme of additional summer relief officers to reinforce our posts in eastern Europe during periods of peak demand.

### Iran

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his current assessment of relations with Iran.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's statement in the House on 21 February.

### Chile

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about encouraging the transition to democracy in Chile.

**Mr. Eggar:** We have regular discussions on developments in Chile with the United States Administration, as we do with our European partners. All of us continue to encourage an orderly and peaceful transition to democracy in that country.

### Relocation

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet executives of Nottingham development enterprise to discuss the relocation of parts of his Department to Nottingham as part of the policy on the relocation of such posts away from the south-east.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Under the policy which my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced on 31 March 1988, the foreign and Commonwealth Office is now reviewing the location of its work with a view to finding sites offering labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Where appropriate, areas which are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies, such as Nottingham, will be considered. There are no plans at present to relocate parts of the diplomatic and aid wings of the FCO to Nottingham.

### Apartheid

**Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made or proposes to make, alone or in co-operation with European Community partners, to the South African Government about the effects of the audit and inspection provisions of the Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill on bilateral and European Community programmes to assist the victims of apartheid.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 1 February. Since then, we have made clear to the South African Government our serious concern about certain features of the draft Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill, including its wide information-gathering provisions. We have had no reason to challenge the draft Bill's provisions regarding audit.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mrs Chalker:** The IT strategies of each wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office directly support the Department's business aims and objectives. Particular attention is paid to securing value for money from new technology by using IT tools and systems that meet Government and international standards.

In 1987 a new automated message handling system was introduced into the FCO communications centre to speed up the transmission and receipt of messages between the FCO and its overseas missions.

Since 1983 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has invested significantly in computerised financial and personnel management systems to enhance efficiency of resource use and to measure more effectively the results of its activities. Six such systems serving about 300 work stations are in operation. Overseas about 130 posts have standard IT systems in support of our commercial, information, consular, aid and administrative activities. The bulk of these are standard systems which will be upgraded to meet the newly emerging standards over the next two to three years.

The future needs at home for secure office automation in the diplomatic wing are the subject of a current £4·5 million turnkey development contract. If the evaluation of this pilot scheme proves satisfactory, proposals for substantial investment in this area will be scrutinised

against the background of the Department's business objectives, cost benefit analysis and other operational considerations.

A separate office automation pilot is in progress in the aid wing. This makes use of a separate message handling switch providing, combined telex, facsimile and electronic mail facilities. If successful it will be extended to integrate more closely ODA's three United Kingdom sites and five overseas development divisions.

The FCO will be making use of the electronic news distribution service to forward press notices via the Central Office of Information to the press.

Other enhancements have included the widespread introduction of facsimile and automated telephone exchanges in overseas posts and the provision of abreviated telephone dialling facilities from FCO departments in both wings to almost all overseas missions.

There is currently an ongoing development for the introduction of IT-based secure communications systems between the FCO and its overseas missions. Within the next 12 months up to 12 missions should receive this eqipment thereby speeding up the handling of information between London and posts overseas.

## Cyprus

**Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with Mr. Vassiliou; and when he intends to meet Mr. Denktash.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed with President Vassiliou on 1 March progress in the intercommunal talks. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I followed up those discussions in our meeting with him on 2 March. We encouraged Mr. Vassiliou to continue to negotiate constructively towards a settlement of the Cyprus problem.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet Mr. Denktash. We shall be urging Mr. Denktash to take a similarly constructive attitude to the search for a settlement.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 6 March 1989*

## WALES

### Rates

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average rate per adult in Wales in 1988-89.

**Mr. Grist:** The average domestic rate bill per adult in Wales in 1988-89 is £156.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Seafarers (Taxation)

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the extent to which the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands are contemplating following the example of the Danish and Swedish Governments in making special arrangements to reduce the burden of personal income tax and social security payments by or on behalf of their national seafarers so as to improve the competitive position of their merchant fleets in international trade; and if he has any plans to follow their example.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** The information that we have is as follows.

In 1988 the Netherlands Government distributed NFl 50 million (£12,500,000) to shipowners in proportion to the tax and social security payments that they remitted. The Netherlands Council of Ministers has approved a proposal to reduce by 35 per cent. the taxable income of seafarers employed by shipping companies whose ships fly the Netherlands flag. If this proposal is enacted, companies will from 1 January 1990 be entitled to withhold from seamen's wages the amount of tax and social security thus saved, while employees' after-tax position will remain unchanged.

I understand that the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany has agreed a Bill to establish a second German register for ships in international trade, the intention being that foreign seafarers not resident in the Federal Republic of Germany would be paid at rates agreed by the trade union of their native country.

On the final part of the question, I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

### Public Service Pensions

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of the number of widows of post-retirement marriages with public servants contracted after 6 April 1978 who receive a pension in respect of their late husband's service; and what is the average amount received.

**Mr. Brooke:** I regret that the information required is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### VAT

**Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether, pursuant to the reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *548*, to the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), he has received any recent representations about the timetable for the imposition of value added tax on non-domestic construction and property;

(2) what discussions he has had with representative bodies in the construction industry about the proposed commencement date of 1 April 1989 for the extension of value added tax to non-domestic construction; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lilley:** I have received a number of letters on this subject since 6 February. I met the joint taxation committee of the Building Employers Confederation and other construction industry trade bodies on 16 February. I told the committee that there was to be no change in the commencement dates I announced on 6 February following an extensive period of consultation.

**Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate when Her Majesty's Customs and Excise plans to publish guidance literature on the proposed extension of value added tax to non-domestic constructon; and what steps are being taken to see that traders affected by the new rules receive that literature sufficiently before the proposed start date for the new regime.

**Mr. Lilley:** The guidance for building contractors is now available in local VAT offices. That for property developers and landlords is expected to be available during the week ending 17 March. All the trade bodies have known about the main changes since 21 June 1988 and they have had the draft legislation since 6 February. They have thus had ample time to inform their members accordingly. In addition Customs and Excise has referred to the changes in "VAT Notes" (No. 2) 1988-89 and will do so again in "VAT Notes" (No. 1) 1989-90. "VAT Notes" goes to every registered trader with the VAT return and will alert traders to the further guidance available from local VAT offices.

### Workplace Nurseries

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list all pre-Budget representations that have been received on the taxation of workplace nurseries.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a small number of representations.

### Data Network

**Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the Government data network and on the Government's plans for the future management of its voice and data traffic.

**Mr. Brooke:** After trials in January the initial phase of the Government data network has been accepted. It was implemented at 178 Customs and Excise sites throughout the United Kingdom on 20 January and is now in daily use.

The Government will now be considering the future strategy for Government voice and data traffic as a whole. An interdepartmental collaborative study, led by Her Majesty's Treasury, has been set up to identify possible options for aggregating Government voice traffic and integrating voice and data traffic. Ministers will receive a report of the study in about six months' time and will announce their conclusions, in the light of the study, in due course.

The study will be undertaken by a project team involving Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, the Department of Employment, the Home Office, the Inland Revenue, the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Department of Social Security in conjunction with Her Majesty's Treasury's central computer and telecommunications agency. Consultancy support for the project team will be provided by Kermon Associates Ltd. and PA Consulting Group, and a third consultancy firm will be chosen to provide independent quality assurance.

### Excise Duties (Revalorisation)

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be *(a)* the revenue yield and *(b)* the impact on the retail prices index of revalorisation of excise duties at (i) the present rate of inflation and (ii) the present rate of inflation less the mortgage component of inflation.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* Estimates are as follows:

| | *Net revenue yield 1989-90 £ million* | *RPI impact effect Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| (i) Present rate of inflation (January 1989 RPI) | 1,350 | 0·51 |
| (ii) Present rate of inflation less mortgage components | 995 | 0·38 |

### Premium Bonds

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Government pay banks and post offices for their involvement in the selling of premium bonds.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* In 1987-88 banks, including Girobank, were paid a total of £2 million for their involvement in the selling of premium bonds. In addition, Post Office Counters Ltd. was paid a composite fee for servicing National Savings products. The premium bond element cannot be separately identified.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Leo Alexandrovskey

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the British Government have made to the Russian authorities about their continued failure to grant an exit visa to Leo Alexandrovskey of Leningrad who first applied for such a visa in 1978.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The case of Lev Aleksandrovsky has only very recently been brought to our attention by my hon. Friend. We are now including it among those cases on which we consistently press the Soviet authorities.

### Angola (Weapons)

**Sir Ian Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the levels, quantities and types of Cuban and Soviet military equipment recently introduced into Angola; and what assessment he has made of the implications of this information for Her Majesty's Government's policy of supporting the United Nations embargo on the supply of weapons to South Africa.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We have no reliable information to provide about recent Cuban and Soviet military supplies to Angola but are encouraged by Cuba's commitment to withdraw all its troops from Angola within 27 months from 1 April 1989 and the deployment of the United Nations Angola verification mission (UNAVEM) to verify this. We remain fully committed to the United Nations arms embargo on South Africa.

### Israeli-occupied Territory

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a copy of the United States State Department report regarding human rights abuses in the Israeli-occupied territories to be *(a)* made available to interested Members and *(b)* deposited in the Library.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I am arranging for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Eggar:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Race Relations

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Government have decided not to uprate the grant for the Commission for Racial Equality in line with inflation.

**Mr. John Patten:** Subject to parliamentary approval of the supply estimates, the Commission for Racial Equality's grant-in-aid provision for 1989-90—£11,440,000—will meet in full the commission's bid for additional expenditure.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Home Office makes increasing use of information technology, where this offers the best value for money, to help meet its business objectives. Developments in information technology and their application to the Department's business needs are kept under review, and the newest technologies are applied where these provide cost-effective solutions.

### Police Custody (Deaths)

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all deaths in police custody since 1979, giving the date and cause of death, the age and sex in each case, the location of police custody at the time of death and the inquest verdict.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Information on deaths in police custody for the years 1980-87 is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary and of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the years in question. Copies of these may be found in the Library. It was not the practice to compile figures relating to deaths in police custody before 1980 and information for 1979 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about deaths which occurred last year will appear in the 1988 reports, and these will be published shortly.

### Non-animal Testing (Grants)

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for grant have been received by the animal procedures committee under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 for funds for research into non-animal testing techniques in 1988-89 and 1989-90; how many grants were given; to whom; and for what purposes.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Of 124 applications received for Home Office research grants it was decided to fund four, following recommendations from the Animal Procedures Committee:

Dr. P. A. Botham and Dr. G. J. A. Oliver, ICI Central Toxicology Laboratory.
"Validation of an enucleated eye model".

Dr. A. F. Bristow and Dr. S. Poole, National Institute for Biological Standards and Control.
"Assay of Pyrogens measuring lymphokine production in vitro".

Dr. A. Robinson, Public Health Laboratory Service.
"Alternative potency tests for cellular pertussis".

Dr. R. M. Stagg, now at Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Scotland.
"Fish cell culture for toxicity assessment".

In addition, the Home Office has commissioned an investigation into antibody production and is supporting international work on acute toxicity testing aimed at further reducing the need for formal LD50 tests.

No applications have been sought or received for funding in 1989-90 whilst consideration is being given to the possibility of commissioning work in particular areas of concern.

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the grant made to the animal procedures committee under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to commission research into non-animal testing techniques in 1988-89; and whether he will announce the grant for 1989-90.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Home Office grants for research to reduce the number and severity of experiments on living animals in 1988-89 totalled £70,000. We have sought provision for 1989-90 of £120,000.

### Electronic Surveillance

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the companies which have tendered for pilot bail projects using electronic surveillance; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John Patten:** No companies have yet tendered. Invitations to tender will be sent shortly.

### Football (Offences)

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many exclusion orders have been granted against persons convicted of a football-related offence in *(a)* the Merseyside police area, *(b)* the Tyneside police area, *(c)* the Birmingham police area and *(d)* the Greater Manchester police area since 1 July 1987.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The exclusion order provisions of the Public Order Act 1986 came into force on 1 August 1987. I understand from the chief officers of police concerned that the information for their force areas since then is as follows:

*(a)* Merseyside—56;
*(b)* Northumbria—3;
*(c)* West Midlands—150;
*(d)* Greater Manchester—113.

### Blasphemy

**Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to seek the advice of the hierarchy of the Church of England on reform of the law on blasphemy.

**Mr. John Patten:** We have noted the views of the group set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury to consider the Law Commission's recommendations for reform of the law of blasphemy, but we have no plans for any such reform.

### Remand Statistics

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown by race on the most recent convenient date, of the prisoners held in the following remand establishments: Ashford, Chelmsford, Feltham, Latchmere House, Norwich and Rochester.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The readily available information is given in the table. Ashford was not open on 30 September 1988.

*Population[1] of selected prison service establishments on 30 September 1988: by ethnic origin*

*Number[2]*

| *Establishment* | *White* | *West Indian, Guyanese, African* | *Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi* | *Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin* | *Other, not recorded refusal* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chelmsford local prison | 326 | 53 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 398 |
| Feltham remand centre | 249 | 107 | 12 | 20 | 36 | 424 |
| Latchmere House | 68 | 59 | 23 | 11 | 12 | 173 |
| Norwich remand centre | 54 | 1 | — | 1 | 4 | 60 |
| Norwich local prison | 193 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 16 | 223 |
| Rochester remand centre | 147 | 43 | 4 | 2 | 16 | 212 |

[1] Including sentenced and non-criminal prisoners.
[2] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate.

## Erotica

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the strip show currently being transmitted on Super channel, which originates from Italian television station Rete Mia, is subjected to approval of the Broadcasting Standards Authority; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what powers the Cable Authority has to ban transmissions of an erotic nature from being carried out on cable networks; whether it is his intention to exempt satellite television operators from such a restriction; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Renton:** The Cable Authority is under a statutory obligation to ensure that programmes on cable do not offend good taste and decency. If, in the authority's opinion, a programme fails to meet these standards, it may give a direction excluding it from a licensed station and as an ultimate sanction has the power to revoke a licence.

Most satellite services uplinked from abroad are received in the United Kingdom on cable and are regulated by the Cable Authority. Paragraphs 7.12-7.14 of our recent White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s; Competition, Choice and Quality" set out our proposals to safeguard against the possible future development of unacceptable satellite services not taken on cable.

The terms of reference of the Broadcasting Standards Council require it to monitor and report on the portrayal of violence and sex and standards of taste and decency in television and radio programmes received in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on whether the Italian television station Rete Mia, currently transmitting a strip show to the United Kingdom on Super channel, has plans to extend such transmissions via a Sky television transponder and a channel on the second Astra satellite; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Renton:** None.

## Mr. J. Garfinkle

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what compensation has been paid by the Metropolitan police to Mr. J. Garfinkle of 110 Dirleton road, London E16; what was the justification for the payment; and to what incident it related.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Mr. Garfinkle was arrested on suspicion of possessing a controlled drug but was released without being charged. In a civil action claiming damages for assault; wrongful arrest and unlawful detention he was awarded compensation of £1,532·50p by the court.

## Raja Shahid Mahmoud

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Raja Shahid Mahmoud, Ref: TN4/IS81/161/2/889, was detained on arrival in the United Kingdom; whether he possessed a valid visa to visit the United Kingdom; where he was detained; whether he has been released from detention; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Renton:** Raja Mahmoud held a valid visit visa when he arrived on 13 February. He was detained under the authority of an immigration officer pending further examination, and pending a decision to grant or refuse him leave to enter. Raja Mahmoud was detained at Harmondsworth until 3 March when he was refused entry and released on temporary admission. He has a right of appeal exercisable before removal.

## Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what allowance he has made in his Department's budget for each of the next five years to provide for the substitution of HCFC 22 for chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants covered by the Montreal protocol; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The cost of replacing refrigerants over the next five years will be contained within planned maintenance budgets.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## Magisterial Officers

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if approval has been sought for the

payment of grant for the purposes of authorising the pay award to magisterial officers for 1988 following Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service arbitration in January; when such approval is likely to be given; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he anticipates the pay award to all magisterial officers for 1988 will be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* The management side of the joint negotiating committee for magistrates courts staff has sought confirmation that grant will be paid on the recent arbitration award.

We hope to provide a response very shortly, taking into account recruitment and retention problems.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps she has taken to ensure the use of chlorofluorocarbons in food and other packaging in refrigerator units in Government buildings and in research stations operated on behalf of the Government is halted as soon as possible.

**The Prime Minister:** As I informed the hon. Member on 25 January at column *568*, Government Departments have been asked to review their policies, specifications and practices with a view to promoting the objective of reducing use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and halons to the maximum possible extent. The Government's policies are aimed at ensuring that production and consumption of CFCs, whether in the public or the private sector, are eliminated as quickly as possible, and that all possible steps are taken to minimise emissions of CFCs currently in use.

### Lead-free Petrol

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will initiate a study to evaluate the total cost of converting *(a)* all ministerial and departmental cars and *(b)* all vehicles operated by Her Majesty's armed forces to lead-free petrol use.

**The Prime Minister:** No. The Crown Suppliers (a trading fund of the Property Services Agency) who supply vehicles to various Government Departments and manage the ministerial fleet through the Government car service, and the MOD, have already implemented a policy of purchasing vehicles which can run on unleaded petrol and a programme of converting the vehicles which can be adapted to run on unleaded petrol. The cost of converting vehicles, capable of conversion, to run on unleaded petrol is minimal. In the majority of cases this involves only minor engine adjustment.

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to ensure all vehicles operated by *(a)* Government Departments and *(b)* the armed forces are converted to use lead-free petrol by installation of catalytic converters.

**The Prime Minister:** No. It is our policy that, where possible, vehicles should run on unleaded petrol. In the majority of cases this involves only minor engine adjustment. The installation of catalytic converters is not usually necessary.

### President Gorbachev

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to discuss with President Gorbachev during his visit to the United Kingdom on 5 April, joint nuclear disarmament initiatives under the provisions of article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

**The Prime Minister:** No. Article VI of the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons requires the parties to it to pursue negotiations on effective measures connected with nuclear disarmament. Since the United States and the Soviet Union possess between them the overwhelming preponderance of nuclear weapons it is universally recognised that the primary responsibility for negotiations falls to them. The United States and Soviet Union are currently engaged in such negotiations which aim at 50 per cent. reductions in their strategic nuclear weapons.

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to discuss with President Gorbachev, during his visit to the United Kingdom on 5 April, joint United Kingdom-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics initiatives to implement a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty under the provisions of the 1963 partial test ban treaty.

**The Prime Minister:** No.

### Middle East

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if, in her recent meeting with the Israeli Foreign Minister, she expressed concern over the Israeli development of a destabilising nuclear weapons capability in the middle east.

**The Prime Minister:** No.

### Engagements

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the engagements she carried out on Wednesday 1 March.

**The Prime Minister:** During the morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I had a working lunch with the president of Cyprus at 10 Downing street. In the afternoon I had further meetings including one with the United Kingdom/Japan 2000 Group.

### "Our Future World"

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has yet received the report by the Natural Environment Research Council "Our Future World"; and if she will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

**The Prime Minister:** I have done so today.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Isle of Man

49. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met with his opposite number from the Isle of Man; and what matters were discussed.

**The Attorney-General:** I have not had the pleasure of meeting the Attorney-General for the Isle of Man.

### Women Judges

50. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Attorney-General how many women are currently serving as recorders, county court and High Court judges and in the Court of Appeal.

**The Attorney-General:** There are at present 29 women recorders, 17 women circuit judges, 1 woman High Court judge, and 1 woman Lord Justice of Appeal.

### Rape Cases

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply of 27 February, concerning the discontinuance of proceedings in rape cases, under what kinds of circumstances it has recently been considered that the public interest does not require a prosecution.

**The Attorney-General:** I regret that the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The code for Crown prosecutors at paragraph 8(vi)(b) states that where a Crown prosecutor is satisfied as to the sufficiency of evidence in a rape case there will seldom be any doubt that a prosecution will be in the public interest.

### Mr. Chander Singh

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Attorney-General what progress has been made in proceeding with the prosecution of Mr. Chander Singh for offences of fraud.

**The Attorney-General:** Inquiries into the affairs of Mr. Chander Singh are being pursued.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Attorney-General (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Departments;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**The Attorney-General:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## ENERGY

### Single European Act

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the impact that the Single European Act will have on his Department's operation of domestic policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Parkinson:** The impact of the Single European Act cannot be measured precisely given that many measures taken under new or amended provisions of the EEC treaty could have been taken under powers existing in the treaty before amendment. However the main areas within my Department's responsibility affected by the SEA are:

(i) research and development and environmental aspects of emergency operations;

(ii) operations which might affect the internal market. In this context the Council has generally endorsed a communication by the Commission on completing the internal energy market—COM (88) 283 of 2 May 1988, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

### Acid Rain

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the Ferrybridge and Eggborough power stations will be included in the acid rain clean-up programme.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The Central Electricity Generating Board and its successors will decide the order in which large coal-fired power stations should be retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment in order to meet their share of the United Kingdom's commitment to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions.

### Restart (Yorkshire)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to visit miners and former miners in the south and north Yorkshire mining areas, and address a meeting on the redundant mineworkers' pension scheme in relation to the restart programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** My right hon. Friend and I have no plans to address a meeting in the south and north Yorkshire mining areas on the redundant mineworkers payments scheme. I refer to my answer to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 27 February at column *5* in which I made a statement on the problems caused by restart for beneficiaries under the scheme.

### British Coal (Salaries)

**Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the salaries paid to *(a)* the chairman of British Coal, *(b)* the deputy chairman of British Coal and *(c)* the new joint deputy chairman of British Coal as announced on 28 February; and when the last-named takes up his appointment.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The current annual salaries of the chairman and deputy chairman of British Coal are £145,000 and £75,000 respectively. British Coal Corporation members' salaries are presently under review.

Mr. David Kendall takes up his appointment as joint deputy chairman on 1 April 1989 and will receive a salary of £95,000 a year.

### Electricity (Privatisation)

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals exist within the North West electricity board to mount a pre-flotation advertising campaign; what is the budget allocation *(a)* individually and *(b)* collectively with the other area boards; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Proposals by the North West electricity board to mount pre-flotation advertising campaigns either individually or collectively with other area boards are a commercial matter for the board itself. I have asked the chairman of Norweb to write to the hon. Member.

## Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditionng systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Parkinson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

# EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

## "Our Changing Schools"

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many copies of the booklet "Our Changing Schools—a Handbook for Parents", have been printed; at what cost; to whom are they being circulated; and how are they being distributed.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Four million copies of "Our Changing Schools—a Handbook for Parents" have been printed. The cost of printing was £483,000. Copies have been circulated to the headteachers of all LEA maintained schools in England, chief education officers, as well as to public libraries, day nurseries, play groups and relevant national bodies.

The main distribution has been in response to requests from headteachers for additional copies to give to parents. Copies have also been available from many supermarkets. Copies are available from DES on request.

## Undergraduates

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students from the Bolton education authority area gained places at universities during each of the last five years; and what was the average number from each education authority in England and Wales during each of these years.

**Mr. Jackson:** The available data are listed below. The figures represent the number of new mandatory and discretionary awards made to university students by Bolton local education authority and the average number of these types of award made by the 105 English and Welsh LEAs.

*New mandatory and discretionary awards[1] to university students*

| | *Academic year* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* |
| Bolton LEA | 376 | 320 | 325 | 294 | 307 |
| Average for all LEAs (England and Wales) | 626 | 609 | 615 | 607 | 606 |

[1] Excludes sandwich students on their placement year.

## Youth Service

**Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* for each local education authority in England and Wales the youth service provision component of grant-related expenditure, as assessed for the years 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

**Mr. Butcher:** The information requested in respect of local education authorities in England is set out in the table. Although grant-related expenditure is assessed for individual services, rate support grant is unhypothecated and is intended to support expenditure on all the services for which local authorities are responsible. The figures for Welsh authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

*Youth Service Component of Grant-related Expenditure 1986-78—1989-90*

| *LEA* | *1986-87 £ million* | *1987-88 £ million* | *1988-89 £ million* | *1989-90 £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barking | ·53 | ·65 | ·72 | ·77 |
| Barnet | 1·14 | 1·36 | 1·60 | 1·69 |
| Bexley | ·68 | ·78 | ·89 | ·90 |
| Brent | 1·47 | 1·70 | 1·95 | 2·08 |
| Bromley | ·87 | 1·01 | 1·16 | 1·19 |
| Croydon | 1·22 | 1·45 | 1·64 | 1·71 |
| Ealing | 1·48 | 1·72 | 2·02 | 2·13 |
| Enfield | 1·03 | 1·19 | 1·37 | 1·42 |
| Haringey | 1·14 | 1·31 | 1·48 | 1·53 |
| Harrow | ·72 | ·85 | ·98 | 1·02 |
| Havering | ·72 | ·82 | ·92 | ·94 |
| Hillingdon | ·77 | ·88 | 1·02 | 1·06 |
| Hounslow | ·85 | ·99 | 1·16 | 1·20 |
| Kingston | ·38 | ·44 | ·51 | ·52 |
| Merton | ·57 | ·66 | ·77 | ·81 |
| Newham | 1·29 | 1·51 | 1·70 | 1·82 |
| Redbridge | ·80 | ·93 | 1·08 | 1·14 |
| Richmond | ·45 | ·53 | ·60 | ·63 |
| Sutton | ·48 | ·56 | ·64 | ·66 |
| Waltham Forest | 1·02 | 1·19 | 1·36 | 1·42 |
| ILEA | 11·49 | 13·55 | 15·80 | 16·64 |
| Birmingham | 5·34 | 6·21 | 7·06 | 7·28 |
| Coventry | 1·43 | 1·65 | 1·86 | 1·93 |
| Dudley | ·97 | 1·14 | 1·29 | 1·33 |
| Sandwell | 1·46 | 1·70 | 1·91 | 1·93 |
| Solihull | ·68 | ·79 | ·89 | ·92 |
| Walsall | 1·14 | 1·27 | 1·44 | 1·49 |
| Wolverhampton | 1·36 | 1·58 | 1·79 | 1·86 |
| Knowsley | ·83 | ·93 | 1·05 | 1·08 |
| Liverpool | 2·05 | 2·35 | 2·67 | 2·76 |
| St. Helens | ·64 | ·75 | ·83 | ·84 |
| Sefton | ·96 | 1·12 | 1·25 | 1·31 |
| Wirral | 1·14 | 1·32 | 1·50 | 1·59 |
| Bolton | 1·04 | 1·21 | 1·38 | 1·46 |
| Bury | ·57 | ·65 | ·74 | ·77 |
| Manchester | 2·19 | 2·58 | 2·91 | 3·04 |
| Oldham | ·90 | 1·04 | 1·19 | 1·21 |
| Rochdale | ·85 | ·99 | 1·12 | 1·16 |
| Salford | ·91 | 1·08 | 1·21 | 1·26 |
| Stockport | ·85 | 1·00 | 1·12 | 1·16 |
| Tameside | ·75 | ·86 | ·98 | 1·03 |
| Trafford | ·74 | ·85 | ·95 | 1·00 |
| Wigan | 1·01 | 1·19 | 1·34 | 1·38 |
| Barnsley | ·72 | ·86 | ·96 | 1·00 |
| Doncaster | ·99 | 1·17 | 1·34 | 1·38 |
| Rotherham | ·87 | 1·03 | 1·18 | 1·19 |
| Sheffield | 1·84 | 2·14 | 2·43 | 2·48 |
| Bradford | 2·26 | 2·61 | 3·00 | 3·11 |
| Calderdale | ·71 | ·82 | ·92 | ·97 |

| LEA | 1986-87 £ million | 1987-88 £ million | 1988-89 £ million | 1989-90 £ million |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kirklees | 1·62 | 1·85 | 2·11 | 2·20 |
| Leeds | 2·55 | 2·97 | 3·35 | 3·46 |
| Wakefield | 1·02 | 1·19 | 1·33 | 1·35 |
| Gateshead | ·69 | ·78 | ·88 | ·91 |
| Newcastle | ·95 | 1·12 | 1·29 | 1·38 |
| North Tyne | ·58 | ·67 | ·74 | ·78 |
| South Tyne | ·53 | ·64 | ·70 | ·72 |
| Sunderland | 1·03 | 1·23 | 1·40 | 1·43 |
| Isle of Scilly | 0·01 | 0·01 | 0·01 | 0·01 |
| Avon | 2·80 | 3·24 | 3·77 | 3·94 |
| Bedfordshire | 1·94 | 2·27 | 2·58 | 2·70 |
| Berkshire | 2·52 | 2·91 | 3·39 | 3·55 |
| Bucks | 1·96 | 2·31 | 2·70 | 2·83 |
| Cambridge | 1·96 | 2·36 | 2·73 | 2·89 |
| Cheshire | 2·99 | 3·53 | 4·01 | 4·12 |
| Cleveland | 2·22 | 2·58 | 2·91 | 2·95 |
| Cornwall | 1·21 | 1·44 | 1·65 | 1·74 |
| Cumbria | 1·39 | 1·62 | 1·83 | 1·90 |
| Derbyshire | 2·91 | 3·40 | 3·91 | 4·02 |
| Devon | 2·72 | 3·19 | 3·68 | 3·89 |
| Dorset | 1·63 | 1·93 | 2·23 | 2·36 |
| Durham | 1·94 | 2·23 | 2·56 | 2·66 |
| East Sussex | 1·80 | 2·08 | 2·47 | 2·58 |
| Essex | 4·36 | 5·07 | 5·82 | 6·03 |
| Gloucestershire | 1·56 | 1·83 | 2·07 | 2·18 |
| Hampshire | 4·68 | 5·51 | 6·31 | 6·58 |
| Hereford and Wye | 2·02 | 2·34 | 2·67 | 2·80 |
| Hertfordshire | 2·96 | 3·49 | 3·95 | 4·08 |
| Humberside | 2·95 | 3·42 | 3·87 | 4·03 |
| Isle of Wight | 0·32 | 0·37 | 0·43 | 0·45 |
| Kent | 4·65 | 5·41 | 6·20 | 6·41 |
| Lancashire | 4·83 | 5·64 | 6·48 | 6·70 |
| Leicester | 3·21 | 3·74 | 4·28 | 4·47 |
| Lincolnshire | 1·69 | 1·97 | 2·30 | 2·40 |
| Norfolk | 2·03 | 2·41 | 2·76 | 2·90 |
| North Yorks | 1·95 | 2·28 | 2·64 | 2·75 |
| Northants | 1·82 | 2·14 | 2·46 | 2·57 |
| Northumberland | 0·82 | 0·99 | 1·13 | 1·17 |
| Nottinghamshire | 3·45 | 4·05 | 4·63 | 4·77 |
| Oxfordshire | 1·79 | 2·12 | 2·43 | 2·54 |
| Shropshire | 1·34 | 1·54 | 1·78 | 1·84 |
| Somerset | 1·29 | 1·51 | 1·73 | 1·82 |
| Staffordshire | 3·14 | 3·67 | 4·16 | 4·28 |
| Suffolk | 1·81 | 2·14 | 2·40 | 2·52 |
| Surrey | 2·93 | 3·39 | 3·87 | 3·98 |
| Warwickshire | 1·58 | 1·85 | 2·08 | 2·14 |
| West Sussex | 1·80 | 2·09 | 2·41 | 2·52 |
| Wiltshire | 1·74 | 2·05 | 2·34 | 2·44 |
| TOTAL | 164·00 | 191·50 | 219·10 | 228·00 |

*Note 1:* The control total for the youth service provision component of the education GRE incorporates expenditure on youth service provision and on other educational services which include European social fund sponsored courses, and expenditure on sports, outdoor, activity and residential study centres.

*Note 2:* The control total is distributed half in proportion to each LEA's population aged 11-17 and half in proportion to 11-17 population adjusted by the additional educational needs index.

**Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* for each local education authority in England and Wales the expenditure on youth service provision for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88.

**Mr. Butcher:** The information is given in the table. Figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

*LEA recurrent expenditure on youth and community services*

| Local education authority | 1986-87 £ million | 1987-88 £ million |
|---|---|---|
| Barking | 0·64 | 0·59 |
| Barnet | 0·87 | n.a. |
| Bexley | 0·67 | 0·74 |
| Brent | 3·17 | 3·56 |
| Bromley | 0·52 | 0·62 |
| Croydon | 0·74 | 0·84 |
| Ealing | 0·75 | n.a. |
| Enfield | 0·68 | 0·69 |
| Haringey | 1·76 | n.a. |
| Harrow | 0·27 | 0·29 |
| Havering | 0·75 | 0·70 |
| Hillingdon | 0·70 | 0·71 |
| Hounslow | 0·69 | n.a. |
| Kingston-upon-Thames | 0·38 | 0·40 |
| Merton | 0·24 | n.a. |
| Newham | n.a. | n.a. |
| Redbridge | 0·65 | 0·75 |
| Richmond-upon-Thames | 0·30 | 0·34 |
| Sutton | 0·42 | 0·48 |
| Waltham Forest | 1·21 | 1·29 |
| ILEA | 27·19 | 30·54 |
| Birmingham | 1·45 | 3·49 |
| Coventry | 0·85 | 0·91 |
| Dudley | 0·68 | 0·84 |
| Sandwell | 0·58 | 0·66 |
| Solihull | 0·32 | 0·39 |
| Walsall | 1·81 | 1·96 |
| Wolverhampton | 0·64 | n.a. |
| Knowsley | 0·43 | 0·49 |
| Liverpool | 1·93 | 2·10 |
| St. Helens | 0·05 | nil |
| Sefton | 0·51 | 0·61 |
| Wirral | 0·90 | 1·03 |
| Bolton | 0·80 | 0·91 |
| Bury | 0·53 | 0·84 |
| Manchester | 2·17 | 2·24 |
| Oldham | 0·36 | 0·62 |
| Rochdale | 1·12 | 1·32 |
| Salford | 0·51 | n.a. |
| Stockport | 0·65 | 0·53 |
| Tameside | 0·84 | 1·04 |
| Trafford | 0·46 | 0·54 |
| Wigan | 0·86 | 0·82 |
| Barnsley | 0·57 | 0·52 |
| Doncaster | 1·12 | 1·32 |
| Rotherham | 0·76 | 0·89 |
| Sheffield | 2·62 | n.a. |
| Bradford | 2·42 | 2·83 |
| Calderdale | 0·51 | 0·93 |
| Kirklees | 1·22 | 1·33 |
| Leeds | 2·74 | 2·59 |
| Wakefield | 0·64 | 0·68 |
| Gateshead | 0·59 | 0·79 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 1·02 | 1·16 |
| North Tyneside | 0·50 | n.a |
| South Tyneside | 1·37 | 1·55 |
| Sunderland | 0·71 | 0·73 |
| Avon | 3·36 | 3·72 |
| Bedfordshire | 0·97 | 1·06 |
| Berkshire | 1·85 | n.a |
| Buckinghamshire | 2·11 | 1·94 |
| Cambridgeshire | 1·48 | 1·63 |
| Cheshire | 1·62 | 1·74 |
| Cleveland | 1·95 | 2·35 |
| Cornwall | 0·43 | 0·53 |
| Cumbria | 1·04 | 1·26 |
| Derbyshire | 2·85 | 4·51 |
| Devon | 2·36 | 2·62 |
| Dorset | 1·32 | 1·47 |
| Durham | 0·95 | 1·10 |
| East Sussex | 0·96 | 0·98 |
| Essex | 3·25 | 3·39 |
| Gloucestershire | 1·35 | 1·48 |
| Hampshire | 2·56 | 2·86 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 0·99 | 1·19 |
| Hertfordshire | 2·05 | 2·44 |
| Humberside | 2·74 | 3·18 |
| Isle of Wight | 0·40 | 0·42 |
| Kent | 1·90 | 2·29 |
| Lancashire | 3·46 | 4·05 |

| Local education authority | 1986-87 £ million | 1987-88 £ million |
|---|---|---|
| Leicestershire | 2·23 | 2·62 |
| Lincolnshire | 0·93 | 1·01 |
| Norfolk | 1·08 | 1·36 |
| North Yorkshire | 1·27 | 1·41 |
| Northamptonshire | 1·44 | 1·61 |
| Northumberland | 0·68 | 0·70 |
| Nottinghamshire | 3·80 | 4·26 |
| Oxfordshire | 0·93 | 1·10 |
| Shropshire | 1·33 | 1·55 |
| Somerset | 1·24 | 1·93 |
| Staffordshire | 2·20 | 2·42 |
| Suffolk | 1·54 | 1·97 |
| Surrey | 1·76 | 2·07 |
| Warwickshire | 1·06 | 1·44 |
| West Sussex | 1·27 | 1·39 |
| Wiltshire | 1·30 | 1·50 |

*Notes:*

1. The expenditure is based on LEA returns to DOE and includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises and transport related expenses, supplies and services. It does not include the cost of central administration, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.
2. "Youth and Community Services" covers youth clubs, residential and non-residential youth centres and the employment of youth leaders.
3. The LEAs who have not submitted expenditure returns are marked "n.a".

## Headteachers

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many headteachers would receive a salary increase of more than £2,000 per annum on the implementation of the 1989 report of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The Government have accepted the recommendation of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions that salaries of heads and deputies should be increased by 7·5 per cent. from 1 April 1989. As a result some 2,050 head teachers will receive salary increases of more than £2,000 per annum.

## Higher Education Courses

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish tables showing for each EEC country, the United States of America, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and such other OECD countries for which data are available (1) the estimated per annum *(a)* total cost and *(b)* cost to public funds of (i) tuition, and (ii) maintenance in respect of courses in universities and other institutions of higher education of United Kingdom first-degree standard, (2) the average length of courses in each country, (3) the wastage rate, and (4) the estimated cost to public funds of (i) tuition and (ii) maintenance of each successful graduate.

**Mr. Jackson:** The readily available information is given below and covers public expenditure on higher education as a whole. Data on wastage rates are not generally available.

*Public expenditure on higher education, calendar year 1984 (provisional estimates)*

| Country | Year of data | Current expenditure at 1984 prices[1] | | Typical length of course | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Excluding student support and welfare and R & D Per qualifier (£ thousands) | Student support and welfare Per student (£) | University (Years) | Other (Years) |
| France | 1983 | 5·9 | 180 (loan + grant) | 4 | 2 |
| Germany[2] | 1984 | 10·0 | 70 (loan only) | 4 | 3 |
| Italy | 1983 | n/a | 40 (grant only) | 5 | 2 |
| Japan[3] | 1982 | 14·5 | 30 (loan only) | 4 | 2 |
| Netherlands | 1984 | 14·4 | 360 (loan + grant) | 5 | 4 |
| United Kingdom[4] | 1984 | 9·1 | 750 (grant only) | 3 | 2 to 3 |
| United States of America[5] | 1982 | 19·2 | 270 (loan + grant) | 4 | 2 |

n/a Not available.

[1] At purchasing power parity; data prior to 1984 have been adjusted via consumer price indices.

[2] Revised coverage of source statistics.

[3] Excludes public subsidies to private education and qualifiers in the private sector. Private sector course characteristics suggest lower cost per qualifier overall.

[4] Excluding expenditure and students on nursing and paramedical courses at DHSS establishments. Also excludes tuition fees and in-service teacher training secondments and costs.

[5] Provisional, includes capital.

*Sources:* Statistical Bulletin 4/87
UNESCO Statistical Year Book
OECD Comparative Statistics
Correspondence

## Veterinary Education

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what will be the number of new posts and additional pupils created by proposals to rationalise veterinary education at *(a)* the university of Liverpool, *(b)* Bristol university and *(c)* the university of London; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what will be the costs of rationalisation of veterinary education at *(a)* the university of Liverpool, *(b)* Bristol university and *(c)* the university of London; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what will be the effect on staff and pupil numbers of monies expended in rationalising veterinary education in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what will be the effects on the total numbers of staff and pupils of the proposals to rationalise veterinary education in England; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what costs will be incurred by the rationalisation of veterinary education in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** The available information is in the University Grants Committee report "Veterinary Education into the 21st Century", a copy of which is in the Library. The principal recommendations are to reduce the number of veterinary schools from six to four by merger of the Glasgow and Edinburgh schools on the Edinburgh site, and the cessation of para-clinical and clinical teaching at the Cambridge school; and that each of the four schools should, principally through redistribution of posts, have a clinical staff of 36 and have the capacity for an intake of 75-85 home students, a total of 300-335. Current intakes are towards the bottom of this range. The 1987 intake totalled 306 with the following figures for individual schools: Bristol—42; Cambridge—41; Edinburgh—54; Glasgow—54; Liverpool—45; and London—70. The report estimates the cost of the recommended rationalisation to be some £20 million.

These recommendations are currently out for consultation. Decisions will be taken by the new Universities Funding Council which takes over full funding responsibilities for universities on 1 April.

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the representations he has received concerning proposals to terminate paraclinical and clinical teaching at the veterinary school at Cambridge; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received concerning proposals for the closure of the veterinary school at Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** In respect of each proposal, we have received about 300 letters, including many from hon. Members. In addition, I am meeting some hon. Members.

## Foreign Students

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide the figures for the numbers of foreign students attending full-time courses of higher education in the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Jackson:** The information is shown below. Before 1984-85 the definition of a student from abroad included those charged a fee at the overseas rate. From 1984-85 students from abroad have been defined by domicile. Where available, adjusted figures are shown for comparison of number by both definitions.

*Full-time and sandwich students from abroad in higher education in the United Kingdom*

| *Academic year* | *Thousands* | |
|---|---|---|
| 1977-78 | 58·0 | |
| 1978-79 | 59·1 | |
| 1979-80 | 56·2 | |
| 1980-81 | 51·6 | |
| 1981-82 | 50·7 | |
| 1982-83 | 46·7 | [1]47·9 |
| 1983-84 | 46·5 | [1]46·9 |
| 1984-85 | | 48·6 |
| 1985-86 | | 53·7 |
| 1986-87 | | 57·1 |

[1] Adjusted.

*Source:* Education Statistics for the United Kingdom (HMSO).

## Private Schools

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children and young persons currently attending private schools within the Wakefield metropolitan district are normally resident in other local authority areas.

**Mr. Butcher:** This information is not collected centrally.

## Secondary School Teachers

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the survey of secondary school teachers was completed; what were its conclusions; and when it will be published.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** The 1988 secondary school staffing survey has not yet been completed—validation and processing of the complex survey data are still in progress. Key results are expected to be available by about the end of April.

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost of the survey of secondary school teachers.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** The exact cost of the 1988 secondary school staffing survey is not yet known, as work on the survey is still continuing. However, the eventual cost is expected to be about £250,000 (excluding any costs to schools and teachers participating in the survey).

## Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what it his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conway (Dr. Thomas) today.

# TRADE AND INDUSTRY

## Relocation

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will meet executives of Nottingham Development Enterprise to discuss the relocation of parts of his Department to Nottingham as part of the policy on relocation of such posts away from the south-east.

**Mr. Maude:** Under the policy which my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, announced on 31 March

1988, my Department is now reviewing the location of its work with a view to finding sites offering easier labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Where appropriate, areas which are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies, such as Nottingham, will be considered. My officials will be consulting local representatives in relevant sites as appropriate.

## Single European Act

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the impact that the Single European Act will have on his Department's operation of domestic policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maude:** The Single European Act has had an impact on many areas of my Department's work. All new and existing departmental policies and initiatives take our obligations arising from the Act into account. In particular our "Europe—Open for Business" campaign is designed to alert business to the need to prepare actively for the completion of the single European market.

## Telephone Tapping

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions within the Doncaster district *(a)* British Telecom engineers and *(b)* other specialist engineers, have monitored telephone conversations on domestic telephone lines in the last year for which figures are available; what were the comparable figures in 1978; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** The arrangements for the interception of the public telecommunication system are governed by the provisions of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The information that is available is given in the annual report of the commissioner appointed under section 8 of that Act.

## Post Offices

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list *(a)* the main post offices and *(b)* the sub-post offices in (i) the Doncaster area and (ii) South Yorkshire as a whole which have opened or closed since 1979, showing those which have gone onto a part-time basis since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** I have consulted the Post Office, which has supplied the following information. There are currently 10 main post offices and 266 sub-post offices in the Doncaster post code area, and 10 main post offices and 365 sub-post offices in the South Yorkshire postal address area. There has been no change in the provision of main post offices in these areas since 1979. During the same period one sub-office has been opened in the Doncaster post code area, 13 have been closed and 18 sub-offices have been converted to part-time (community) offices. In the South Yorkshire postal address area 15 sub-offices have closed and 10 have been converted to part-time (community) offices.

The sub-offices concerned are as follows:

*Doncaster post code area*

*Opened—1*
Wybers Wood

*Closed—13*
Redbourned
Haighton Avenue
New Clee
Hatcliffe
Kexby
Ladborough
New Conisborough
Town Moor
Wiseton
Woodlands East
Whitton
Barnby on the Marsh
Asselby

*Conversions—18*
Bigby
Waddingham
Grasby
Austerfield
Badsworth
Hooton Pagnell
Womersley
Al. thorpe
Eastoft
East Stockwith
Slotton
Babworth
Bole
Balne
East Lowick
Sykehouse
Laxton
Howden Dyke

*South Yorkshire postal address area*

*Opened — 0*

*Closed — 15*
New Conisborough
Town Moor
Wiseton
Woodlands East
Cranemoor
Ickles
Bridgehouse
Upper Allen Street
Carbrook
Thorpe Salvin
Walkley Road
Shirelygreen
High Hoyland
Frederick Street
Burgoyne Road

*Conversions — 10*
Hooton Roberts
Austerfield
Brodsworth
Hooton Pagnell
Womersley
Wadshelf
Dunford Bridge
Crow Edge
Stantree
Woothorpe

## British National Space Centre

**Dr. Hampson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what payments have been made to British Telecom International from the British National Space Centre budget; and for what purpose.

**Mr. Atkins:** None, except for services purchased on a commercial basis. However, under arrangements instituted at the time of formation of Eutelsat in 1978, the BNSC shares the United Kingdom subscription to that

body with British Telecom International. The BNSC payments, which are made through the European Space Agency, have so far amounted to £7·99 million.

**Dr. Hampson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the value of the activity undertaken by the United Kingdom space industry as a direct output of the British National Space Centre civil space budget for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90, excluding the value of sub-contracts placed outside the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Atkins:** Space expenditure falls to the budgets of the individual Departments and research councils who are partners in the BNSC. Their total contributions to the European Space Agency's programmes are estimated at £90 million in 1988-89 and £82 million in 1989-90. Some 80 per cent. of these contributions will, in accordance with ESA rules, return to United Kingdom industry in the form of contracts. In addition, the national programmes of BNSC partners amount to about £50 million per year. These include expenditure on space science in universities and research institutes. The proportion spent in industry is between 40 and 50 per cent.

### Iraq

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current rating of Iraq in respect of the export credit guarantee scheme; what consideration is being given to increasing cover to Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Alan Clark:** ECGD cover for Iraq is presently available for United Kingdom exports ranging from consumer goods and raw materials to capital goods and projects.

The United Kingdom/Iraq financial protocol, negotiated on an annual basis, governs the level of support for contracts eligible for extended credit terms. The last protocol was signed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in November 1988. This provided additional United Kingdom credits of £340 million for contracts placed in 1989. These facilities have yet to be utilised and no further increase in support is presently being considered.

### Harmonisation

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to assemble any observations sent by British enterprises, trade associations, or similar bodies to the Commission of the European Economic Community for consideration during the pre-publication stage of the proposals it plans to present to the Council of Ministers within the scheduled programme of harmonisation.

**Mr. Maude:** It is most important that business makes its concerns known to the Commission, both directly and through Government channels, if possible before particular proposals are published. Business usually keeps Departments informed of direct contacts with the Commission, and this is extremely helpful. My Department and other Departments with responsibilities in this area take business concerns fully into account in our contact with the Commission before the publication of proposals and during subsequent negotiations.

### Licensed Trade

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into licensed trade will be published.

**Mr. Maude:** The report will be published as soon as possible.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Forth:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Aid (Environmental Factors)

55. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how environmental factors are assessed in consideration of overseas aid projects.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** All programme managers in the Overseas Development Administration are required to ensure the environmental soundness of projects. A manual is being published this week to help them to do this. I shall place a copy in the Library.

### Lomé IV (Negotiations)

56. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Community, African, Caribbean and Pacific ministerial negotiating meeting on Lomé IV in Brazzaville.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** The meeting, which I attended, identified the main areas of agreement and disagreement and set a framework for the next stage of the negotiations.

61. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations for a successor to the third Lomé convention.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** The ministerial negotiating meeting on a successor to Lomé III in Brazzaville on 16 and 17 February identified the main areas of agreement and disagreement and set a framework for the next stage in the negotiations.

### Development Budget

59. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of the United Kingdom overseas development budget at current prices in 1979; and what is the planned level for 1989-90.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** At today's prices the net aid programme stood at £1,489 million in 1979-80. The aid

budget for next year will be £1,430 million plus additional provision for Nigeria which I currently expect to be a further £47 million.

### Iodine Deficiency

60. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the British aid programme is making to cure the problem of iodine deficiency in developing countries.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** Both UNICEF and the World Health Organisation support work to prevent and control iodine deficiency disorders. During this financial year we have contributed £7·5 million to UNICEF's general resources, from which projects to correct iodine deficiency disorders will be funded.

### AIDS

58. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projections his Department has made of the impact of AIDS in assessing the overseas aid needs of central African countries.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** More research is needed before we can estimate the impact of AIDS on developing countries. We are supporting work in this field. It is one element among many which we use in assessing a country's assistance needs.

## SCOTLAND

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Scottish Office has made steady progress with its strategy of exploiting information technologies to improve its efficiency by developing systems which support the management and policy priorities which are identified in departmental and divisional management plans.

Communications have been improved by the introduction of an office automation system providing word processing and electronic mail facilities linking the offices of Ministers and senior officials in Edinburgh, London and Glasgow, and by the installation of a digital telephone system covering the main Scottish Office buildings in Edinburgh and linked to the Government telephone network.

Computer systems have been developed to support financial and personnel management and the diverse needs of the office. Some 500 microcomputers are in use together with 600 visual display units linked to the mainframe computer in Edinburgh. A number of these visual display units enable officers who are in direct contact with the public to provide an improved service.

The Scottish Office strategy for information technology is endorsed by its top management and subject to refinement, monitoring and review by the standing committee on information technology services. That committee considers plans and proposals for further projects as necessary.

### Working Hours

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the average number of hours worked per week in Scotland by *(a)* primary school teachers, *(b)* secondary school teachers, *(c)* National Health Service doctors, *(d)* National Health Service nursing staff, and *(e)* employees of the Scottish Development Agency.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The available information is as follows:

| | *Average hours per week* |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Primary school teachers | 25·9 |
| *(b)* Secondary school teachers | 27·4 |
| *(c)* National Health Service doctors | n.a. |
| *(d)* National Health Service nursing staff | 32·0 |
| *(e)* Employees of the Scottish Development Agency | n.a. |

*Notes:*

Figures at *(a)* and *(b)* are from 1984 and relate only to the timetabled working hours in school in a normal working week. Due to industrial action schools comprehensive data for subsequent years was not collected. Data from the 1988 School Census will become available later this year. In January 1987 new conditions of service for teachers, including working hours, were agreed in the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education.

Figures shown at *(d)* are estimates based on recorded hours worked in the period ended 30 September 1988. They include data for part-time staff and staff in training. No corresponding information is available for doctors.

Comparable figures are not available for staff of the Scottish Development Agency. The majority of SDA staff are in salaried non-overtime grades and usually work considerably more than their contracted 35 hours. All but the most junior grades are contracted to work 35 hours per week plus hours governed by the exigencies of the work.

## DEFENCE

### Chemical Weapons

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the accuracy of Mr. Gorbachev's estimate of the Soviet chemical weapons stockpile as 50,000 tonnes.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Soviet claim that its stockpile of chemical warfare agents is no larger than 50,000 tonnes has not been backed up by any supporting data. We assess, in common with other Western estimates, that total Soviet chemical warfare stocks are several times higher.

### Nuclear Submarines

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions nuclear submarines docked in British ports in the last three years; and if he will list those ports.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The numbers of occasions during the last three years on which nuclear-powered submarines have docked in British civil ports are as follows:

| | Number of visits | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 |
| Cardiff | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Liverpool | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Southampton | 0 | 1 | 1 |

In addition nuclear-powered submarines have made use of offshore berths at the locations listed below. Data on the use of these is recorded as an aggregate of numbers of days rather than by number of visits:

| | Days in use | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 |
| Rothesay | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| Loch Striven | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| Loch Goil | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Brodick Bay | 7 | 1 | 3 |
| Portree | 6 | 2 | 15 |
| Broadford Bay | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Torbay | 0 | 3 | 6 |

Offshore berths are covered by public safety schemes or special safety schemes, as are all ports where nuclear-powered submarines actually dock.

## Obsolete Nuclear Shells

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to his reply of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *767*, he will discuss with the United States Government plans to scrap obsolete nuclear shells held in Great Britain and with the British armed forces in NATO; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present.

## Low Flying

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measurements have been made of noise levels on the ground caused by military jet aircraft overflying at 100 ft and speeds of up to 550 knots within 20 miles of the RAF station at Finningley; and what compensation has been paid where dwellings are subject to noise levels from military aircraft of 125 db(A) or more in that area.

**Mr. Neubert:** No such noise measurements have been made within 20 miles of RAF Finningley, but I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 26 January to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) at column *753* and of 6 February to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) at columns *447-48*.

## Royal Navy Mechanics

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy mechanics served in each of the following branches: *(a)* air engineering, *(b)* marine engineering and *(c)* weapon and electrical engineering, in each year since 1983.

**Mr. Neubert:** The numbers of Royal Navy mechanics serving in air engineering, marine engineering and weapon and electrical engineering each year since 1983 are given in the table. All figures are at the 1 January point.

| Year | Air engineering | Marine engineering | Weapon and Electrical engineering |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1983 | 1,915 | 6,561 | 8,803 |
| 1984 | 2,079 | 6,275 | 8,937 |
| 1985 | 1,979 | 6,046 | 8,929 |
| 1986 | 1,721 | 5,512 | 8,579 |
| 1987 | 1,639 | 5,248 | 8,262 |
| 1988 | 1,654 | 5,103 | 7,954 |
| 1989 | 1,665 | 5,079 | 7,799 |

*Note:* Weapon and electrical engineers include air and marine engineers with electrical qualifications.

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total outflow of Royal Navy mechanics in each of the following branches in 1988 and how many of these left prior to the completion of their engagements: *(a)* air engineering, *(b)* marine engineering and *(c)* weapons and electrical engineering.

**Mr. Neubert:** The total outflows of Royal Navy mechanics from the air engineering, marine engineering and weapon and electrical engineering branches during 1988 were as follows:

| Air engineering | Marine engineering | Weapon and Electrical engineering |
|---|---|---|
| 203 | 548 | 790 |

Of these, the numbers who left to completing their engagements were:

| Air engineering | Marine engineering | Weapon and Electrical engineering |
|---|---|---|
| 158 | 433 | 576 |

Engagements for naval ratings are generally open ended, up to a maximum of 22 years and ratings may leave at any time after an initial period at 18 months notice.

*Note:*

1. Weapon and electrical engineers include air and marine engineers with electrical qualifications.
2. Promotions to officer have been excluded.

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many mechanics qualified to serve in the following branches of the Royal Navy in 1988 *(a)* air engineering, *(b)* marine engineering and *(c)* weapons and electrical engineering.

**Mr. Neubert:** The numbers of Royal Navy mechanics who qualified to serve in the air engineering, marine engineering and weapon and electrical engineering branches in 1988 were as follows:

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Air engineering | 91 |
| Marine engineering | 345 |
| Weapon and electrical engineering | 659 |

*Notes:*

1. Weapon and electrical engineers include air and marine engineers with electrical qualifications.
2. These figures may be incomplete due to reporting delays.

## Aldermaston and Burghfield (Audit)

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what methods of communication and consultation were

used between his officials and the British Nuclear Fuels plc team carrying out the audit at Aldermaston and Burghfield during the month of January 1986.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave him on 22 December 1988 at column *380* and on 18 January 1989 at column *199*.

### Soviet Naval Activity

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on changes in the level of Soviet naval activity in the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Since the end of 1985, there has been a significant reduction in the overall deployment level of Soviet naval combatants away from home fleet waters world wide. We believe, however, that in home waters the level of naval activity has remained at least constant, or indeed may have increased. The modernisation of the Soviet fleet has also continued, and its ability to conduct wartime operations has not diminished.

### Royal Navy (Training)

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of man weeks allocated to formal individual training in 1979 and 1974, across all categories of Royal Navy personnel, for each of the following areas: *(a)* new entry training, *(b)* specialisation training, *(c)* sub-specialisation training and *(d)* routine top-up training.

**Mr. Neubert:** Information on man weeks allocated to individual training was not produced in the form requested for the years up to and including 1979. Much of the detailed information over this period is no longer held. So far as later years are concerned, I refer the hon. Gentleman to answer 6 provided to the Defence Committee on 3 February 1988, reproduced on page 25 of the Committee's sixth report of Session 1987-88.

### Sea Time

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average time spent at sea by *(a)* chief petty officers and petty officers, *(b)* leading ratings and *(c)* able ratings.

**Mr. Neubert:** Average sea time (that time during which a rating is drafted to an operational ship) is currently:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| Chief petty officers and petty officers | 42 |
| Leading rates | 59 |
| Able rates | 64 |

It does not follow, however, that such time is spent entirely at sea; ships spend a proportion of their operational time at their base ports.

### Norton Manor Camp

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why a private security firm has the responsibility of patrolling Norton Manor camp, near Taunton; whether he proposes any changes in security at the camp following recent Irish Republican Army bombings at Army camps; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** A private security firm is employed at Norton Manor camp on routine and strictly-defined security tasks. Its presence constitutes only one element of the physical security arrangements in force at the camp. Security arrangements are constantly reviewed in the light of our assessment of the terrorist threat.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what allowance he has made in his Department's budget for each of the next five years to provide for the substitution of HCFC 22 for chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants covered by the Montreal protocol; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbons refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(3) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Neubert:** It is our policy to reduce the use of chlorofluorocarbons wherever possible. The information requested is not available centrally and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost.

### Live Bombing Exercise

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next live bombing exercise is to be conducted in the Moray Firth; where, in relation to recognised danger areas, and British territorial waters, the exercise will take place; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* There are no plans to drop live bombs in the Moray Firth.

## TRANSPORT

### Relocation

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet executives of Nottingham Development Enterprise to discuss the relocation of parts of his Department to Nottingham as part of the policy on relocation of such posts away from the south-east.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Under the policy which my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced on 31 March 1988, the Department is reviewing parts of its work with a view to possible relocation. Where appropriate, areas which are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies, such as Nottingham, will be considered.

Nottingham has been selected for relocation of the headquarters staff of the driver testing and training division in mid-1990.

### Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about a railway link to Manchester international airport.

**Mr. Portillo:** My officials have recently received a joint paper from Greater Manchester passenger transport

executive and British Rail which seeks to demonstrate that the proposed rail link is commercially viable. The paper will be discussed at a meeting between the relevant parties and the Department at the end of this week.

### Seafarers (Taxation)

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the extent of refund to shipping companies of personal taxation and social security payments made by their seafarers made by the Danish and Swedish Governments; what estimate he has made of the value of this concession to the running costs of Danish and Swedish ships engaged in international trade; and what steps he proposes to take to enable British shipping companies to meet this challenge.

**Mr. Portillo:** I am advised that Danish nationals serving on ships registered on the Danish international register are exempted from the full rate of income tax with the savings passed on to shipping companies. The Swedish Government rebate to shipping companies income tax and social security payments made in respect of Swedish seafarers serving on Swedish flag vessels engaged in long distance shipping, at an estimated cost for 1989 of 550 million Swedish kroner. The Department has asked the EC Commission to consider the compatibility of the Danish arrangements with the Community's competition rules. The question of state aids to shipping is also under consideration as part of the second stage of the Community's shipping policy.

### Bus Services

**Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of local bus services outside London are now provided by private operators.

**Mr. Portillo:** Of the local bus miles outside London run during 1987-88, 58 per cent. were provided by operators which were in the private sector by March 1988.

### Severn Bridge

**Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report following the inquiry on the proposals to increase the tolls on the Severn bridge.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Not before the inquiry has been concluded and the report has been written.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Relocation

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will meet executives of Nottingham Development Enterprise to discuss the relocation of parts of his Department to Nottingham as part of the policy on relocation of such posts away from the south-east.

**Mr. Lee:** Under the policy that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced on March 1988, the Employment Department is now reviewing the location of its work with a view to finding sites offering easier labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Areas which are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies, such as Nottingham, will be considered. My Department already has large concentrations of headquarters staff in three such regional locations at Runcorn, Bootle and Sheffield and the study taking place is giving particular attention to those locations; but other sites in assisted and urban programme areas have not yet been ruled out.

### Wages

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the average wage for *(a)* full-time male employees, *(b)* part-time male employees, *(c)* full-time female employees and *(d)* part-time female employees, for each of the last 10 years, for each economic region both in real and cash terms; if he will publish a further table showing average regional wages on the same basis for (i) manufacturing industry, (ii) the leisure industry and (iii) other service industries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lee:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply he was given on 20 October 1988, *Official Report*, column *869*. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of a table of 1988 data for part-timers which was not available at the time together with the available information by industry, copies of which have also been placed in the Library.

### Labour Statistics (Sheffield)

**Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what percentage unemployment has fallen in each of the Sheffield parliamentary constituencies since June 1987.

**Mr. Lee:** The following information is also available in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in June 1987 and January 1989 for each of the Sheffield parliamentary constituencies, together with the percentage change over the period. The figures are affected by seasonal influences as well as by the change in coverage of the count due to new benefit regulations from September 1988 for young people aged under 18.

| Constituency | June 1987 | January 1989 | Percentage change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sheffield Central | 9,729 | 7,282 | −25·2 |
| Sheffield Attercliffe | 5,801 | 4,117 | −29·0 |
| Sheffield Brightside | 7,537 | 5,610 | −25·6 |
| Sheffield Hallam | 4,425 | 3,133 | −29·2 |
| Sheffield Heeley | 7,011 | 5,012 | −28·5 |
| Sheffield Hillsborough | 5,524 | 3,942 | −28·6 |

## Jobs

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the new jobs which have become available since 1983 are part-time and what proportion were filled by men and women.

**Mr. Lee:** There are no figures for job gains and job losses. Between September 1983 and September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the workforce in employment in Great Britain increased by 1,989,000. Of this net increase 1,167,000 (59 per cent.) was attributable to growth in part-time employment, 649,000 (33 per cent.) to growth in male employment and 1,339,000 (67 per cent.) to growth in female employment.

The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes. In classifying the work force in employment between full and part-time, all programme participants are counted as in part-time employment.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full-time and part-time jobs were created in the United Kingdom in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Lee:** There are no figures for job gains and job losses. In the year to September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the work force in employment in the United Kingdom increased by 404,000. There are no estimates of full-time and part-time employment in Northern Ireland for these dates, and therefore no estimates for the United Kindom.

The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

## Labour Statistics (Salford)

**Ms. Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the figures for female part-time jobs in the Salford area.

**Mr. Lee:** The available information taken from the September 1984 census of employment indicates that there were 17,700 female part-time employees in employment in the Salford local authority district.

## Labour Statistics (Luton)

**Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the percentage fall in the number of unemployed has been in the travel-to-work area covering Luton in the last 12 months; how many people are currently registered as unemployed in Luton; and how many known job vacancies there are there.

**Mr. Lee:** In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in the Watford and Luton travel-to-work area was 12,773 compared with 20,858 in January 1988, a fall of 8,085 or 38·8 per cent. The comparison is affected by the change in coverage from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations for those people aged under 18 years. There were 4,022 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres approximately covering the Watford and Luton travel-to-work area in January 1989. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number in the economy. Recent research shows that nationally only about one third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

## Private Employment Agencies

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many private employment agencies he has investigated since 1979 which accept fees from job applicants for counselling or other services; and what action he has taken in each case.

**Mr. Lee:** All private employment agencies are routinely investigated for breaches of any of the provisions of the Employment Agencies Act 1973 and regulations, including the provision prohibiting the offer of a job-finding service conditional upon the use of other services, such as counselling, for which job applicants may legally be charged a fee. There have been about 25,000 such inspections since 1979. If any infringement of the legislation is found, action is taken to ensure that it is corrected. If the infringement persists, prosecution would be considered.

## Wages Councils

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will produce a breakdown of the responses to his consultation document "Wages Councils", setting out *(a)* the total number of responses, *(b)* those in favour and those against, and *(c)* the responses of employers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nicholls:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) on 15 February, *Official Report*, column *233*.

## Labour Statistics

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the mid-year unemployment figure each year since 1979; and what was the increase or decrease in unemployment in each year both in numbers and in percentage terms.

**Mr. Lee:** The following information is also available from the Library. The table shows seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom for each June from 1979, together with the change in numbers and percentage terms on the previous year.

*Unemployment: Seasonally adjusted, consistent with current coverage in the United Kingdom*

| Date | Number | Change (over 12 months) | Percentage change |
|---|---|---|---|
| June 1979 | 1,069,000 | −83,900 | −7·3 |
| June 1980 | 1,275,200 | 206,200 | 19·3 |
| June 1981 | 2,177,400 | 902,200 | 70·7 |
| June 1982 | 2,523,100 | 345,700 | 15·9 |
| June 1983 | 2,807,400 | 284,300 | 11·3 |
| June 1984 | 2,900,900 | 93,500 | 3·3 |
| June 1985 | 3,027,600 | 126,700 | 4·4 |
| June 1986 | 3,130,200 | 102,600 | 3·4 |
| June 1987 | 2,857,200 | −273,000 | −8·7 |
| June 1988 | 2,324,100 | −533,100 | −18·7 |

## HEALTH

### Child Minders

62. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has of the extent of unregistered childminding carried out by children aged under 16 years; if he has any plans to legislate in relation to childminding carried out by children; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** It is not possible to provide an estimate. Local authorities have a duty under the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948 to register as child minders persons who for reward look after in their own homes child ren aged under five. We would not expect a local authority to register a child aged under 16 as a child minder. The Government will be introducing amendments to the Children Bill (now in the House of Lords) relating to the registration of child minders by local authorities.

### NHS Staff

**Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the number of ancillary staff employed in the National Health Service as of 30 September 1988, excluding nurse auxiliaries, *(b)* the number of whole-time equivalents in England, *(c)* the average hours of ancillary staffs by grade together with average pay by grade and *(d)* the average hours of part-time ancillary staffs by grade and average pay, broken down by male and female for each of categories *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)*.

**Mr. Mellor:** The latest figures available are:

*(a)* and *(b)* September 1987

*(a)* 157,300

*(b)* Male 41,500; female 73,500; total 115,000.

*(c)* and *(d)* 1987-88.

*Estimated average gross weekly earnings*[1]

| Grade | Full-time | | Part-time (per head) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female £ pw | Male £ pw | Female £ pw | Male £ pw |
| Non supervisors and chargehands | | | | |
| Scale A | 114·49 | 132·11 | 54·84 | 57·49 |
| Scale B | 113·36 | 133·11 | 62·55 | 59·27 |
| Scale C | 138·00 | 162·90 | 71·25 | [3]87·96 |
| Scale D | [3]140·46 | 156·59 | 79·18 | [2] |
| Supervisors | | | | |
| Scale I | 141·89 | 148·54 | 79·39 | [2] |
| Scale II | 145·73 | 179·29 | 96·53 | [2] |
| Scale III | 134·71 | 181·00 | [2] | [2] |
| Scale IV | [3]154·36 | 182·26 | [2] | [2] |

[1] The other information requested is not available—without incurring disproportionate cost.
[2] Numbers of staff in these grades are too small to provide reliable figures.
[3] These averages are based on relatively small numbers.

### Resource Management

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resource management initiative select studies he considered when drawing up the relevant proposals in "Working for Patients".

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I had available internal progress reports from the six resource management initiative pilot sites and three assessments of progress on resource management from the National Health Service training authority, the joint consultants committee's sub-group on resource management and the NHS management board's director of resource management.

### Plastic Surgery

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the waiting time for plastic surgery in the Leicester health authority; what are the comparable figures for waiting times in *(a)* other authorities in the Trent region and *(b)* nationally; what assessment he has made of the reasons for these levels; and what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times in Leicester health authority for plastic surgery.

**Mr. Mellor:** The median waiting time for plastic surgery in-patients treated in 1987-88 in the Leicestershire health authority, other authorities in the Trent region and England is given in the table. Some patients do however wait considerably longer than the times shown, as plastic surgery waiting lists comprise cases with widely different degrees of urgency. Epidemiological changes and medical innovation have led to substantial increases in plastic surgery workloads.

A total of £69,000 has been made available to the Leicester health authority from the waiting list fund in 1987-88 and 1988-89, which has enabled them to treat an additional 350 plastic surgery patients from the waiting list. The regional health authority propose to continue to fund Leicester's plastic surgery waiting list fund project in 1989-90.

*Median waiting time (weeks)—plastic surgery in-patients cases treated 1987-88*

| | Weeks |
|---|---|
| Leicestershire | 5 |
| South Lincolnshire | 5 |
| Nottingham | 6 |
| Sheffield | 10 |
| Trent region | 7 |
| England | 7 |

*Note:* Other districts in Trent did not treat plastic surgery patients during the year.

## Medical Secretaries

**Dr. Glyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had with regard to the shortage of medical secretaries in the National Health Service; and whether he has discussed this with the Whitley Council.

**Mr. Mellor:** We have received about 180 letters since the beginning of March 1988 about medical secretaries. Negotiations are taking place in the administrative and clerical staffs Whitley council on management side proposals which include a scheme to supplement the national pay scales where recruitment and retention problems are experienced.

## Geriatric Wards

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds are provided in long stay geriatric wards in the National Health Service hospitals in the following regions *(a)* East Anglia, *(b)* North East Thames, *(c)* North West Thames, *(d)* South West Thames and *(e)* South East Thames.

**Mr. Freeman:** The available information given in the table relates to general wards for elderly patients.

*Average daily available beds in general wards for elderly patients, National Health Service hospitals, by selected regional health authorities, 1987-88*

| Regional health authority | Available beds |
|---|---|
| East Anglian | 2,539 |
| North West Thames | 3,386 |
| North East Thames | 4,260 |
| South East Thames | 3,535 |
| South West Thames | 2,832 |

## Hospital Trusts

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which sets of Korner data will be collected from National Health Service hospital trusts; and if similar data will be required from hospitals in the private sector.

**Mr. Freeman:** We shall be giving detailed consideration over the coming months to the information which will be needed centrally when National Health Service hospital trusts are established.

## Single European Act

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the impact that the Single European Act will have on his Department's operation of domestic policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor:** The main impact is in the extent to which it facilitates the introduction of European Community legislation contributing to the establishment of the single market in areas falling within the Department's responsibilities and in its requirement that in proposals affecting health a high level of health protection shall apply. As far as can be foreseen at present the main effects of European Community legislation and legislative proposals on the Department's domestic policy will be in the areas of pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and tobacco products.

## AIDS

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sums have been allocated to all aspects of treatment, research and education related to AIDS and HIV for the current and next three financial years.

**Mr. Mellor:** In the current year, we have made available to health authorities in England £58·6 million as a contribution towards the additional costs of providing treatment and care for people infected with HIV and with AIDS. For 1989-90 a total of almost £130 million is being made available towards those costs. Details of the distribution of resources to regional health authorities were given in health circular HC(88)66.

A number of Government-funded organisations are supporting HIV-related research, on which over £13·2 million is expected to be spent in this financial year. The Medical Research Council is the main agency through which we support biomedical research in relation to HIV and AIDS, and is funded through grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. The MRC plans to spend, through its directed programme on AIDS:

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 5·0 |
| 1989-90 | 7·0 |
| 1990-91 | 8·0 |
| 1991-92 | 8·5 |

The Department is providing the MRC with an additional £1,050,000 this year and £1·7 million in 1989-90 principally for epidemiological research on HIV. We are making available separately an estimated £593,000 for HIV-related health and personal social services research projects this year, and will be deciding shortly the Department's budget for such research for 1989-90.

In respect of health education related to HIV and AIDS, the Department has allocated £8·7 million in 1988-89 to the Health Education Authority, and £1·3 million to the national AIDS helpline, which provides a free, confidential telephone advice service. The Department's budget for health education work in 1989-90 has yet to be decided. No decisions have yet been made on the Department's allocations for treatment, research and health education in future years.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what national data exists on which people known to be HIV positive develop AIDS.

**Mr. Mellor:** No national data are available showing which HIV-positive individuals develop AIDS.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any people in the United Kingdom have been diagnosed as having AIDS without the presence of HIV.

**Mr. Mellor:** Of the cases of AIDS reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre and the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit, 88 per cent. have been tested for the presence of antibodies to HIV or for HIV. Of these, results were positive in all but five individuals.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on whether test for Epstein-Barr, cytomegalo lymphoma hepatitis B, herpes simplex viruses or anti-bodies in people with AIDS are routinely performed.

**Mr. Meilor:** These tests are not routinely performed. However, if the clinical findings suggest that any of these conditions may be present, the tests would be carried out in accordance with clinical judgment.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any evidence that virus infections such as leukaemia and lymphoma retroviruses can result in selective damage to specific cells of the immune system, and in particular to white blood cells known as T and B lymphocytes.

**Mr. Mellor:** I understand that there is a considerable scientific literature on the possible effects of retroviruses on elements of the immune system.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in what percentage of people with Kaposi's sarcoma has HIV been isolated;

(2) what percentage of people with AIDS are infected with syphilis.

**Mr. Mellor:** I regret that these data are not available.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what criteria he authorises spending on research and public education programmes which identify HIV as the sole cause of AIDS.

**Mr. Mellor:** The overwhelming consensus of expert opinion is that HIV is the causative organism of AIDS.

**Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer on 10 January, *Official Report*, columns *605-8* about the AIDS education campaign, if he will state the value of the AIDS advertising budget; and how many times advertisements have been placed in the newspapers and journals set out in his answer.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 17 February 1989]:* The amounts spent on mass media advertising from the inception of the Government AIDS public education campaign to 31 December 1988 were as follows:

*Department of Health (to 31 December 1987)*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Press | 3,196,047 |
| Radio | 880,939 |
| Television | 3,461,985 |
| Cinema | 855,284 |
| Poster | 1,865,599 |
| Miscellaneous | 94,568 |
| Total | 10,354,422 |

*Health Education Authority (to 31 December 1988)*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Press | 1,120,367 |
| Television | 2,300,000 |
| Posters | 880,694 |
| Total | 4,301,061 |

A list giving the advertising insertions in the national and regional press and magazines for this period has been placed in the Library.

If my hon. Friend would like details of advertising insertions and associated spending from 1 January 1989, he may wish to approach the Health Education Authority for this information.

## Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Mellor:** Personal computers are used extensively throughout the Department, and many already communicate via an electronic mail service or over local area networks.

We are refining further our information technology (IT) strategy, which includes the development of a centrally maintained IT-based information centre. This system draws data from the NHS for use by top management and Ministers.

The Department's information technology branch keeps abreast of developments in the IT field and plans are constantly updated to improve our internal communications facilities where appropriate.

## "Working for Patients"

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria were used in selecting the audiences of National Health Service staff addressed by him following the launch of "Working for Patients".

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Those invited were people who would be closely connected with the implementation of the review, such as health authority and FPC chairmen and senior managers and professional staff and those who needed to be informed at first hand about the contents of the White Paper and to be able to question Ministers about its proposals.

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district medical officers were invited to the roadshow launch in the west midlands of "Working for Patients".

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The district medical officers invited were:

Dr. M. C. T. Wilkes, Kidderminster HA
Dr. H. V. Duggal, Mid-Staffordshire HA
Dr. M. E. Summerly, North Staffordshire HA
Dr. J. S. Dodge, Rugby HA
Dr. R. K. Griffiths, C Birmingham HA
Dr. M. J. Carpenter, E Birmingham HA
Dr. S. Gyde, N Birmingham HA

Dr. G. T. Pollock, Coventry HA
Dr. J. Middleton, Sandwell HA
Dr. G. M. Singal, Walsall HA

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any instructions, verbal or written, were given to managers or other National Health Service staff about their comments to the press or media following the launch of "Working for Patients".

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** It is the responsibility of individual health authorities to determine policy on how their staff should deal with questions from the press and media, including questions on "Working for Patients".

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the names of the press/public relations company responsible for the launch of the White Paper "Working for Patients"; if a process of competitive tendering was used before choosing the company; and if the press department at his Department was considered for the task.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** NML Presentations Ltd. was contracted by the Department to provide organisational, production and design services in connection with the NHS review launch communication programme. It was chosen from a number of companies which were asked to compete for the job. My Department's information division supervised and monitored the contract.

## Management Consultants (Cost)

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give each district health authority the spending on buying in advice from management consultants in the latest available year, giving this sum as a percentage of each district health authority's total revenue spending.

**Mr. Mellor:** The employment or use of management consultants is a matter for individual health authorities and their annual accounts do not separately identify any expenditure consequently incurred.

## Water Supply (Contamination)

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan of 27 February, if he will give the total number of qualified members of (i) the medical and (ii) the scientific staff of his Department dealing with matters related to contamination of drinking water by *(a)* micro-organisms, *(b)* chemicals, and *(c)* radiation.

**Mr. Mellor:** The numbers of qualified medical and scientific staff in post in the divisions which deal with matters related to the contamination of food, drinking water and the environment are set out in the table. These figures do not include the chief medical officer and his deputies and the two medical heads of divisions, senior principal medical officers (SPMOs). SPMOs deal with selected issues according to their nature and importance.

| | *Contamination by micro-organisms* | *chemicals* | *radiation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Medical | 2 | 7 | 1 |
| Other scientific | 2 | 16 | 4 |

## Cervical Cancer Screening

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the age distribution of screening examinations for cervical cancer in England and Wales in 1988;

(2) how many women had a first cervical cancer screen in England and Wales in 1988.

**Mr. Freeman:** This information is not available at present. However, we hope to be able to provide figures for 1988-89 towards the end of this year, following the introduction of new cancer screening returns in April 1988.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of screening examinations for cervical cancer in 1988.

**Mr. Freeman:** The information is not available in the form requested but following the introduction of a new cancer screening return from April 1988 it is hoped to be able to give details of women screened in 1988-89 towards the end of this year.

In 1987-88, in England and Wales, 4,322,345 cervical cytology cases were examined. A woman who was tested more than once was counted on each occasion, but where more than one smear was taken from the same patient at the same session, they were counted as one test.

## Cash Limits

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1978-79 the percentage increase in the cash limits set for hospital and community health services which was intended to cover pay and price inflation and the percentage increase which would have been required fully to cover pay and price inflation in each year.

**Mr. Mellor:** The information is as follows:

*Hospital and Community Health Services, England—Percentage increase in net current expenditure*

| | *1979-80* | *1980-81* | *1981-82* | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage increases in cash limit | 19·4 | 31·9 | 10·3 | 7·7 | 5·1 | 5·7 | 5·3 | 7·4 | 10·5 |
| Percentage required to fully cover HCHS pay and price inflation | 20·5 | 28·0 | 8·2 | 6·5 | 5·1 | 5·8 | 5·2 | 6·9 | 8·1 |
| Effective charge in purchasing power | −0·9 | +3·0 | +2·0 | +1·1 | 0·0 | −0·1 | +0·1 | +0·5 | +2·2 |

The table is based on HCHS net current (outturn) expenditure figures for the years in which HCHS pay and prices information is currently available. These figures do not, of course, take account of income from cash-releasing cost improvements which, in the years since 1984-85 provided a significant contribution to the margin available for service development.

## Dental Charges

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the effects of the introduction of charges on the take-up of dentists' invitations for routine inspections.

**Mr. Mellor:** Information is not yet available which would enable a comparison to be made between numbers of courses of treatment commenced before and after the introduction of the dental examination charge.

## Residential Care

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received any evidence to indicate that the full cost to public funds of private residential care is less than that which would be incurred if similar care were provided by local authorities.

**Mr. Mellor:** We are aware of certain studies of the costs of residential care. However, the very limited scope of the studies and the difficulties in making comparisons means that we are unable to draw general conclusions as to the relative cost to public funds of provision in different sectors.

## Cook-chill Food

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, following the advice from his chief medical officer that all cook-chill food should be re-heated until piping hot before consumption, what action he is taking about those supermarkets which continue to retail cook-chill chicken labelled "ready to eat".

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The chief medical officer's advice that cooked chilled meals and ready to eat poultry should be re-heated until they were piping hot was directed at pregnant women and certain others at special risk. As far as the rest of the population was concerned, he said that provided good hygiene practices were followed there was no need for them to change the types of foods that they regularly ate and enjoyed.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy towards the acceptance by health authorities of commercial sponsorship of the publication of newsheets relating to cook-chill catering.

**Mr. Freeman:** It is a matter for health authorities to determine their use of commercial sponsorship in the publication of any news sheets that they wish to issue provided they do not contravene current health policy.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will direct Wakefield health authority to ensure that future editions of "Catering Update" relating to cook-chill catering are produced without commercial sponsorship by companies closely associated with the introduction of such catering.

**Mr. Freeman:** No. Editorial control of such publications rests with the DHA.

## Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## Residential Care

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the full annual cost to local authorities of supplementing the incomes of residents of private homes whose resources, including income support, fall short of their residential fees.

**Mr. Mellor:** This information is not available centrally.

## Food Poisoning

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will break down the figures for food poisoning according to numbers and types of cases associted with *(a)* fish, *(b)* meat, *(c)* vegetables, *(d)* eggs and *(e)* other foods.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** *[holding answer 14 February 1989]:* A suspected food is identified in only a small proportion of reported outbreaks. The following table gives details of outbreaks of food poisoning reported to the public health laboratory service in 1987, where a suspected vehicle of infection and causative agent has been indentified.

| *Food* | *Salmonella SP* | *Clostridium Perfringens* | *Staphylococcus Aureus* | *Bacillus SP* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fish | 2 | — | — | — | 2 |
| Meat | 8 | 24 | 1 | 2 | 35 |
| Vegetables | — | — | — | — | — |
| Eggs | 6 | — | 1 | — | 7 |
| Other foods | | | | | |
| Chicken | 24 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 33 |
| Turkey | 15 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| Poultry | 2 | 1 | — | — | 3 |
| Other mixed foods | 14 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 41 |

Information is not readily available on all cases involved in these outbreaks. Provisional information on outbreaks associated with these foods in 1988 suggests that, with the exception of eggs, there was no significant difference in the numbers reported. However in 1988 the public health laboratory service received reports of 60 outbreaks of food poisoning, involving about 1,600 people, associated with the consumption of eggs.

**Mr.Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning from salmonella enteritidis have been reported over the past 12 months, broken down by the general circumstances of kitchen hygiene, catering or domestic.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** *[holding answer 14 February 1989]:* Reports of food poisoning cases are not routinely broken down by general circumstances of kitchen hygiene. Reports of outbreaks give information on such contributory factors. Salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 is associated predominantly with chicken and eggs. The number of reported food poisoning outbreaks linked with eggs, but not with chicken, showed a marked increase in 1988. Information suggests that while inadequate kitchen hygiene may have been a contributory factor in some of these outbreaks it cannot account for the marked increase in the total number of egg-associated salmonellosis reported in 1988.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Teenage Mothers (Council Houses)

64. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the provision of council accommodation to teenage mothers.

**Mr. Trippier:** The allocation of council housing to tenants is a matter for local housing authorities.

### Homeless Persons (London)

**Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of men and women who are currently of no fixed abode within Greater London.

**Mr. Trippier:** It is not possible to make a reliable estimate.

### Water Pollution

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will recommend the use of *(a)* mobile pollution detectors as used by a division of Wessex water authority and *(b)* the new anti-pollution vessel Thames Bubbler as used by Thames water authority, to other water boards in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moynihan:** These are both interesting developments whose operational performance will, no doubt, be carefully assessed by the individual water authorities concerned.

After Royal Assent of the Water Bill, the National Rivers Authority will take over the water authorities' regulatory functions. I would expect it to wish to review the scope for using mobile pollution detectors and oxygenating vessels more widely.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the location of each intermediate variation order currently under consideration by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to each of the water authorities.

**Mr. Howard:** Details of applications made under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, including those for time-limited variations, are held on the individual water authorities' registers. These may be inspected, free of charge, by anyone at all reasonable hours.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long he expects consideration of each application for intermediate variation orders to take; and by what date he expects all those applications received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on or after 28 March to be processed.

**Mr. Howard:** It is not possible to say how long consideration of each application for a time-limited consent variation will take. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will consider applications and where applicable, grant time-limited variations as quickly as possible. The inspectorate will remain responsible for issuing discharge consents until the National Rivers Authority is established.

### Legionella (House of Commons)

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *582*, specific tests for legionella have ever been undertaken in the air conditioning system and standby generator serving the underground carpark of the House; and if he will construct a table showing the numerical result of the last bacteriological count undertaken.

**Mr. Chope:** No specific tests for legionella have been necessary following the regular bacteriological sampling counts.

The results of the last count, taken on 16 February 1989, are shown in the table.

*Microbiological services report (Standard analyses)*

| *Sample details* | *K Plant Tower (air conditioning system)* | *Emergency generator (underground carpark)* |
|---|---|---|
| *Aerobic Bacteria* | | |
| Klebsiella spp (Highly significant potential slime former in industrial systems) | | |
| Bacillus spp (Spore and potential slime formers) | | |
| Other potential slime formers (Enterobacteria, Pseudomonads, Flavobacteria etc) | $<10^2$ | $<10^2$ |
| Other Aerobic bacteria | $<10^2$ | $<10^2$ |
| Total Aerobic bacteria | $<10^2$ | $<10^2$ |
| *Anaerobic Bacteria* | | |
| Dissimilatory Sulphate-reducers (Principally Desulfovibrio but includes other corrosive SRSs) | Not detected | Not detected |
| Total Anaerobic bacteria (Includes Clostridia, facultative anaerobes and aerotolerant strains) | | |
| *Microfungi* | | |
| Mould-like forms (Significant as potential slime formers) | Not detected | Not detected |
| Yeast-like forms (Unicellular microfungi, less significant as slime formers) | Not detected | Not detected |
| Total Microfungi | Not detected | Not detected |

## Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Ridley:** The Department of the Environment (Central) operates, in accordance with its strategic framework for using information technology, a central computer bureau which runs a number of systems covering the Department's wide-ranging activities; this is supported by an extensive communications network. In addition, the Department operates office automation systems and standardised word processing facilities designed to expedite internal communications. All these developments assist with the provision of appropriate information to the public.

The Property Services Agency has its own information technology strategy and has embarked on a major programme of computerisation. This is being developed against the back ground of my announcement on 25 May 1988 to put PSA on to a more commercial footing, and move to a trading fund status by 1993. Procurement of hardware began in November 1988 and some computer applications are currently being trialled in PSA's southern region, which includes the group and estates offices in Bournemouth.

The IT strategies of both parts of the Department are subject to continual refinement, monitoring and review. The newest proven technologies will continue to be applied, where they support the Department's business and policy priorities and provide value for money.

## London Docklands

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the recently published expenditure plans for the London Docklands development corporation take into account the securing of essential social infrastructure, and the need for London Docklands development corporation to be more effective in securing this provision, identified in the National Audit Office report on urban development corporations, paragraph 2.27.

**Mr. Trippier:** The Government's expenditure plans 1989-90 to 1991-92 (Cm. 609) take full account of LDDC's priorities, which include helping to improve social infrastructure. The LDDC is constantly concerned to use the resources which can be made available to it in the most effective way.

## Sewage Disposal

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exercise his powers to call in for public inquiry the current proposals of the North West water authority for sewage disposal in Morecambe bay.

**Mr. Moynihan:** My right hon. Friend will consider the need for an inquiry when he has considered North West water authority's applications for discharge consents under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, together with the large number of representations made to him.

## Seal Products

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government intend to support an indefinite extension of EEC directive 85/444 banning the importation of the skins of bluebacked and whitecoated seal pups and products derived there from.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 15 February 1989 at column *281*.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate allegations that blueback and whitecoat seal skins have been illegally imported into the United Kingdom in contravention of EEC directive 85/444.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Enforcement of the prohibition on commercial importation into the United Kingdom of harp and hooded seal pup skins and products stemming from directive 85/444 (EEC), is the responsibility of Customs and Excise. It has no evidence to support allegations of illegal importation, but would be prepared to consider any such evidence made available to it. No licences have been issued for imports into the United Kingdom that were contrary to the ban.

## Water Supply (Contamination)

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish immediately *(a)* the terms of reference and *(b)* the membership of the independently-led inquiry into cryptosporidia contamination in the water supply in the Oxford and Swindon areas.

**Mr. Howard:** Mr. Terry Dick, chairman of the western consumer consultative committee of the Thames Water region, will conduct the independent investigation established by Thames Water into the cryptosporidia contamination of the water supply in the Oxford and Swindon areas. Mr. Dick will be able to obtain whatever support he needs from within or outside Thames Water. The investigation has the following aims:

(i) to describe the events which called into question the purity of the water supply;
(ii) to review Thames Water's handling of the incident, from both the technical and customer relations standpoints; and
(iii) to assess the effectiveness of the remedial measures taken.

The findings of the investigation will be made public.

## Ozone Layer

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the occasion of the forthcoming international conference on "Saving the Ozone Layer" on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the use of R22 in preference to R12 in refrigeration plant; and if he will give guidance to those making immediate international decisions for refrigeration plant with a life of 10 or more years.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The Government's policy on the use of CFC22 is set out in its reply to the first report from the Environment Committee (Session 1987-88 HC 270-1) on air pollution (Cm. 522).

## "Environment in Trust"

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the "Environment in Trust" leaflets published on 1 March; how many have been printed; and what was the total cost of the hire and use of the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre on 1 March.

**Mr. Ridley:** The one-off costs of creative design and artwork for the "Environment in Trust" series of leaflets are £117,594. The initial print of 25,000 leaflets has cost £99,760. The cost of the hire and use of the accommodation at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre for the reception on 1 March 1989 was £2,571.

This is remarkably good value for money.

## Water (Privatisation)

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals exist within the North West water authority for mounting a pre-flotation advertising campaign; what would be the budget for such a campaign; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals exist within the nine water authorities other than North West water for mounting a pre-flotation advertising campaign; what would be the total budget for such campaigns; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moynihan:** This is a matter for the individual water authorities and I suggest the hon. Member approaches them direct.

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals exist within the Water Authorities Association to mount a national, centrally co-ordinated campaign before flotation; what would be the budget for such a campaign; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moynihan:** The water authorities are currently undertaking a national corporate advertising campaign. The details are a matter for the Water Authorities Association.

## Right to Buy

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the number of repossessions of properties purchased by ex-council tenants who have exercised their right to buy.

**Mr. Trippier:** The latest information on all building society and local authority repossessions is given in the table. Information separating repossession of ex-council houses from other repossessions is not available.

*Properties taken into possession in period*

| *Year* | *Building Societies (United Kingdom)* *Number* | *Percentage of loans at end of period* | *Year* | *Local authorities (England)* *Number* | *Percentage of loans at end of period* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 2,530 | 0·048 | 1980-81 | 1,000 | 0·14 |
| 1980 | 3,020 | 0·056 | 1981-82 | 1,100 | 0·16 |
| 1981 | 4,240 | 0·077 | 1982-83 | 950 | 0·14 |
| 1982 | 5,950 | 0·105 | 1983-84 | 840 | 0·13 |
| 1983 | 7,320 | 0·123 | 1984-85 | 570 | 0·10 |
| 1984 | 10,870 | 0·171 | 1985-86 | 630 | 0·13 |
| 1985 | 16,770 | 0·250 | 1986-87 | 490 | 0·12 |
| 1986 | 20,930 | 0·296 | 1987-88 | 330 | 0·10 |
| 1987 | 22,930 | 0·319 | | | |
| 1988 | 16,150 | 0·216 | | | |

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the annual cost to date of the publicity material promoting the right to buy council properties.

**Mr. Trippier:** Annual expenditure to draw attention of council tenants to their right to buy under the Housing Act has been as follows:

| | *£* |
|---|---|
| 1980-81 | 655,000 |
| 1981-82 | 239,000 |
| 1982-83 | 84,000 |
| 1983-84 | — |
| 1984-85 | 1,306,000 |
| 1985-86 | 300,000 |
| 1986-87 | 670,000 |
| 1987-88 | 25,000 |
| 1988-89 | [1]75,000 |

[1] Provisional.

## Ordnance Survey

**Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of Ordnance Survey.

**Mr. Ridley:** The Ordnance Survey financial targets for the four years from 1986-87 to 1989-90 which were announced on 30 October 1986 have already been met, indicating the excellent achievements made by management and staff. In acknowledgement of the commitment to full cost recovery in the longer term, I have now set new targets for Ordnance Survey:

(1) To recover by the end of 1991-92 a minimum of 55 per cent. of the total annual cost of core activities.

(2) To recover the total cost of Public Sector repayment work at home and overseas.

(3) To maximise revenue on small scale and specialist products recovering not less than 110 per cent. of the total costs of that category.

I have today approved the Ordnance Survey plan for 1989-92 based on these targets and I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

### Strategic Guidance for London

**Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish his strategic guidance for London; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ridley:** I have today published the draft strategic guidance for consultation. Comments are invited by 26 May. I hope to publish the guidance in its final form before the summer recess.

The draft sets out guidance on those planning matters which must be dealt with on a Londonwide basis, in order to assist the boroughs to prepare effective unitary development plans for their areas. Its aims are to facilitate development and employment; regenerate rundown areas; maintain the vitality and character of established town centres; sustain the amenity of residential districts; allow for a wide range of housing provision; and accord high priority to the environment by maintaining the green belt and metropolitan open land, and by preserving fine views, conservation areas and surrounding countryside. The draft guidance includes the number of additional dwellings for which each borough should make provision in the 1990s. The proposals take account of the advice put forward by the London planning advisory committee, with the agreement of the boroughs. The boroughs will have discretion in their UDPs to identify suitable locations for housing development and to indicate densities and parking standards so as to ensure that such development can be accommodated without detriment to the local environment.

Copies of the draft guidance have been sent to all London MPs and placed in the Library of the House.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the implications for his policy on safe destruction of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons in the United Kingdom of the decision of European Community Ministers to eliminate most chlorofluorocarbon gases by the end of the century.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Policy on the destruction of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is not affected by last week's Environment Council resolution agreeing that production and consumption of certain CFCs should be eliminated by the end of the century.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what allowance he has made in his Department's budget for each of the next five years to provide for the substitution of HCFC 22 for chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants covered by the Montreal protocol; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** As refrigeration and air conditioning systems in Government premises need replacing or servicing, full advantage will be taken of the best available alternatives to the Montreal protocol CFCs. This does not require any separate budgetary provision.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department.

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas).

### Rent Assessment Officers

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is being given to rent officers in assessing eligible rent in (1) boarding accommodation and (2) supportive accommodation as a result of the changes being implemented in April of the current year.

**Mr. Trippier:** Where the rent paid by a housing benefit claimant includes an amount in respect of board, the local authority will make a deduction in respect of that amount in accordance with the housing benefit regulations before referring the rent for consideration by the rent officer. Any other services provided—including supportive services—will be identified by the local authority in its application to the rent officer. Under the draft orders now laid before Parliament the rent officer will be required to determine the value within the overall rent of any of those service items which are ineligible for housing benefit.

### Environment Council

**Mr. Andrew Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 2 March.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside, represented the United Kingdom at this meeting.

Following the initiative of the United Kingdom, the Council agreed on the need to reduce production and consumption of the CFCs controlled by the Montreal protocol by at least 85 per cent. as soon as possible with a view to phasing them out by the end of the century, and to strengthen the protocol accordingly. This represents substantial and welcome progress since the Environment Council 24 November. The agreement gave a clear signal to this week's "Saving the ozone layer" conference and to the first meeting of the parties to the protocol in Helsinki in May. It puts the European Community firmly in the lead in trying to convince the rest of the world that tougher international measures are needed.

I am pleased to report that the Council reached agreement on the municipal waste incineration directive, which sets sensible but appropriately rigorous standards for new municipal waste incinerators in line with the regime likely to be imposed for domestic reasons by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution when they come under its control at the end of March under regulations to be laid before the House within the next few days.

The Council had a further useful discussion of the proposal for a directive on the contained use of genetically modified micro-organisms. A considerable number of points were resolved, and the proposal was referred back for further consideration of remaining issues.

A proposal to introduce controls over discharges of four dangerous substances to waste was also discussed.

The Council gave preliminary consideration to proposed technical amendments to the air quality directive on smoke and sulphur dioxide emission which do not affect the United Kingdom.

The Commission noted progress on the global transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste convention which is currently under negotiation under the auspices of the United Nations environment programme.

A preliminary exchange of views took place on a communication from the Commission on measures to improve the conservation of the African elephant.

Ministers also discussed the conference to be held in The Hague on 11 March and agreed a declaration stating that any member state attending the conference would not be asked to enter into international commitments liable to affect the environment policy of the Community as a whole.

### Civil Servants (Political Activity)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff within his Department in the category "intermediate", as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local or national political activity.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* My Department operates a block permission scheme related to the types of work on which staff are engaged. The number of staff employed in these areas varies over time. In November 1987, a total of 11,801 posts in the PSA and 1,165 in DOE (Central) were covered by permissions. More recent figures are not available.

### Thames Water Authority

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of *(a)* the report on water quality and *(b)* the operational response of the Thames water authority referred to in "Thames Water Board News" of 16 September 1988.

**Mr. Moynihan** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* No. I understand that the documents are internal papers of the Thames water authority which were submitted to the authority's board meeting in September 1988.

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how Thames water authority has performed over the last eight quarters in relation to its potable water quality targets;

(2) if he will make a statement relating to the quarter ended 30 June 1988 and for subsequent quarters on the performance of the Thames water authority in relation to *(a)* the European Community directive on quality of water intended for human consumption, *(b)* his Department's report 71 on the bacteriological examination of drinking water supplied and *(c)* World Health Organisation guidelines for drinking water.

**Mr. Moynihan** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* I am making inquiries of the Thames water authority and will write to the hon. Member shortly on these two questions.

### Water Meters

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of *(a)* the average cost per household, and *(b)* the overall cost in England and Wales of installing individual water meters in each dwelling; to what extent this is to be at the charge of *(a)* the Exchequer and *(b)* the consumer; and what estimate he has made of the cost to public funds of meter installations where the householder is in receipt of income support.

**Mr. Moynihan** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 20 February at column *495*, it will be some time before the metering trials provide reliable estimates of the average cost of installing meters on a wide scale. This will depend on a number of factors including the extent of complex plumbing, the number of common supply pipes, the siting of meters and the type of meter technology used.

Where a water undertaker decides to introduce compulsory metering of existing properties, the cost of installing meters will be met by the water undertaker and recovered, in so far as they are reasonable, through charges to its customers as a whole. The amount of costs which they will be able to recover in this way will be subject to an average cash ceiling per installation set by the director general. There will be no charge on public funds.

### Bathing (Warnings)

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will require local authorities to fly red flags, or similar clear warnings of danger to be displayed, along all beaches where bathing may be hazardous to health, according to information available to him through the European Community or his own Department.

**Mr. Moynihan** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* A total of 67 per cent. of our bathing waters now meet the standards of the EC bathing water directive and water authorities are developing improvement programmes for the remaining waters. However, failure of a bathing water to meet these standards does not mean there is a serious health hazard. This would only arise in exceptional circumstances and it would then be for local environmental health officers to advice on appropriate action, including the provision of health warnings.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on proposals for the privatisation of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service research and development.

**Mr. Ryder:** I have no plans for the privatisation of the research and development service of ADAS.

### Bees

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will expand the use of the set-aside scheme so as to assist the bee industry by returning fallow land to a flower-rich environment by seeding with nectar and pollen-bearing plants.

**Mr. Ryder:** Land left fallow under the scheme must be kept in good agricultural condition. The detailed management rules forbid the use of insecticides and fungicides and require the establishment of a green cover crop (such as clover, which is particularly attractive to

bees). Farmers may sow conservation or wildflower mixes and are advised to consider doing so in the scheme literature. There is thus already ample opportunity under the scheme for the creation of set-aside land of conditions attractive to bees and other wildlife.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the monetary value to agriculture of British bees as pollinators.

**Mr. Ryder:** We recognise that honey bees play a significant role in pollinating some major agricultural and horticultural crops, but is it not possible to put a monetary value on this because of other factors involved.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what his Department is doing to prevent the starvation of bees in the summer months in areas of intensive farming where pasture, woods and hedgerows have been eliminated as a source of nectar.

**Mr. Ryder:** Feeding of bees and similar matters of bee management are for individual beekeepers who can seek advice if necessary from the bee unit of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

ADAS advice on conservation matters is generally freely available, and when giving commercial advice to farmers, advisers seek to achieve a reasonable balance between the interests of agriculture and conservation considerations. My Department also provides grant aid towards the cost of new hedge planting and farm woodlands.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) of 27 February, what is the cost of his new programme of research and development into bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and how this programme is being funded.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Decisions will be taken in relation to possible new areas of research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the light of advice received from the newly established research consultative committee.

### Hedgerows

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many miles of hedgerows have been replanted in the northern region in the last three years; and at what cost in grants.

**Mr. Ryder:** I regret that figures relating purely to hedge replanting are not available. Neither do we have details of hedge planting carried out without grant aid. Grant paid between October 1985 and September 1988 in the Ministry's northern region under the agriculture improvement scheme for hedge planting, hedge laying and associated gates and stiles amounted to £407,494 on eligible expenditure of £911,685. This broadly equates to 275 miles of hedge planting.

### Beef Premium

**Sir. John Farr:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the beef special premium, due to replace the beef variable premium from 3 April, will be payable direct and in full to those engaged in finishing beef in the traditional manner.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The Community special premium for beef is payable to beef producers on up to 90 head of male animals per year at a rate of £28·42 per head. The detailed Community regulations implementing the decisions of the January Agriculture Council are currently being finalised. As we are required to apply the new scheme by 3 April, I have concluded in consultation with the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland that we should, at least in the first instance, make use in Great Britain of the option to apply the premium when cattle are sold at live markets for slaughter and at slaughterhouses, as we already have an administrative system for that in place. This will enable those finishing beef to continue to sell cattle through live markets and slaughterhouses and to receive the new premium at a similar marketing stage to the old variable premium.

Farming and trade interests would, I know, see advantage in applying the premium on farm. I shall review in consultation with the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland the practicability and cost-effectiveness of moving in due course to an on-farm basis. A separate announcement will be made shortly about the arrangements to apply in Northern Ireland.

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he expects the new beef special premium, due to come in on 3 April to replace the present beef variable premium will apply to the first 90 male animals in a herd only, compared with the present payment on all graded animals regardless of sex, to affect the specialist beef finisher; and to what extent he expects the smaller finisher in the traditional manner will lose premium.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** As my right hon. Friend explained in his reply to my hon. Friend today the new special premium is to be paid at the same marketing stage as the old variable premium. The rate of payment is £28·42 per head on male animals up to 90 head per producer. The old variable premium varies according to market circumstances and the weight of the beast with a typical value range of about £40 to £54 per beast. With a fixed rate for the new premium, beef finishers will be able to take it more predictably into account in their planning. They will also know that the quality standard which matters is not the certification standard imposed by scheme rules, but the demands which are imposed by market needs. I believe that beef finishers will find that the new premium will enable them to concentrate more on meeting the quality demands of the market. Finishers marketing less than 90 head of male animals per year will be able to claim the new premium on all of them and the payments they receive may well be higher than they would have received at times when the variable premium was paid at less than the maximum rate.

### Animal Research

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he is giving to the representations of the Animal Diseases Research Association regarding the need to continue funding research programmes into euzootic abortion, cryptosporidiosis listeriosis and toxoplasmosis.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** A letter on this subject from the Animal Diseases Research Association was received in my Department on 2 March and is receiving careful attention.

### Salmonella

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will itemise which of the 17 measures he has announced to counter salmonella in poultry since December 1988 require *(a)* new primary legislation and *(b)* new secondary legislation before becoming operative;

(2) when he intends to introduce *(a)* secondary or *(b)* primary legislation for each of the 17 measures he has announced to control salmonella.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on Friday 3 March at columns *373-74*.

### Salmon

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make representations to the Republic of Ireland about the threat to salmon stocks caused by Irish fishermen in international waters; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** The Minister of State at the Scottish Office and I had informal discussions with our opposite number from the Irish Republic. The United Kingdom fisheries Departments regularly monitor the effects of the Irish salmon fishery and the relevant enforcement bodies of our respective countries, along with those of Northern Ireland, will continue to work in close co-operation against any illegal fishing for salmon.

### Bovine Somatotropin

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place in the Library the text of the advice given by the Veterinary Products Committee to his Department on an application by Monsanto to produce the genetically-engineered hormone bovine somatotropin to boost milk production in cows.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** No. The advice on individual applications which the committee gives from time to time is confidential under the terms of the Medicines Act.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

### Vine Stocks (Fungus)

**Sir David Price:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the spread of the eutypiose fungus upon vine stocks is expected to have upon wine production in the European Community; and what steps are being proposed to contain the spread.

**Mr. Ryder** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* Eutypa lata has been fairly widely distributed in the traditional wine producing countries for many years. I am not aware of any proposals from the European Commission specifically concerned with its treatment or containment. There have been no confirmed cases in which it has been identified in this country but ADAS horticultural advisers and plant pathologists have been alerted since 1987 to watch for possible signs of the disease.

### Agriculture and the Environment

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whether he will give details of the work which will be undertaken by the Agricultural and Food Research Council in its £5·4 million plan for co-operative research on agriculture and the environment.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have been asked to reply.

The AFRC, in conjunction with Economic and Social Research Council and Natural Environment Research Council, will shortly start a programme of research on agriculture and the environment. Funds are divided equally between the three research councils. The AFRC will take the lead in supporting work on herbivore/plant interactions and vegetation dynamics.

### Collaborative Research

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will give details of the work which will be undertaken by the Agricultural and Food Research Council under its £3 million plan to expand its LINK scheme for collaborative research with the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have been asked to reply.

The AFRC will be co-sponsoring the control of plant metabolism and protein engineering programmes. It is also considering co-sponsoring the eukaryotic genetics, molecular recognition, molecular sensors and food sciences programmes.

### Institute for Animal Health

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will give details of the work to be undertaken by the Agricultural and Food Research Council in its £11 million plan to restructure the Institute for Animal Health; and over what period such work will be carried out.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have been asked to reply.

Plans are well advanced for the first phase of the restructuring of the AFRC's institute of animal health on to two sites. This will involve the relocation of poultry disease research from the Houghton laboratory to the Compton laboratory, requiring the provision of new poultry housing for experimental and production flocks as well as new laboratory accommodation for scientific staff. It is expected that this work will be completed within the next three years. Plans are also being made for the refurbishment of the Pirbright laboratory.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

### Discrimination

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, in his consideration of legislative proposals to deal with discrimination in Northern Ireland, attention was given to problems of discrimination on grounds of age, disability or ethnicity; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Viggers** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* The Government's consultative paper on equality of opportunity in employment in Northern Ireland considered whether combined legislative and other measures should be taken on discrimination on grounds of religion, sex and disability. In the light of responses received, however, the Government decided that legislative action should concentrate on religious equality of opportunity.

### DNA Profiling

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on published research on the possibility of obtaining sufficient DNA for DNA profiling by mouth swabs by rubbing the area between lip and gum with a bud of cotton wool without recourse to taking scrapes from the inside of the buccal cavity, or using the polymcrase chain reaction test.

**Mr. Ian Stewart** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* I am not aware of any published research which specifically addresses the point raised by the hon. Member, although I understand that the application of the technique of DNA profiling to mouth swabs generally has been mentioned in a number of publications.

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the research by scientists from the Northern Ireland forensic science laboratory on DNA profiling by mouth swabs will be published; in which scientific journal it is expected to appear; and if he will make it his policy to subject the papers to peer review prior to publication.

**Mr. Ian Stewart** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* I understand that it is at present too early to say when a report of the results of work done by the laboratory on DNA profiling of material from mouth swabs will be available for publication. Nor has any decision been taken as to the scientific journal to which this report may be offered. Whether or not the report is subject to peer review will be for decision in the light of the policy of the particular journal in which it is published.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been confirmed in cattle in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Viggers:** Ten cases to 28 February 1989.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Transitional Protection

8. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have lost transitional protection at the most recent date.

9. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have lost transitional protection at the most recent date.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) earlier today.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were awarded a transitional addition in April 1988 and how many of these as a result will receive this April *(a)* reduced uprating, and *(b)* no uprating.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Precise information is not available. An estimated 1·4 million claimants were awarded transitional additions in April 1988. It is further estimated that 3¼ million claimants will receive their full increase at this year's uprating; approximately 610,000 will receive a partial uprating and 570,000 no increase.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in respect of each Department of Social Security region how many claimants were awarded a transitional addition in April 1988, and how many of these as a result will receive this April *(a)* reduced uprating, and *(b)* no uprating.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information is not available.

### Pensions

18. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners receive less than the full pension unprating in April 1989 due to having current protected transitional income support payments.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Precise information is not available, but we estimate that of the 1·7 million pensioners on income support 1·2 million will receive the full increase and 0·3 million a partial increase.

24. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what level the basic old-age pension would now stand if it had been uprated in line with earnings since 1979.

**Mr. Scott:** Based on annual upratings in line with earnings, the current weekly value of the basic retirement pension would be £48·80 for a single pensioner and £78·15 for a pensioner couple. The key indicator of the priority that this Government give to pensioners' income is the 23 per cent. real-terms increase in pensioners' average total net income during our first seven years in office.

31. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the level of basic pensions in April 1989 for single persons and couples had they been uprated in line with earnings since 1980.

**Mr. Scott:** Based on annual upratings in line with earnings since 1980, the level of basic retirement pension in April 1989 would be £53·20 for a single pensioner, and £85·20 for a pensioner couple.

42. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what level the basic old-age pension would now stand if it had been uprated in line with earnings since 1979.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is as follows:

*Value of retirement pension if increased in line with average earnings since 1979*

| *Uprating dates* | *Single* £ | *Couple* £ |
|---|---|---|
| November 1979 | 23·20 | 37·15 |
| November 1980 | 27·35 | 43·80 |
| November 1981 | 30·50 | 48·85 |
| November 1982 | 33·05 | 52·90 |
| November 1983 | 35·95 | 57·50 |
| November 1984 | 37·75 | 60·40 |
| November 1985 | 41·05 | 65·70 |
| July 1986 | 43·35 | 69·40 |
| April 1987 | 45·25 | 72·45 |
| April 1988 | 48·80 | 78·15 |
| April 1989 | 53·00 | 84·85 |

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the current level of retirement pension for a single pensioner and a pensioner couple if uprated by prices or earnings, whichever was the higher, each year since 1980.

**Mr. Scott** *[pursuant to his reply, 22 February 1989, c. 682]:* I regret that the figures provided have been found to contain an error. The figures assume that the upratings which took effect from November 1983 and November 1984 were based on the increase in prices or average earnings over the periods November 1982 to November 1983, and November 1983 to November 1984.. The increases should have been measured over the 12 months to May in each case.

The amended figures are as follows:

| *Up-rating Dates* | *Value of Retirement Pension if increased in line with the higher prices or average earnings* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Single* £ | *Couple* £ |
| November 1980 | 27·45 | 44·00 |
| November 1981 | 30·75 | 49·30 |
| November 1982 | 33·30 | 53·40 |
| November 1983 | 36·20 | 58·05 |
| November 1984 | 38·05 | 61·00 |
| November 1985 | 41·40 | 66·35 |
| July 1986 | 43·70 | 70·05 |
| April 1987 | 45·60 | 73·15 |
| April 1988 | 49·20 | 78·95 |

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what level the basic old-age pension would now stand if it had been uprated in line with earnings since 1979.

**Mr. Scott** *[pursuant to his reply, 23 February 1989, c. 758]:* I regret that the figures provided have been found to contain an error. The figures assume that the upratings which took effect from November 1983 and November 1984 were based on the increase in average earnings over the periods November 1982 to November 1983, and November 1983 to November 1984. The increase should have been measured over the 12 months to May in each case.

The information requested, with the amended figures, is as follows:

Based on annual upratings in line with earnings since 1979, the current weekly value of basic retirement pension would be £48·80 for a single pensioner, and £78·15 for a pensioner couple.

## Elderly People

14. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the social security budget is spent on the elderly.

**Mr. Moore:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) earlier today.

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his Department's spending plans on support for the elderly as outlined in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-92" White Paper Cm 615.

**Mr. Scott:** Spending on benefits for the elderly continues to increase, and is planned to rise to nearly £28 billion in 1991-92.

30. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the social security budget is spent on the elderly.

43. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the level of public expenditure on the elderly is now; and what it was in 1978-79.

**Mr. Scott:** I refer my hon. Friends to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 2 March at column *323*.

## Computerisation

20. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when computerisation of the social security system will start to provide savings in administration costs.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The operational strategy—the Department's programme to computerise social security administration—is already producing some small savings in administration. These are expected to rise to £150 million per annum by 1995.

33. **Mr. Wyn Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures on the anticipated cost and savings of his Department's computerisation programme.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood and for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 5 December 1988 at column *61*.

## Public Expenditure

21. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of public expenditure is taken up by his Department.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) earlier today.

## Social Fund

22. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why applications for loans from the social fund are being turned down.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** To the end of January 1989, 61 per cent. of applications for budgeting loans and 90 per cent. for crisis loans were successful.

My hon. Friend will no doubt be pleased to note that over 6,000 loan applications were refused because social fund officers awarded non-repayable grants instead. This is further evidence that social fund officers are properly considering whether individual needs can instead be met by a community care grant. This presents a rather different picture from that which opponents of the social fund would have us believe.

I have set out in the table details of the full reasons for refusal.

*Reason for refusal as percentage of total applications processed (11 April 1988—31 January 1989)*

| *Reasons for Refusal* | *Budgeting loans* *Per cent.* | *Crisis loans* *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| Savings over £500 sufficient to meet cost | 0·10 | 0·01 |
| Not in receipt of IS | 4·29 | — |
| Not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks | 11·71 | — |
| Excluded items | 3·33 | 0·35 |
| Excluded persons | 0·08 | 0·08 |
| Amount less than £30, not travelling expenses | 1·06 | — |
| Adjusted amount less than £30, not travelling expenses | 0·36 | — |
| Total debt of £1,000 | 0·02 | — |
| Previous application and SFO decision for this item | 1·63 | 0·36 |
| No serious damage or risk to health or safety | — | 5·95 |
| Inability to repay | 1·32 | 0·76 |
| Help available from another source | 0·30 | 1·34 |
| Insufficient priority | 11·88 | 0·22 |
| Suitable alternative available | 0·26 | 0·43 |
| Loan refused—CCG awarded | 1·02 | 0·03 |
| Other | 2·30 | 1·50 |

*Notes:*
IS—Income Support
SFO—Social Fund Officer
SF—Social Fund
CCG—Community Care Grant

26. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost of loans from the social fund in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Questions of expenditure from the social fund in respect of Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Social fund gross expenditure to the end of January 1989 in respect of loans for offices in Great Britain is as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Scotland | 19·0 |
| England | 70·0 |
| Wales | 8·5 |

37. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the correlation between the level of applications for support from the social fund and the percentage disposal of social fund total budgets from his Department's offices; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We are closely monitoring the operation of the social fund. Information for each local office relating to the numbers and financial values of applications processed and awards made and the budgets remaining at the end of each month is placed in the Library at monthly intervals. A note explaining the basis on which the 1988-89 allocations were made is also in the Library.

## Spending Plans

23. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his Department's spending plans as outlined in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-92", Cm. 615.

**Mr. Scott:** We plan to increase spending on social security from £47·6 billion in 1988-89 to £51 billion in 1989-90, rising to almost £60 billion in 1991-92. This programme is by far the largest in Government, accounting for over 30 per cent. of the total.

The plans imply a growth rate in spending on benefits of over 2 per cent. each year above the assumed increase in prices. This is on top of the 33 per cent. real terms increase in expenditure on social security which has taken place since 1978-79. The plans also take account of the continuing fall in unemployment, which more than accounts for the £900 million fall in expenditure this year, compared with previous plans, and which saves over £1·5 billion in each of the next three years. This has enabled us to keep the planning total for 1988-89 much the same as in previous plans despite plans to spend more on other parts of the programme, in particular on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled, where spending has already increased by over 90 per cent. in real terms since we took office in 1979.

The extra package of help for poorer pensioners which we announced on 24 November last year is additional to the programme described in the White Paper. This adds almost £100 million to the totals in 1989-90 and £200 million a year thereafter.

It is thanks to the growth in the economy and to the success of our economic policies that the country is able to afford the massive resources devoted to social security spending which are detailed in the White Paper.

## Family Support

25. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much expenditure on support for the family has increased since 1978-79.

38. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the level of public expenditure on support for the family now; and what it was in 1978-79.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** From 1974-75 to 1978-79, support for families, excluding extra help needed because unemployment was rising, fell by 7 per cent. in real terms. Under this Government, family support has risen by 27·3 per cent. —again in real terms. Expressed in 1988-89 values this means that between 1974-75 and 1978-79, family support fell by £500 million from £7,250 million to £6,740 million and then rose by £1,840 million to £8,580 million in 1988-89.

34. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what support is provided in the United Kingdom and in other European Community countries for families with children.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer my hon. Friend to the Department's publication "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (Position at 1 January 1988)", a copy of which is in the Library.

## Income Support

27. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases, of which he has knowledge, those aged 16 and 17 years have ceased to receive income support without taking up a job or employment training at the most recent date.

**Mr. Scott:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams) earlier today.

41. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to seek to improve the level of public comprehension of the income support system.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** There are already a number of indications that the public are finding the new income support scheme much simpler to understand. However, we are continuing to monitor and we will seek to take action to improve comprehension should it become necessary.

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of income support recipients among *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* unemployed *(c)* long-term sick or people with disabilities and *(d)* single parents who will receive no increase in their benefits, due to still getting transitional addition payments, in each year from 1989-90 to 1999-2000, and beyond.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Precise information is not available. Estimated numbers derived from the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are in the table. No estimates are available beyond these dates; the numbers involved are expected to be tiny.

| | *1989-90* | *1990-91* |
|---|---|---|
| Pensioners | 200,000 | 50,000 |
| Unemployed | 210,000 | 70,000 |
| Long-term sick or disabled | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| Lone Parents | 40,000 | 10,000 |

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the latest figures for the number of income support recipients awarded transitional additions for 1988-89 and the number who will still be receiving transitional additions in 1989-90.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Precise information is not available. It is estimated that around 1·4 million claimants were awarded income support transitional additions in April 1988, and that some 600,000 will continue to receive them following the April 1989 uprating.

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the number of transitional addition payments for 1989-90 by Department of Social Security region, and for Greater London.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Statistics on income support transitional protection are obtained through the annual statistical inquiries which follow uprating exercises and are

based on an examination of 1 per cent. of cases in receipt of benefit. The 1989 inquiry will be held in May and the information from this is necessarily not yet available.

Information on housing benefit transitional payments will become available later this year, but this will be on the basis of local authority areas and not social security regions.

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the number of claimants in receipt of income support for each of the following categories (1) unemployed claimants, (2) claimants not required to register for work, (3) pensioners and (4) young people aged 16 to 18 years; and if he will indicate the number of claimants in receipt of each premium within each of the above categories.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The latest available information is as follows:

1. 1,559,000
2. 1,186,000
3. 1,671,000
4. 137,000 (estimated figures for age 16 to 18 inclusive).

I regret that information about the number of claimants in receipt of each premium within specified categories is not yet available.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest figure for the full annual amount paid in income support to residents of private residential homes within the Wakefield metropolitan district.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that the information requested is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, *Official Report*, 1 February, column *293*, he will *(a)* rework the data for 1979, 1980, 1981 in terms of 1982 regions, *(b)* present a table showing claimants in each 1982 social security region from 1979 to 1988, provisional taking 1982 as the base year.

**Mr Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 14 February 1989]:* The information is as follows:

*Number of claimants receiving Supplementary Benefit or Income Support: 1979 to 1988*

*Thousands*

| *Social Security Region* | [1]*1979* | *1980* | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | [2]*1988* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Eastern | 475 | 530 | 636 | 717 | 735 | 780 | 789 | 809 | 793 | 694 |
| London North | 466 | 520 | 627 | 706 | 734 | 779 | 791 | 812 | 803 | 655 |
| London South | 432 | 471 | 548 | 623 | 645 | 683 | 699 | 722 | 703 | 574 |
| Wales and South Western | 395 | 427 | 500 | 560 | 574 | 617 | 625 | 637 | 618 | 532 |
| Midlands | 457 | 520 | 648 | 747 | 777 | 819 | 825 | 848 | 826 | 694 |
| North Western | 450 | 496 | 594 | 674 | 697 | 735 | 744 | 765 | 753 | 671 |
| Scotland | 294 | 320 | 385 | 439 | 461 | 492 | 501 | 549 | 548 | 498 |
| TOTAL | 2,969 | 3,284 | 3,938 | 4,466 | 4,623 | 4,905 | 4,974 | 5,142 | 5,044 | 4,318 |
| INDEX (using 1982 as the base year) | 66 | 73 | 88 | 100 | 103 | 110 | 111 | 115 | 113 | 97 |

[1] Figures quoted for 1979 to 1981 are reworked data.
[2] Figures for 1988 are provisional and subject to amendment.
*Sources:* November/December Quarterly Count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where benefit payment has ceased but other action is continuing. The data from the Annual Statistical Inquiry used in the reply on 1 February cannot be reworked in the way requested.

## Families (Policies)

29. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to bring forward policies of social security designed to strengthen the family unit; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** One of the major objectives of the social security reforms introduced last April has been to focus additional help on families with children. We are continually looking at the social security system to ensure that benefits meet the genuine needs of families and do not harm the people they are trying to help by creating disincentives to independence.

## Single Parent Families

32. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, if he will make a statement on the disregard rules for single-parent families.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** To help those lone parents who choose to work, £15 of a lone parent's net weekly earnings is disregarded in calculating their entitlement to income support and housing benefit. Under family credit lone parents are entitled to the same credit as couples and their one-parent benefit is wholly disregarded. We shall continue to monitor the benefit system and the incentives and disincentives to independence that it provides.

## Residential Homes

35. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to review his Department's proposal for residents of those homes for the elderly, presently not requiring registration under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We have no plans to change benefit rules for elderly people in such residential care and nursing homes.

## Young People

36. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his Department's spending plan on support for young people outlined in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-92" White Paper, Cm 615.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Young people who have left school and are under 18 do not normally have title to social

security benefits in their own right. As the White Paper explains in paragraph 38, income support was withdrawn from this age group in September 1988, except for certain restricted categories. These include young people unable to take up a place on a youth training scheme (for example, lone parents) or, for a short period, young people not working, but seeking a youth training scheme place, who either have no home, or are unable to live there, or who would unavoidably be in severe hardship if income support were not paid. We expect the benefit expenditure on these groups to be quite small.

### Heating Allowances

39. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the regional distribution of heating allowances in percentage terms in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The table gives the information requested on supplementary benefit heating additions for the last three years for which information is available. These additions do not form part of the income support scheme which replaced supplementary benefit on 11 April 1988.

| *Region* | *1984* | *1986* | *1987* |
|---|---|---|---|
| North Eastern | 16·91 | 16·54 | 16·53 |
| Midlands | 17·05 | 16·95 | 17·12 |
| North Western | 14·72 | 14·51 | 14·92 |
| London North | 15·89 | 15·14 | 15·49 |
| London South | 12·90 | 13·38 | 12·62 |
| Scotland | 9·93 | 10·02 | 11·02 |
| Wales and South West | 12·60 | 12·46 | 12·30 |
| Great Britain | 100·00 | 100·00 | 100·00 |

*Source:* Annual Statistical Enquiries. The information was not collected in 1985.

### Board and Lodging Payments

40. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the planned changes in board and lodging payments, paid to those in adult placement schemes.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. and learned Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 20 February at column *475*.

### Maintenance Payments

44. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has received any recent representations on the need to increase the number of fathers making maintenance payments in respect of their children.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Department receives representations on this issue from time to time from individuals and organisations, including the National Council for One Parent Families. The Government are naturally concerned that for three quarters of the lone parent families receiving income support the absent husbands and fathers who should be helping to support them pay no maintenance at all.

### Pensioners

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many retirement pensioners (i) aged 65 to 70 years and (ii) aged 80 years and over both receive income from an occupational pension and receive housing benefit.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Latest information shows that in 1986 approximately 440,000 pensioner tax units[1] where the head was aged 65 to 70 were in receipt of income from an occupational pension and received either a rent or rate rebate or rent allowance. The relevant figure for pensioner tax units where the head was aged 80 or over was about 220,000.

*Source:* Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

[1] A pensioner tax unit is either a single person of state pension age or over, or a couple where the man is of state pension age or over.

**Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners have an income in excess of £125 per week; what percentage they represent of all pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, about 1·25 million (19 per cent.) pensioner tax units[1] had gross incomes in excess of £125 a week.

[1] A pensioner tax unit is either a single person of state pension age or over, or a couple where the man is of state pension age or over.

*Source:* 1986 Family Expenditure Survey.

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would have been the level of the retirement pension for *(a)* a single person and *(b)* a married couple in each year from 1979 to 1989 had upratings in each year been in line with increases in the retail price index or with earnings whichever was higher in each year.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Uprating dates* | *Value of retirement pension if increased in line with prices or earnings* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Single* £ | *Couple* £ |
| November 1979 | 23·20 | 37·15 |
| November 1980 | 27·35 | 43·80 |
| November 1981 | 30·65 | 49·05 |
| November 1982 | 33·20 | 53·10 |
| November 1983 | 36·10 | 57·70 |
| November 1984 | 37·95 | 60·65 |
| November 1985 | 41·30 | 66·00 |
| July 1986 | 43·60 | 69·70 |
| April 1987 | 45·50 | 72·75 |
| April 1988 | 49·10 | 78·50 |
| April 1989 | 53·30 | 85·25 |

### Pension Ages

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received seeking equalisation of state pension ages; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We received a total of 363 representations between 10 February 1988 and 7 February 1989. The Government are fully committed to the principle of equal treatment for men and women. Equalisation of state pension age involves the consideration of a number of important issues, including long-term

demographic and economic trends. Proposals for equalisation of pension age continue to be under consideration.

### Attendance Allowance

**Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will now take steps to increase attendance allowance.

**Mr. Scott:** We have no plans to increase attendance allowance except in line with the movement in prices.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information he has regarding the numbers of families in Cornwall in receipt of attendance allowance prior to 6 April 1987 who will be expected to repay benefit under the Social Security Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has regarding the levels of repayments being required from families in Cornwall for overpayment of the attendance allowance prior to 6 April 1987; what is the minimum sum of repayment requested; and what is the maximum.

**Mr. Scott:** I regret that the requested information is not available.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Department already uses information technology extensively to improve service to the public, to improve efficiency and to enhance the working conditions for staff, and the major programmes of information technology which are now under way will further improve the Department's operations. The computerised benefit systems being developed under the operational strategy will enable clients to obtain information regarding their claims more quickly, while computer printouts will provide clear explanations of how the benefit is calculated, and of entitlement. Progress is also being made on improving communications by upgrading the telephone systems, the widespread use of facsimile machines and the increasing use of new telecommunications devices, such as electronic mail, throughout the organisation.

### Overpayment

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the bringing into force of section 53 of the Social Security Act 1986 by the Social Security Act 1986 (Commencement No. 4) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1959) and its effect on claimants who used due care and diligence to avoid overpayment as specified in section 119(2) of the Social Security Act 1975 prior to the Social Security Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** None. The provision was brought into force from 6 April 1987 by the Social Security (Payments on Account, Overpayments and Recovery) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 491). On or after that date all decisions made by the independent adjudicating authorities on whether an overpayment of benefit is recoverable have been subject to a common test of misrepresentation or failure to disclose a material fact.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice local social security offices have received from his Department regarding the retrospective application of section 52 of the Social Security Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** I assume that the hon. Member intended to refer to section 53 of the Social Security Act 1986. Section 53 has no retrospective effect. It applies only to decisions on overpayments made by the independent adjudicating authorities on or after 6 April 1987, the date on which the Social Security (Payment on Account, Overpayments and Recovery) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 491) came into force.

All decisions on whether overpayments should be recoverable are made by the independent adjudicating authorities. Guidance to adjudication officers is contained in the "Adjudication Officer's Guide" which is published by HMSO and a copy is in the Library.

### Supplementary Benefit

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide the live load figures of supplementary benefit for each of the following categories (1) unemployed claimants (E load), (2) claimants not required to register for work (A load) and (3) pensioners for each of the six local offices in Lothian region for the years April 1980 to April 1988.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information is as follows:

| *Supplementary Benefit Live Load* | *(1)* | *1980* | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Edinburgh City ILO | E | 2,073 | 3,280 | 4,245 | 4,701 | 4,923 | 5,246 | 6,650 | 7,000 |
| | A | 1,290 | 1,377 | 1,664 | 1,877 | 2,130 | 2,408 | 2,544 | 2,800 |
| | P | 2,361 | 2,368 | 2,341 | 2,193 | 2,254 | 2,228 | 2,230 | 2,271 |
| Edinburgh East ILO | E | 2,169 | 3,434 | 4,074 | 4,254 | 4,018 | 4,026 | 4,354 | 4,373 |
| | A | 1,950 | 2,127 | 2,270 | 2,609 | 2,896 | 3,153 | 3,414 | 3,832 |
| | P | 2,717 | 2,866 | 2,921 | 2,629 | 2,962 | 3,013 | 3,176 | 3,490 |
| Edinburgh North ILO | E | 1,998 | 3,205 | 3,552 | 3,499 | 3,886 | 4,255 | 4,902 | 5,188 |
| | A | 1,263 | 1,385 | 1,750 | 1,932 | 2,223 | 2,392 | 2,649 | 3,223 |
| | P | 2,654 | 2,672 | 2,689 | 2,482 | 2,553 | 2,403 | 2,465 | 2,636 |
| Edinburgh South ILO | E | 1,806 | 3,057 | 3,789 | 4,301 | 4,332 | 4,398 | 4,659 | 4,819 |
| | A | 1,533 | 1,641 | 1,992 | 2,477 | 2,688 | 2,955 | 3,170 | 3,340 |

| Supplementary Benefit Live Load | (1) | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P | 2,369 | 2,434 | 2,512 | 2,477 | 2,632 | 2,745 | 2,955 | 3,106 |
| | E | 1,630 | 2,744 | 3,301 | 3,578 | 3,964 | 4,120 | 4,877 | 4,835 |
| Edinburgh West ILO | A | 1,548 | 1,759 | 2,055 | 2,318 | 2,603 | 2,831 | 3,194 | 3,406 |
| | P | 2,874 | 2,972 | 3,021 | 2,895 | 2,881 | 2,814 | 2,793 | 2,966 |
| | E | 2,353 | 4,702 | 5,825 | 6,701 | 6,413 | 6,306 | 6,387 | 5,746 |
| Bathgate ILO | A | 1,743 | 2,072 | 2,933 | 3,590 | 3,980 | 4,273 | 4,628 | 4,928 |
| | P | 2,825 | 2,980 | 3,149 | 2,885 | 3,334 | 3,109 | 3,368 | 3,535 |

*Note (1)*
E = unemployed claimants.
A = claimants not required to register for work.
P = pensioners.
*Source:* 100 per cent. count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where benefit payment has ceased but other action is continuing.

## Family Income Supplement

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the number of claimants and the number of dependants and the percentage take-up of family income supplement for the years April 1980 to April 1989.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information about awards of family income supplement current on each of the dates shown is as follows:

| | Claimants (Thousands) | Partners (Thousands) | Dependent children (Thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|
| April 1980 | 88 | 38 | 191 |
| April 1981 | 106 | 52 | 227 |
| April 1982 | 142 | 77 | 306 |
| April 1983 | 189 | 110 | 402 |
| April 1984 | 204 | 123 | 431 |
| April 1985 | 203 | 120 | 423 |
| April 1986 | 209 | 123 | 432 |
| April 1987 | 220 | 128 | 457 |

Family income supplement was replaced by family credit on 11 April 1988. Immediately prior to the changeover 216,000 awards of family income supplement were current, but information about the numbers of dependants is not available.

The available information about estimated take-up is as follows:

| | By caseload Per cent. | By expenditure Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| 1981-82 | 48 | 53 |
| 1983-84 | 54 | 65 |

More up-to-date information is not yet available.

## Citizens Advice Bureau Volunteers

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if it is his policy to investigate the social security claims of citizens advice bureau volunteers.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** There are no special arrangements for investigating such claims.

## National Insurance Cards

**Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the plastic national insurance number cards now issued to all 18-year-olds are capable of being used or adapted for use in cash dispensing machines; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Plastic national insurance number cards are not capable of being used in cash dispensing machines and there are no proposals for inclusion of further information on the magnetic strip.

## Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) today.

## Sickness (Self-certification)

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any evidence of employers refusing to accept sickness self-certification forms SCI.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** No. It is up to the employer what evidence of incapacity he requires from his employees when sick. But the employer cannot require a doctor's statement until a period of sickness has lasted seven days.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 7 March 1989*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Prison Service

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a report on the young offender wing at HM prison, Leeds, from the deputy director-general of the prison service; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hurd:** I have now received the report which I asked the deputy director-general to prepare on the young offender wing at Leeds, with particular reference to the deaths of five young prisoners there in the past year. The report concludes that the deaths appear not to have been the result either of the way in which the prisoners were treated or of conditions on the wing, which are at least as good as those at comparable establishments. The report finds the prison service suicide prevention procedures are being complied with at Leeds prison, and argues that the situation would not be improved by simply removing the young prisoners at Leeds to another establishment. It does, however, make a number of specific recommendations aimed at preventing further fatalities. These include the installation of more sophisticated cell lighting to facilitate observation of inmates at night without disturbing them; the establishment of a suicide prevention management group at the prison; the training of more staff in suicide prevention awareness and techniques; the improvement of the reception area where newly arrived inmates are screened for suicide risk; and improved arrangements for communication between staff involved with young prisoners at Leeds. I accept these recommendations and am asking the governor and regional director to implement them as quickly as possible.

### Citizenship Applications

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available the income and expenditure account for the administration of citizenship applications for 1987-88.

**Mr. Hurd:** I have today placed in the Library a copy of the nationality fees income and expenditure account for the 12 months ended 31 March 1988.

### Magistrates Courts

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the cost of opening one magistrates' court, staffed by a probation officer in the London area for two hours on a Saturday afternoon.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* This information is not readily available. But it is estimated that the average cost on a Saturday afternoon of a London magistrates court is £2,500.

### Lindholme Prison

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by year and by grade of inmate, the number of offences by inmates at HM prison Lindholme, since it was opened of *(a)* gross personal violence to a prison officer, *(b)* assault on a prison officer and *(c)* attempts to commit such offences; and if he will give in his answer the penalty imposed on inmates found guilty of each offence.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* All prisoners held at Lindholme are sentenced adult males. The readily available information relates to offences proved on adjudication and is given in the table.

*Proved offences of gross personal violence to or assault on a prison officer committed at Lindholme prison: by type of offence and punishment awarded, 1986 and 1987.*

*Number of offences*

| *Offence and year* | | *Total offences* | *Cellular confinement* | *Forfeiture of privileges* | *Stoppage or reduction of earnings* | *Exclusion from associated work* | *Forfeiture of remission* | *Total punishments* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gross personal violence to prison officer | 1986 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 1987 | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Assault on prison officer | 1986 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| | 1987 | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Attempted gross personal violence to or assault on prison officer | 1986 | 2 | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 |
| | 1987 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |

## THE ARTS

### Manuscript Conservation

**Sir Philip Goodhart:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his proposals for assisting the conservation of manuscripts.

**Mr. Luce:** I am glad to announce that I am setting aside up to £100,000 a year for the three years 1989-90 to 1991-92 towards the establishment of a national manuscripts conservation fund. This is in response to a proposal from the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and the British Library, who are seeking matching amounts from other sources. The purpose of the fund is to provide financial assistance to record offices, libraries and other owners of manuscripts, documents and archives accessible to the public, where the need for special conservation beyond the applicants' normal resources can be demonstrated. Grants will normally match applicants' own contributions. If the expectation regarding matching by applicants and from other sources is realised, this will mean that up to £400,000 will be available for the

conservation of manuscripts in each year. The rules of the fund will be determined by its trustees who have yet to be appointed. The fund will be administered by the British Library's research and development department, to which all inquiries should be addressed.

## CIVIL SERVICE

### Hon. Members (Courses)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will take steps to devise with the Civil Service college together with the permanent staff of the House an induction course for new hon. Members.

**Mr. Luce:** Last year the college arranged two briefing seminars for hon. Members. They would be happy to arrange another if there appears to be sufficient demand to justify it.

### Payment Warrants

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service why, pursuant to his reply of 20 February, *Official Report*, column 519, the three organisations referred to were asked to return their payment warrants; and why the four others were not so asked.

**Mr. Luce:** The structure of the vote for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service allowed payment to four organisations but not to the three asked to return their payment warrants.

## ENVIRONMENT

### 67 Tufton Street, Westminster

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date, after the previous lease had expired in June 1979, the renewed leasehold agreement between the Property Services Agency and Bourne Association Ltd., for the rent of 67 Tufton street, Westminster, commenced.

**Mr. Chope:** June 1979.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date, after the previous lease had expired in June 1979, a renewed leasehold agreement between the Property Services Agency and Bourne Association Ltd., for the rent of 67 Tufton street, Westminster, was signed.

**Mr. Chope:** The renewed leasehold agreement was signed in November 1980.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date, after the previous lease had expired in June 1979, a renewed leasehold agreement between the Property Services Agency and Bourne Association Ltd., for the rent of 67 Tufton street, Westminster, terminated.

**Mr. Chope:** It is not due to terminate until lease expiry in June 1999.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any agreement was made to exempt from the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 the leasehold agreement made by the Property Services Agency for the rent of 67 Tufton street, Westminster, which expired in June 1979.

**Mr. Chope:** At no time was there any agreement which could have taken the lease which terminated in June 1979 outside the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date notice of determination of the leasehold agreement made between Bourne Association Limited and the Property Services Agency for the rent of 67 Tufton street, Westminster, was served on the Property Services Agency.

**Mr. Chope:** October 1978.

### Dust and Noise (St. Stephen's House)

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to initiate a full analysis of dust taken from all work areas, rooms, corridors and toilets in St. Stephen's house.

**Mr. Chope:** There is more dust than usual but this is unavoidable while major building work is under way on the adjoining properties. No useful purpose would be served by analysing the dust.

### Neighbour Notification

**Mr. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning authorities in England and Wales have a code of practice for neighbour notification.

**Mr. Chope:** My Department does not have this information.

### Housing

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy for those who cannot afford to buy or rent housing in the open market.

**Mr. Trippier:** Our policy is that affordable housing should be within the reach of all families. In particular we recognise the need to stimulate investment in the rented sector. This need not all be publicly owned and subsidised housing—housing benefit is available for poorer tenants who cannot afford their housing costs. But we accept the continuing need for some new investment in subsidised rented housing in areas of shortage. We are therefore encouraging private investment in housing associations and increasing public funding for the Housing Corporation programme by 80 per cent. over three years; and we have clarified local authorities' powers to pay subsidies to private landlords where this is needed to stimulate investment whilst keeping rents at affordable levels.

### Rents (Newham)

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his Department treats as a reasonable affordable rent in the London borough of Newham.

**Mr. Trippier:** This is a matter for the landlords and tenants concerned, and circumstances will vary. Housing associations are required to have regard to the Housing Corporation's tenants' guarantee, which says that they should set and maintain their rents at levels which are within the reach of those in low paid employment. Local authorities should have regard to the provision of section 24 of the Housing Act 1985.

### Waste Paper (Palace of Westminster)

**Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made for the collection and disposal of waste paper from the Palace of Westminster.

**Mr. Chope:** The collection and disposal of waste paper from the Palace of Westminster is carried out by a contractor employed by the Property Services Agency.

### Homelessness

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table of the numbers of registered homeless people for each housing authority area for each of the last three years.

**Mr. Trippier:** The number of households accepted under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts reported by local authorities for 1985, 1986 and 1987 are published in "Local Housing Statistics" (issues No. 78, 82 and 86 respectively). Figures for the first and second quarters of 1988 are also published in issues No. 86 and 87 of "Local Housing Statistics"; figures for the third quarter appear in "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter of 1988. Supplementary Tables".

Copies of all these are available in the Library.

### Housing (Birmingham)

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will reply to the letter dated 24 January 1989 from the city of Birmingham housing department about the 1989-90 financial arrangements for five estate action schemes in Birmingham.

**Mr. Trippier:** The Department's regional office will respond very shortly.

### Rating Assessment

**Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to ensure the harmonisation of the decapitalisation rates used for rating assessment in Great Britain.

**Mr. Ridley:** My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and I propose that, to assist the harmonisation of rating, we should use our powers to prescribe common decapitalisation rates to be used throughout Great Britain in the 1990 revaluation for properties valued by reference to the cost of construction. The evidence suggests that the rate should be set somewhere in the range 6 to 7 per cent., although a lower rate may be justified for certain educational and health care establishments valued on this basis. We shall be issuing a consultation paper shortly.

### Compulsory Purchase

**Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for amending the law on land compensation and compulsory purchase.

**Mr. Ridley:** My Department has today issued a consultation paper inviting comments by 21 April 1989 on various proposals relating to compulsory purchase and land compensation. I have placed a copy in the Library.

**Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have concluded their review of the compensation provisions applying to compulsory purchases for commercial purposes.

**Mr. Ridley:** The Government have given careful thought to the representations about the land compensation code made during the debates on the Channel Tunnel Bill and in a memorandum submitted by the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association.

Under the existing provisions, compensation is based on the market value of the land, taking account of any planning permission or hope value which attaches to it, but disregarding the effects of the scheme for which the land is being taken, except in so far as the actual or prospective development might have taken place apart from the scheme. It is generally accepted that in most cases this basis of compensation achieves a fair result since it gives the land owner the value which his asset would have realised on the open market in the absence of the proposed scheme.

The main point raised during the parliamentary debates on the subject, and repeated in the joint memorandum, was that the code operates unfairly where the end use of the land is essentially commercial, since a commercial undertaking acquiring land without the benefit of compulsory purchase powers might be expected to pay the landowner a premium in order to secure the land for itself. Particular concern was expressed about the compulsory powers which remain with nationalised industries after they have been privatised.

Land may be acquired compulsorily only where authorised by or under statute. The compulsory powers remaining with nationalised industries after privatisation relate only to the statutory functions of those industries and cannot be used to acquire land which is not needed for those functions. Each acquisition must be justified on its merits having regard to the statutory powers concerned. In these respects, compulsory acquisitions of land by or on behalf of private sector bodies do not differ from other compulsory acquisitions. The Government's view is that the market value of the land as assessed under the existing compensation provisions remains a fair measure of the loss to be compensated where any land is acquired compulsorily. It will be for Parliament to consider the scope and extent of any compulsory aequisition powers proposed in future legislation including private legislation to authorise particular developments for which land may need to be compulsorily acquired. However, it is the Government's view that compulsory powers should not be available to acquire land for incidental commercial development.

### Ozone Layer

**Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making to co-ordinate the European research into stratospheric ozone.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** In October 1987 at a meeting of Ministers from a number of EC and EFTA countries, we suggested that co-operation on stratospheric ozone should be dealt with on a Europewide basis. We are pleased that following discussion by representatives of various EC and EFTA countries and leading European stratospheric scientists over the past year, our proposal has led to the establishment of a European stratospheric ozone research co-ordinating centre.

The unit will be set up this spring in Cambridge and led by a British scientists Dr. Tony Cox of the UKAEA Harwell laboratory, Oxfordshire, who has an established international reputation in atmospheric chemistry. It will be located at the offices of the Natural Environment Research Council's British Antarctic survey and will operate in conjunction with a panel of European scientists to facilitate co-operation on stratospheric ozone research. The centre will be administered jointly by Cambridge university and the British Antarctic survey. We hope that a scientist from another European country will be attached to the centre to support Dr. Cox.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to initiate research into the methods of safe disposal of chlorofluorocarbons; and whether he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Department is assessing the production, use, recyclability and disposal of CFCs, with a view to defining areas where specific research may be justified. Meanwhile, any company with a project eligible for support under the enterprise initiative, including the research and technology initiative, should make full use of the assistance available.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Less-favoured Areas (Submission)

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the submission being prepared for presentation to the European Commission which covers less-favoured areas in the whole of the United Kingdom will be completed and forwarded for its consideration.

**Mr. Ryder:** We are now very close to completing work on the application of the required economic and demographic tests in the United Kingdom. I plan to put a case to Brussels for consideration very soon and will keep the House informed of progress.

### Belgian Trawlers

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when information has been passed by spotter planes working in conjunction with fisheries protection vessels, that Belgian trawlers were fishing in forbidden or restricted waters; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** In 1988, two Belgian beam trawlers were observed by United Kingdom surveillance aircraft illegally fishing within the six-mile limit. In both cases the vessels were prosecuted and financial penalties were imposed by the courts.

### Information Services

**Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the outcome was of his Departmental review of data with potential value to the information services industry, initiated after the circulation of policy guidelines on Government-held tradeable information in 1986.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** An "information audit" has been carried out in the Department and a number of information systems have been identified as potential candidates for commercial exploitation. Further work is needed on these systems to assess their commercial viability.

### Porcine Somatotropin

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current use of porcine somatotropin.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** No product based on porcine somatotropin has received a product licence or is the subject of an animal test certificate issued under the Medicines Act.

### Red Deer

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to take any action to prohibit farming systems for the intensive rearing of red deer; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I have no plans to prohibit such farming systems. However, I will ask the state veterinary service to check on welfare should any system of continuous deer housing be employed.

### Salmonella

**Dr. Reid:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list which of the 17 measures referred to by him in the *Official Report*, at column 933, on 21 February, are new measures to be enacted and which of them are within existing legislation;

(2) if he will give the dates and circumstances when any of the 17 measures referred to by him on 21 February, *Official Report*, column 933, have been used to deal with salmonella enteritidis.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on Friday 3 March at columns *373-74*. All 17 measures, many of which are already in operation, are intended to contribute actively to combating salmonella enteritidis.

### Bovine Somatotropin

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the licensing of bovine somatotropin.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** The licensing of bovine somatotropin, as with any other veterinary product, will be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Medicines Act.

### Research and Development

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on his proposals for the future funding and manpower of agricultural research and development, particularly in relation to *(a)* the Agricultural Development advisory service and *(b)* the Agricultural and Food Research Council.

**Mr. Ryder:** As announced in November 1987, planned expenditure on R and D by Agriculture departments will be reduced by £5 million in 1989-90 and by a further £5 million in 1990-91. The 1988 Autumn Statement announced a further £5 million reduction for 1990-91 and an additional £9 million for 1991-92. Together, these reductions amount to a total of £24 million by 1991-92, which is equivalent to £30 million at full economic cost. However, there will be an increase in the strategic research funded from the agriculture, fisheries and food programme of £2 million in 1990-91 and a further £3 million in 1991-92.

Final decisions on the future level of Government funding of agricultural research and development will not be taken until after consultations with the industry on the funding of near market research are completed. Those consultations will also be an important factor in determining future staffing levels of the Agriculture Development and Advisory Service on research and development. I shall keep the House informed of decisions taken to adapt our facilities and manpower to the policy on near market research.

The Agriculture and Food Research Council receives funds from my Department and through the science budget which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education and Science who is also answerable to this House for all matters related to the council.

### Mackerel

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the issue of klondyking licences in the mackerel fishery of the south-west of England.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I have recently issued one time-limited klondyking licence valid until mid-March. The vessel concerned has a relatively limited processing capacity. Last year six vessels were licensed to klondyke in this fishery. Before issuing licences I take full account of the views of interested parties. In the case of the licence I have issued, I concluded that, especially in view of the proportion of mackerel landings which has gone for fishmeal, a limited klondyking operation was fully justified. It should have no damaging effects on the mackerel stock, bearing in mind the conservation measures which apply, including the extended south-west mackerel box.

### Sea Defence, Aldeburgh

**Mr. Lord:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current position on grant aid for the Anglian water authority's proposed sea defence scheme for Aldeburgh; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am delighted to announce that approval has now been given to the Anglian water authority's outline proposals for a £4 million sea defence scheme at Aldeburgh. My officials have written to inform the authority.

The area around Aldeburgh is highly prized for its environmental features which include a heritage coast and an environmentally sensitive area. As well as preventing flooding to people, land and property, the improved sea defences will afford protection to valuable conservation, amenity and recreational interests.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### AIDS

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the research conducted by Dr. Robert Gallo in the United States of America relating to the identification of the human B-lymphotropic virus as a possible co-factor necessary for HIV to cause AIDS, is being assessed as part of his AIDS research programme.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The AIDS research programme funded from the science budget is run by the Medical Research Council and it is for the council to make scientific judgments on the content of the programme. I understand that British research has included the possibility that human B-cell lymphotropic virus (human herpes virus 6) might be a co-factor necessary for HIV to cause AIDS. The initial results do not support the contention.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been carried out into the formulation known as AL 721 active lecithin as a means of de-activating the HIV virus.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The Medical Research Council is not conducting such research. I understand that studies that have been carried out under the other auspices have produced conflicting results on both the safety and the activity against HIV of this formulation.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to sponsor trials into the application of AL 721 active lecithin as part of the AIDS research programmes, in view of evidence of its potential for protection against viral activity via the enhancement of cell membrane defences.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The AIDS research programme funded from the science budget is run by the Medical Research Council and it is for the council to make scientific judgments on the contents of the programme. I understand that the council plans no trials of AL 721 active lecithin. Preliminary results should shortly be available from a small trial under other auspices.

### Religious Education

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he has issued as to

the composition of local education authority standing advisory committees on religious education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The basis composition of standing advisory councils on religious education (SACREs) is laid down by the Education Reform Act 1988. The Department has recently issued a circular explaining the new requirements for religious education and collective worship in schools, including those for SACREs, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

## Student Loans

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the organisations which have formally responded to the "Top-Up Loans for Students" White Paper.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** My right hon. Friend has received formal responses from th following organisations:

APT—The Association for Lecturers in Higher Education
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
Association for Student Counselling
Association of College Registrars and Administrators
Association of County Councils
Association of Graduate Recruiters
Association of Heads of Polytechnic Student Services
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of University Teachers
Association of University Teachers, London Committee
Brighton Polyteehnic
Brighton Polytechnic (Department of Economics and Social Science)
Bristol Polytechnic Students' Union
British Dental Association
British Medical Association
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Christ Church College, Canterbury
Church of Scotland, Department of Education
City of London Polytechnic
City University
Commission for Racial Equality
Committee of Directors of Polytechnics
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Conference of Awards Officers of London and the Home Counties
Conference of Scottish Centrally-Funded Colleges
Conservative Collegiate Forum
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council for Professional Supplementary to Medicine
Craigie College of Education
Currie High School, Midlothian
Derbyshire LEA
Dorset Institute Students Union
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art
Dundee Institute of Technology
Engineering Employers' Federation
Equal Opportunities Commission
Essex LEA
Family Welfare Association (Educational Grants Advisory Service)
Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge
Gateshead LEA
General Synod of the Church of England Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry
Glasgow College
Glasgow College Students Association
Hampshire LEA
Harrow LEA
Hatfield Polytechnic Students' Union
Heriot-Watt University
Heythrop College Union
Imperial Chemical Industries plc
Imperial College Union
Incorporated Society of Musicians
Inner London Education Authority
Institute of Education Union Society, University of London
Kent LEA
King's College, London Union
King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry of King's College London
Lancashire LEA
Law Society
Liverpool LEA
London Boroughs Association
London School of Economics and Political Science
Manchester LEA
Medical College of Saint Bartholomew's Hospital
Methodist Church Division of Education and Youth
Methodist Church Division of Ministries
Napier Polytechnic
Napier Polytechnic Students Association
National and Local Government Officers Association
National Architecture Students Association
National Association of Head Teachers
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
National Institute for the Deaf
National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland, Northern Ireland Region
Newcastle upon Tyne LEA
Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic
Norfolk LEA
National Union of Students
National Union of Students, Bristol
National Union of Students, Nottinghamshire Area
National Union of Students, West of Scotland Area
Open University
Paisley College of Technology
Plater College, Oxford
Polytechnic of Central London
Portsmouth Polytechnic Students' Union
Professional Association of Teachers
Queen Mary College Union
Queen's College, Birmingham
Rotherham LEA
Royal Academy of Music Students' Union
Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults
Saint Georges Hospital Medical School Union
Socialist Educational Association
Society of Education Officers
South Bank Polytechnic
South Bank Polytechnic Students' Union
Staffordshire LEA
Thames Polytechnic
Trades Union Congress
United Reformed Church
Universities of Scotland: Standing Conference
University College, London
University College, London Union
University College Middlesex School of Medicine Students' Union
University of Aberdeen
University of Bath
University of Bath Students' Union
University of Birmingham Guild of Students
University of Bradford
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
University of Cambridge Graduate Union
University of Cambridge Students' Union
University of Dundee
University of East Anglia
University of Edinburgh
University of Edinburgh Student Advisory and Counselling Service
University of Edinburgh Students' Association
University of Glasgow
University of Kent at Canterbury
University of Kent at Canterbury Students' Union
University of Leeds
University of London

University of London Union
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
University of Oxford Students' Union
University of Salford
University of Salford Students' Union
University of Southampton
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of Ulster Students' Union
University of Wales
University of Wales College of Medicine
University of Warwick
University of York
Wesley House, Cambridge
West Sussex Institute of Higher Education Students' Union
Westfield College Union Society
Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Educational Guidance Services for Adults

## ILEA

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether it is the current intention to provide revenue support grant for education services in the inner London boroughs when they assume responsibilities for the Inner London Education Authority in April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** In 1990-91 central Government grant will be available for distribution among all local authorities in England, including the inner London boroughs, to support expenditure on all the services for which they are responsible.

## Veterinary Education

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the Riley committee's report to the University Grants Committee which recommends the closure of the Glasgow veterinary school.

**Mr. Jackson:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) at column *397*.

## Expenditure

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of the local education authorities which, in 1988-89, are expected to spend more than their grant-related expenditure assessment in respect of education; what the amount of such excess spending for each authority will be in cash terms and as a percentage of their total expenditure on education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rumbold:** The only consistent forecast expenditure available at this stage is from budget returns submitted by authorities on the form RER last year to the Department of the Environment and is therefore provisional: it is given in the table. The expenditure figures include some capital items and specific grants which do not appear within the grant related expenditure assessment.

*1988-89 comparison GRE v RER budget expenditure*[1]

| *LEA* | *Budget Expenditure £ million* | *Education GRE*[2] *£ million* | *Overspend £ million* | *Overspend per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ILEA | 997·87 | 635·21 | 362·66 | 36·3 |
| Newcastle | 89·83 | 71·19 | 18·64 | 20·8 |
| Manchester | 163·41 | 133·45 | 29·96 | 18·3 |
| Waltham Forest | 80·18 | 66·02 | 14·16 | 17·7 |
| Haringey | 77·46 | 63·96 | 13·51 | 17·4 |
| Liverpool | 173·62 | 144·94 | 28·68 | 16·5 |
| South Tyne | 53·14 | 44·52 | 8·62 | 16·2 |
| Hounslow | 71·18 | 60·19 | 10·99 | 15·4 |
| Walsall | 97·17 | 83·36 | 13·81 | 14·2 |
| Ealing | 102·95 | 88·64 | 14·32 | 13·9 |
| Salford | 74·55 | 64·53 | 10·02 | 13·4 |
| Sandwell | 108·23 | 93·70 | 14·53 | 13·4 |
| Barking | 47·61 | 41·36 | 6·25 | 13·1 |
| North Tyne | 61·76 | 53·84 | 7·92 | 12·8 |
| Gateshead | 62·57 | 54·55 | 8·02 | 12·8 |
| Wakefield | 100·32 | 87·97 | 12·35 | 12·3 |
| Hillingdon | 70·90 | 62·23 | 8·67 | 12·2 |
| Knowsley | 62·24 | 54·75 | 7·49 | 12·0 |
| Wigan | 105·38 | 92·71 | 12·67 | 12·0 |
| Rochdale | 73·12 | 64·42 | 8·70 | 11·9 |
| Richmond | 38·54 | 34·01 | 4·53 | 11·8 |
| Croydon | 99·21 | 87·71 | 11·50 | 11·6 |
| St. Helens | 65·97 | 58·34 | 7·63 | 11·6 |
| Bury | 57·18 | 50·61 | 6·58 | 11·5 |
| Bradford | 175·14 | 155·55 | 19·59 | 11·2 |
| Derbyshire | 298·14 | 264·91 | 33·24 | 11·1 |
| Newham | 88·03 | 79·20 | 8·82 | 10·0 |
| Somerset | 132·71 | 119·51 | 13·20 | 9·9 |
| Wirral | 110·74 | 99·73 | 11·01 | 9·9 |
| Cumbria | 150·30 | 135·40 | 14·90 | 9·9 |
| Coventry | 106·07 | 95·93 | 10·14 | 9·6 |
| Avon | 266·62 | 241·31 | 25·31 | 9·5 |
| Harrow | 63·64 | 57·68 | 5·95 | 9·4 |
| Brent | 96·38 | 87·57 | 8·81 | 9·1 |
| Doncaster | 95·67 | 86·93 | 8·74 | 9·1 |
| Calderdale | 65·10 | 59·19 | 5·91 | 9·1 |
| Sheffield | 161·13 | 146·69 | 14·45 | 9·0 |
| Leeds | 214·16 | 196·08 | 18·09 | 8·4 |

| LEA | Budget Expenditure £ million | Education GRE[2] £ million | Overspend £ million | Overspend per cent. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cleveland | 199·00 | 182·46 | 16·54 | 8·3 |
| Durham | 184·76 | 169·63 | 15·13 | 8·2 |
| Rotherham | 85·71 | 78·72 | 6·99 | 8·2 |
| Hertfordshire | 302·06 | 277·78 | 24·28 | 8·0 |
| Merton | 45·68 | 42·04 | 3·65 | 8·0 |
| Tameside | 68·30 | 62·92 | 5·39 | 7·9 |
| Humberside | 276·51 | 254·83 | 21·67 | 7·8 |
| Havering | 71·50 | 65·97 | 5·53 | 7·7 |
| Nottinghamshire | 308·36 | 286·08 | 22·28 | 7·2 |
| Bedfordshire | 170·32 | 158·02 | 12·30 | 7·2 |
| Northumberland | 92·68 | 86·14 | 6·54 | 7·1 |
| Sutton | 47·23 | 44·07 | 3·15 | 6·7 |
| Kingston | 36·59 | 34·26 | 2·33 | 6·4 |
| Kirklees | 130·73 | 122·49 | 8·24 | 6·3 |
| Isle of Wight | 34·58 | 32·46 | 2·12 | 6·1 |
| Wolverhampton | 90·20 | 84·79 | 5·42 | 6·0 |
| Gloucestershire | 150·69 | 141·85 | 8·83 | 5·9 |
| Barnet | 82·88 | 78·28 | 4·60 | 5·6 |
| Oxfordshire | 150·71 | 143·10 | 7·61 | 5·0 |
| Northamptonshire | 177·21 | 168·37 | 8·83 | 5·0 |
| Stockport | 86·05 | 81·76 | 4·29 | 5·0 |
| North Yorkshire | 203·06 | 193·43 | 9·63 | 4·7 |
| Cambridge | 187·48 | 178·69 | 8·79 | 4·7 |
| Essex | 446·37 | 425·83 | 20·53 | 4·6 |
| Leicester | 275·63 | 263·18 | 12·45 | 4·5 |
| Lancashire | 431·32 | 412·64 | 18·67 | 4·3 |
| Wiltshire | 161·08 | 154·94 | 6·14 | 3·8 |
| Cheshire | 305·34 | 293·74 | 11·60 | 3·8 |
| Barnsley | 65·95 | 63·51 | 2·45 | 3·7 |
| Surrey | 261·09 | 251·51 | 9·58 | 3·7 |
| Shropshire | 125·31 | 120·75 | 4·57 | 3·6 |
| Enfield | 80·65 | 78·29 | 2·36 | 2·9 |
| Bexley | 63·96 | 62·18 | 1·78 | 2·8 |
| Trafford | 65·30 | 63·54 | 1·76 | 2·7 |
| Bucks | 194·82 | 189·58 | 5·25 | 2·7 |
| Oldham | 70·36 | 68·51 | 1·85 | 2·6 |
| Staffordshire | 304·03 | 296·29 | 7·74 | 2·5 |
| Dudley | 88·08 | 85·95 | 2·13 | 2·4 |
| Warwickshire | 144·91 | 141·48 | 3·44 | 2·4 |
| Bromley | 76·14 | 74·56 | 1·58 | 2·1 |
| Redbridge | 63·97 | 62·66 | 1·31 | 2·0 |
| Suffolk | 166·77 | 163·67 | 3·10 | 1·9 |
| Dorset | 152·84 | 150·16 | 2·68 | 1·8 |
| Sefton | 86·44 | 85·14 | 1·30 | 1·5 |
| Hampshire | 420·49 | 415·53 | 4·96 | 1·2 |
| Devon | 256·60 | 254·39 | 2·21 | 0·9 |
| Bolton | 82·74 | 82·16 | 0·58 | 0·7 |
| Solihull | 61·10 | 61·09 | 0·01 | 0·0 |

[1] Provisional information based on form RER. The expenditure figures include some capital items and specific grants which do not appear within the grant related expenditure assessment.

[2] Block grant is unhypothecated and based on GRE assessment for all services, and local authorities have discretion on how they spend across services.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total annual expenditure on education by local education authorities in each year from 1981-82 to the present, in cash and real terms; whether such figures of total annual expenditure include amounts from sources such as reserves and balances; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information requested is provided in the table. The figures for total recurrent spending include movements in and out of reserves. These are not separately identifiable for education spending.

£ million

| | Total recurrent | | Mandatory awards[3] | | Total capital | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cash | Real terms | Cash | Real terms | Cash | Real terms | Cash | Real terms |
| 1981-82 | 8,896 | 12,005 | 770 | 1,039 | 406 | 548 | 10,072 | 13,592 |
| 1982-83 | 9,598 | 12,088 | 669 | 843 | 456 | 575 | 10,723 | 13,506 |
| 1983-84 | 10,102 | 12,169 | 734 | 884 | 469 | 565 | 11,305 | 13,618 |
| 1984-85 | 10,525 | 12,068 | 744 | 853 | 501 | 575 | 11,770 | 13,496 |
| 1985-86 | 10,912 | 11,871 | 710 | 772 | 530 | 577 | 12,152 | 13,220 |
| 1986-87 | 12,061 | 12,697 | 703 | 740 | 574 | 604 | 13,338 | 14,041 |
| 1987-88[1] | 13,222 | 13,222 | 761 | 761 | 562 | 562 | 14,545 | 14,545 |
| 1988-89[2] | 14,214 | 13,378 | 803 | 756 | 619 | 580 | 15,636 | 14,716 |

[1] The 1987-88 figures incorporate a distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their provisional outturn expenditure on education.
[2] The 1988-89 figures incorporate a provisional distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their budgets.
[3] Includes payments to public sector higher education institutions as reimbursements of fees for EC students.

Cash prices for the earlier years have been repriced to 1987-88 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

The capital expenditure figures include expenditure which local authorities have financed from receipts arising from the sale of capital assets and from other sources.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total annual amount of grant-related expenditure in respect of education in each year from 1981-82 to 1989-90, in cash and real terms.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The total (the total for grant related expenditure does not include specific grant paid in aid of education expenditure) of grant-related expenditure for education, including school meals, in the years from 1981-82 to 1989-90 is set out in the table.

| *GREA for education* | *£ million cash* | *£ million at 1987-88 prices* |
|---|---|---|
| 1981-82 | 9,081 | 12,254 |
| 1982-83 | 9,893 | 12,460 |
| 1983-84 | 9,997 | 12,043 |
| 1984-85 | 10,306 | 11,817 |
| 1985-86 | 10,727 | 11,670 |
| 1986-87 | 11,344 | 11,943 |
| 1987-88 | 12,623 | 12,623 |
| 1988-89 | 13,472 | 12,680 |
| 1989-90 | 13,833 | 12,399 |

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department on the amounts of annual expenditure on education by local education authorities, including expenditure from sources such as reserves and balances; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Detailed outturn information for local authority expenditure on education is submitted to the Department of the Environment by local authorities on the revenue outturn (RO1) and capital outturn (CO1) forms. The latest year for which full information is available is 1986-87. LEAs are currently submitting RO1 and CO1 forms showing education expenditure in 1987-88. Local education authorities also provide information on their budgeted expenditure on the return of expenditure and rates (RER) form. This is used as the basis for estimating local authority education spending where actual information is not available. The revenue forms do not separately identify education expenditure financed by reserves. The capital forms do enable authorities to show the receipts arising from the sale of capital assets.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of the local education authorities which in 1987-88 spent more than their grant-related expenditure assessment in respect of education; what was the amount of such excess spending for each authority, in cash terms and as a percentage of their total expenditure on education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information requested is given in the table. The figures for local authorities' expenditure on education are taken from the revised outturns of expenditure as notified by the authorities to the Department of the Environment on form RER. These outturn figures are not necessarily identical to authorities' final education expenditure. The expenditure figures include some capital items and specific grants which do not appear within the grant-related expenditure assessment.

*1987-88 comparison GRE v RER revised outturn expenditure*[1]

| *LEA* | *Revised outturn expenditure £ million* | *Education GRE*[2] *£ million* | *Overspend £ million* | *Overspend per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ILEA | 987·38 | 593·48 | 393·89 | 39·9 |
| Haringey | 82·22 | 60·70 | 21·52 | 26·2 |
| Manchester | 167·57 | 125·43 | 42·13 | 25·1 |
| Brent | 104·70 | 81·03 | 23·67 | 22·6 |
| Waltham Forest | 78·80 | 62·53 | 16·27 | 20·6 |
| Newcastle | 84·72 | 67·26 | 17·46 | 20·6 |
| North Tyne | 61·67 | 51·00 | 10·68 | 17·3 |
| Liverpool | 166·52 | 137·70 | 28·82 | 17·3 |
| Hounslow | 65·67 | 55·49 | 10·19 | 15·5 |
| Richmond | 36·74 | 31·71 | 5·02 | 13·7 |
| Ealing | 96·01 | 82·97 | 13·03 | 13·6 |
| South Tyne | 49·41 | 42·70 | 6·70 | 13·6 |
| Knowsley | 59·39 | 51·48 | 7·90 | 13·3 |
| Walsall | 89·83 | 78·46 | 11·36 | 12·6 |
| Sheffield | 159·41 | 139·30 | 20·10 | 12·6 |
| Wigan | 100·08 | 87·56 | 12·51 | 12·5 |
| Barking | 44·52 | 39·62 | 4·90 | 11·0 |
| Cumbria | 143·10 | 127·38 | 15·72 | 11·0 |
| Rochdale | 67·77 | 60·51 | 7·26 | 10·7 |
| Gateshead | 58·34 | 52·20 | 6·14 | 10·5 |
| Salford | 69·14 | 61·88 | 7·26 | 10·5 |
| Wakefield | 92·68 | 83·41 | 9·27 | 10·0 |
| Bradford | 161·88 | 146·02 | 15·86 | 9·8 |
| Harrow | 59·34 | 53·56 | 5·78 | 9·7 |
| Croydon | 91·69 | 82·89 | 8·80 | 9·6 |
| Derbyshire | 275·04 | 248·80 | 26·23 | 9·5 |

| LEA | Revised outturn expenditure £ million | Education GRE[2] £ million | Overspend £ million | Overspend per cent. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coventry | 99·59 | 90·09 | 9·50 | 9·5 |
| Sandwell | 97·54 | 88·38 | 9·16 | 9·4 |
| Calderdale | 61·14 | 55·63 | 5·51 | 9·0 |
| Barnet | 79·60 | 72·54 | 7·07 | 8·9 |
| Isle of Wight | 31·97 | 29·19 | 2·78 | 8·7 |
| Somerset | 121·81 | 111·25 | 10·56 | 8·7 |
| Bury | 52·03 | 47·62 | 4·41 | 8·5 |
| Hillingdon | 63·59 | 58·23 | 5·36 | 8·4 |
| St. Helens | 60·11 | 55·09 | 5·03 | 8·4 |
| Avon | 245·21 | 225·01 | 20·20 | 8·2 |
| Wolverhampton | 87·12 | 80·07 | 7·05 | 8·1 |
| Nottinghamshire | 292·09 | 268·70 | 23·39 | 8·0 |
| Doncaster | 90·11 | 82·94 | 7·17 | 8·0 |
| Cleveland | 185·31 | 171·68 | 13·63 | 7·4 |
| Tameside | 63·56 | 58·97 | 4·58 | 7·2 |
| Newham | 79·30 | 73·70 | 5·60 | 7·1 |
| Durham | 171·51 | 159·64 | 11·87 | 6·9 |
| Leeds | 200·69 | 186·87 | 13·82 | 6·9 |
| Bedfordshire | 157·41 | 146·64 | 10·76 | 6·8 |
| Kingston | 34·21 | 31·90 | 2·32 | 6·8 |
| Humberside | 256·75 | 239·85 | 16·91 | 6·6 |
| Havering | 66·79 | 62·93 | 3·86 | 5·8 |
| Northumberland | 85·49 | 80·68 | 4·80 | 5·6 |
| Kirklees | 120·74 | 114·07 | 6·66 | 5·5 |
| Cheshire | 289·74 | 273·82 | 15·92 | 5·5 |
| Leicester | 260·32 | 246·06 | 14·26 | 5·5 |
| Wirral | 99·47 | 94·17 | 5·30 | 5·3 |
| Gloucestershire | 139·52 | 132·77 | 6·75 | 4·8 |
| Hertfordshire | 277·41 | 264·07 | 13·34 | 4·8 |
| Rotherham | 77·35 | 73·87 | 3·48 | 4·5 |
| Sutton | 42·94 | 41·13 | 1·81 | 4·2 |
| Stockport | 81·05 | 77·64 | 3·41 | 4·2 |
| Oxfordshire | 139·95 | 134·59 | 5·36 | 3·8 |
| Northamptonshire | 161·25 | 155·09 | 6·16 | 3·8 |
| Lancashire | 400·56 | 386·15 | 14·41 | 3·6 |
| Merton | 41·12 | 39·71 | 1·41 | 3·4 |
| Barnsley | 62·50 | 60·45 | 2·05 | 3·3 |
| Redbridge | 59·84 | 57·98 | 1·86 | 3·1 |
| Bexley | 60·75 | 58·93 | 1·82 | 3·0 |
| Cambridge | 171·06 | 166·08 | 4·98 | 2·9 |
| Shropshire | 115·55 | 112·50 | 3·05 | 2·6 |
| North Yorkshire | 184·82 | 179·95 | 4·87 | 2·6 |
| Enfield | 74·58 | 72·84 | 1·74 | 2·3 |
| Surrey | 241·20 | 235·58 | 5·62 | 2·3 |
| Essex | 408·55 | 399·31 | 9·24 | 2·3 |
| Buckinghamshire | 179·78 | 175·75 | 4·03 | 2·2 |
| Warwickshire | 136·28 | 133·27 | 3·01 | 2·2 |
| Oldham | 65·75 | 64·32 | 1·43 | 2·2 |
| Sunderland | 86·78 | 84·92 | 1·86 | 2·1 |
| Wiltshire | 147·41 | 144·32 | 3·08 | 2·1 |
| Staffordshire | 285·13 | 279·42 | 5·71 | 2·0 |
| Bromley | 71·80 | 70·54 | 1·26 | 1·8 |
| Suffolk | 154·56 | 152·58 | 1·98 | 1·3 |
| Sefton | 81·59 | 80·57 | 1·02 | 1·3 |
| Dudley | 81·74 | 81·03 | 0·71 | 0·9 |
| Trafford | 60·27 | 59·78 | 0·48 | 0·8 |
| Hampshire | 391·25 | 388·48 | 2·78 | 0·7 |
| Dorset | 140·23 | 139·51 | 0·72 | 0·5 |

[1] Provisional information based on form RER. The expenditure figures include some capital items and specific grants which do not appear within the grant related expenditure assessment.

[2] Block grant is unhypothecated and based on GRE assessment for all services, and local authorities have discretion on how they spend across services.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of the local education authorities which in 1986-87 spent more than their grant-related expenditure assessments in respect of education; what was the amount of such excess spending for each authority, in cash terms and as a percentage of their total expenditure on education; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information requested is given in the table. The figures for local authorities' expenditure on education are taken from the revised outturns of expenditure as notified by the authorities to the Department of Environment on the form RER. These outturn figures are not necessarily identical to authorities' final education expenditure. The expenditure figures include some capital terms and specific grants which do not appear within the grant-related expenditure assessment.

*1986-87 comparison GRE v. RER revised outturn expenditure*[1]

| *Local education authority* | *Revised outturn expenditure £ million* | *Education GRE*[2] *£ million* | *Overspend £ million* | *Percentage overspend* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner London education authority | 952·47 | 541·28 | 411·19 | 43·2 |
| Haringey | 82·18 | 56·07 | 26·11 | 31·8 |
| Manchester | 157·14 | 112·50 | 44·64 | 28·4 |
| Brent | 97·05 | 72·71 | 24·34 | 25·1 |
| Newcastle | 80·24 | 60·27 | 19·97 | 24·9 |
| Waltham Forest | 70·20 | 56·99 | 13·21 | 18·8 |
| North Tyne | 55·85 | 45·54 | 10·31 | 18·5 |
| Liverpool | 154·08 | 125·74 | 28·35 | 18·4 |
| Richmond | 35·36 | 29·02 | 6·33 | 17·9 |
| South Tyne | 46·98 | 38·80 | 8·18 | 17·4 |
| Hounslow | 59·74 | 49·84 | 9·90 | 16·6 |
| Knowsley | 57·14 | 47·71 | 9·42 | 16·5 |
| Sheffield | 151·22 | 126·44 | 24·77 | 16·4 |
| Newham | 77·94 | 65·47 | 12·47 | 16·0 |
| Barking | 41·45 | 35·10 | 6·34 | 15·3 |
| Ealing | 88·14 | 76·52 | 11·62 | 13·2 |
| Gateshead | 54·49 | 47·55 | 6·93 | 12·7 |
| Rochdale | 62·24 | 54·52 | 7·72 | 12·4 |
| Wigan | 89·62 | 78·80 | 10·82 | 12·1 |
| Derbyshire | 251·23 | 221·23 | 30·01 | 11·9 |
| Walsall | 81·18 | 71·76 | 9·42 | 11·6 |
| Cumbria | 129·77 | 114·81 | 14·96 | 11·5 |
| Bradford | 146·73 | 129·98 | 16·75 | 11·4 |
| Wakefield | 84·69 | 75·06 | 9·63 | 11·4 |
| Harrow | 54·64 | 48·43 | 6·21 | 11·4 |
| Avon | 227·54 | 202·44 | 25·10 | 11·0 |
| Calderdale | 55·79 | 49·76 | 6·02 | 10·8 |
| Salford | 62·80 | 56·10 | 6·70 | 10·7 |
| Sandwell | 89·46 | 79·97 | 9·50 | 10·6 |
| Croydon | 83·64 | 75·00 | 8·63 | 10·3 |
| Coventry | 91·08 | 81·74 | 9·34 | 10·3 |
| Notts | 267·61 | 241·34 | 26·26 | 9·8 |
| Doncaster | 82·68 | 74·59 | 8·09 | 9·8 |
| St. Helens | 55·20 | 50·09 | 5·11 | 9·3 |
| Humberside | 238·76 | 217·01 | 21·75 | 9·1 |
| Havering | 63·10 | 57·42 | 5·68 | 9·0 |
| Isle of Wight | 29·17 | 26·55 | 2·62 | 9·0 |
| Barnsley | 59·51 | 54·27 | 5·23 | 8·8 |
| Cleveland | 168·90 | 154·14 | 14·77 | 8·7 |
| Bury | 46·70 | 42·72 | 3·98 | 8·5 |
| Cheshire | 265·25 | 243·16 | 22·09 | 8·3 |
| Tameside | 58·14 | 53·34 | 4·80 | 8·3 |
| Wolverhampton | 78·57 | 72·20 | 6·37 | 8·1 |
| Hillingdon | 57·23 | 52·66 | 4·57 | 8·0 |
| Leeds | 182·42 | 168·41 | 14·01 | 7·7 |
| Barnet | 72·88 | 67·32 | 5·56 | 7·6 |
| Leicester | 237·50 | 219·69 | 17·81 | 7·5 |
| Northumberland | 77·04 | 71·35 | 5·69 | 7·4 |
| Rotherham | 71·09 | 66·08 | 5·01 | 7·1 |
| Somerset | 106·61 | 99·41 | 7·20 | 6·8 |
| Bedfordshire | 141·00 | 131·63 | 9·37 | 6·6 |
| Northants | 148·41 | 138·90 | 9·51 | 6·4 |
| Bexley | 56·42 | 52·90 | 3·52 | 6·2 |
| Hertfordshire | 252·07 | 236·44 | 15·63 | 6·2 |
| Sunderland | 80·48 | 75·51 | 4·97 | 6·2 |
| Durham | 153·20 | 143·76 | 9·44 | 6·2 |
| North Yorkshire | 170·31 | 160·70 | 9·61 | 5·6 |
| Kingston | 30·43 | 28·74 | 1·69 | 5·6 |
| Lancashire | 365·31 | 345·89 | 19·43 | 5·3 |
| Buckinghamshire | 163·64 | 155·23 | 8·41 | 5·1 |
| Gloucestershire | 125·32 | 118·89 | 6·42 | 5·1 |
| Cambridge | 155·39 | 147·63 | 7·76 | 5·0 |
| Redbridge | 55·04 | 52·37 | 2·67 | 4·9 |
| Staffordshire | 263·99 | 251·18 | 12·81 | 4·9 |
| Shropshire | 106·23 | 101·08 | 5·15 | 4·8 |
| Stockport | 73·51 | 70·04 | 3·48 | 4·7 |
| Dorset | 129·85 | 124·00 | 5·85 | 4·5 |
| Oldham | 60·18 | 57·54 | 2·64 | 4·4 |
| Wiltshire | 135·00 | 129·13 | 5·87 | 4·3 |
| Sutton | 38·97 | 37·28 | 1·69 | 4·3 |
| Essex | 374·93 | 358·97 | 15·96 | 4·3 |
| Suffolk | 142·37 | 136·66 | 5·71 | 4·0 |
| Bromley | 66·40 | 63·79 | 2·61 | 3·9 |
| Enfield | 68·17 | 65·49 | 2·68 | 3·9 |

| Local education authority | Revised outturn expenditure £ million | Education GRE[2] £ million | Overspend £ million | Percentage overspend |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kirklees | 106·33 | 102·30 | 4·02 | 3·8 |
| Surrey | 221·36 | 214·14 | 7·22 | 3·3 |
| Wirral | 87·93 | 85·23 | 2·70 | 3·1 |
| Dudley | 75·25 | 73·14 | 2·11 | 2·8 |
| East Sussex | 132·25 | 128·72 | 3·53 | 2·7 |
| Oxfordshire | 124·25 | 121·04 | 3·20 | 2·6 |
| Hampshire | 358·78 | 349·66 | 9·12 | 2·5 |
| Merton | 36·78 | 35·92 | 0·86 | 2·3 |
| Warwickshire | 122·48 | 119·63 | 2·85 | 2·3 |
| Sefton | 73·90 | 72·38 | 1·52 | 2·1 |
| Devon | 216·95 | 212·82 | 4·13 | 1·9 |
| Trafford | 54·90 | 54·14 | 0·76 | 1·4 |
| Bolton | 70·85 | 69·97 | 0·87 | 1·2 |
| Norfolk | 161·58 | 159·90 | 1·68 | 1·0 |
| Berkshire | 176·42 | 174·70 | 1·72 | 1·0 |
| Solihull | 52·89 | 52·46 | 0·44 | 0·8 |
| Birmingham | 276·68 | 275·02 | 1·66 | 0·6 |
| Cornwall | 103·29 | 102·83 | 0·46 | 0·4 |

*Notes:*
[1] Provisional information based on form RER. The expenditure figures include some capital items and specific grants which do not appear within the grant related expenditure assessment.
[2] Block grant is unhypothecated and based on GRE assessment for all services, and local authorities have discretion on how they spend across services.

## WALES

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** My Department makes use of information technology (IT) in a number of ways to improve internal communications. For example a video-conferencing system links our Cardiff and London offices, and data and documents are transferred by facsimile, remotely located word processors and electronic mail systems. Advanced desk top publishing techniques are used in the production of many departmental publications which are available to the public. These uses of IT have been developed in accordance with my Department's IT strategy which sets out how IT may best be used to support the business aims and priorities of the Department. We will continue to make the fullest possible use of emergent technologies.

### Expenditure

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list under each region expenditure programme and at constant prices his Department's expenditure in each of mid, south and west Glamorgan and Gwent for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The information is not available in the form requested. Total expenditure on programmes within my responsibility is not broken down on a county basis.

### River Pollution

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the total lengths of Welsh rivers in each of the water authorities classifications 1 to 4 for each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Grist:** River quality surveys are carried out once every five years. Over the last 10 years, therefore, figures are available only for 1980 and 1985, and these are set out in the table. The next survey is expected in 1990.

| Classification | Lengths kilometres 1980 | 1985 |
|---|---|---|
| 1A | 2,573 | 2,418 |
| 1B | 1,237 | 1,377 |
| 2 | 506 | 523 |
| 3 | 301 | 256 |
| 4 | 12 | 26 |

It should be noted that exact comparison of these figures is not possible, as the lengths of rivers included in successive surveys has altered.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of recorded incidents of river pollution, the number of related prosecutions and the number of convictions in Wales in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Grist:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 26 May 1988. I have asked the chairman of the Welsh water authority to write to the hon. Gentleman in respect of the remainder of the last 10 years.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Ethiopia

**Sir John Stanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the provision of development aid both directly and through non-governmental organisations to Ethiopia.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** I refer my right hon. Friend to the Government's observations (Cm 432) on the first report from the Foreign Affairs Committee (Session 1987-88)

"Famine in the Horn of Africa". The response to paragraph 101 of the report contains a statement of the Government's policy on provision of development aid to Ethiopia.

## ENERGY

### Electricity Industry (Safety)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps his Department is taking to ensure that adequate safety measures are enforced by private companies in the electricity industry after the phasing out of the inspector department in April.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I have no intention of phasing out the Department's engineering inspectorate which has responsibility for enforcing the Electricity Supply Regulations 1988. These regulations are designed to secure the safety of the general public against risks associated with the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity. The provisions of these regulations will apply to the privatised electricity supply industry.

### Fluidised Bed Technology

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what consideration he has given to providing matching financial support to the £5 million offered by Ahlstrom of Finland to ensure the continuance of the British Coal topping cycle gasifier and pressurised fluidised bed combustion plant at Grimethorpe;

(2) what is his policy towards Government investment in integrated gasification combined cycle power generation technology;

(3) what is his policy towards Government investments in circulating fluidised bed coal combustion technology;

(4) what is his policy towards Government investment in bubbling fluidised bed combustion coal technology;

(5) if his Department or consultants to his Department have made any study of the benefits of using fluidised bed combustion technology for power plants to reduce carbon dioxide releases and help reduce greenhouse gas build up.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** Integrated gasification combined cycle, bubbling fluidised bed combustion, and circulating fluidised bed combustion are alternative means of consuming coal in an environmentally sensitive way in order to produce heat or to generate electricity. A considerable amount of public sector funding has been directed at the development of these technologies. It is for private sector companies and the energy industries to evaluate these methods of power generation against the more conventional forms of coal combustion, and to exploit their potential accordingly. My Department is studying carefully the British Coal request for Government support of research at Grimethorpe into the topping cycle concept.

"Energy Paper 56", which was published in July 1988, is a comprehensive appraisal of advanced coal-based power generation systems. This report considers the advantages and disadvantages of several technologies, including variants of fluidised bed combustion, and provides an indication of their potential for reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide.

### Energy Efficiency Office

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the work of the Energy Efficiency Office.

**Mr. Parkinson:** The next step in the work of the Energy Efficiency Office is a new programme to be called best practice, beginning on 1 April 1989. Its aim will be to advance and spread best practice in energy efficiency in industry, commerce, housing and the public sector. Further details are given in a leaflet available from the Energy Efficiency Office. Copies of this leaflet will be available in the Libraries of both Houses.

The current energy efficiency demonstration and research and development schemes will close for applications on 31 March 1989. Projects accepted up to that date will however be supported to completion, and the Energy Efficiency Office will continue to promote the lessons learned from successful projects.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Regional Enterprise Grants

**Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications have been received to date under the regional enterprise grants scheme; and how much has been awarded in grants under the scheme.

**Mr. Atkins:** The regional enterprise grants scheme commenced on 1 April 1988 and by 28 February 1989, a total of 2,197 applications had been received from businesses in Great Britain. Grant worth a total of £9·3 million has been offered in 1,102 of these cases.

### SIB (Chippenham) Limited

**Sir Charles Morrison:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when his Department was first appraised of any concern about the operation of the companies based in Chippenham, Wiltshire, trading as Selective Investment Brokers Ltd. or SIB (Chippenham) Ltd.

**Mr. Maude:** In December 1986.

### Export Credits Guarantee Department

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if there are any proposals to change the 1988-89 running costs limit for the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

**Mr. Alan Clark:** The running costs limit for the Export Credits Guarantee Department in 1988-89 (class V, vote 5) has been reduced by £4,000 from £38,758,000 to £38,754,000. This decrease is offset by a corresponding increase in the running costs limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) and reflects the transfer of costs for recruitment under the direct entry grade 7 competition 1988.

### Films Order

**Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to lay the Films Order.

**Mr. Maude:** I have today laid before the House the Films (Exclusivity Agreements) Order 1989 which will come into force on 3 April. Except for minor amendments, this will follow articles 4 to 6 of the draft order, published in August 1988. The order does not include articles addressing the delay in release of popular films, because it is now clear from the representations received and recent developments that there has been a marked and welcome increase in competition in the cinema exhibition industry as well as a further increase in cinema attendances.

If the benefits of increased competition do not materialise, it remains open to me to take further action under the Fair Trading Act.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Teachers

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contacts he has had with the Professional Association of Teachers in recent months; what issues have been discussed; and what plans he has for further meetings with the association.

**Dr. Mawhinney** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* I met representatives of the Professional Association of Teachers on 8 February 1989. The issues discussed were the relationship of the association with the Department of Education, education reforms in Northern Ireland, and discipline in schools. I have no specific plans for further meetings with the association.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Iran

138. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to change the terms of the current prohibition on the sale of arms to Iran.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I have nothing to add to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on 18 January.

### Vaclav Havel

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Czechoslovak Government on behalf of Vaclav Havel.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We have already raised this issue with the Czechoslovak Government and will do so again as necessary.

### Prisoners of Conscience

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list countries to which he has made representations on behalf of prisoners of conscience in each year for which information is available.

**Mr. Eggar:** There is no year for which this information is readily available. It could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Sharpeville Six

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his reasons for making representations to the South African Government on behalf of the Sharpeville Six.

**Mrs. Chalker:** In the case of those sentenced to death in South Africa, we consider making representations only in cases that are clearly political, and where there are strong extenuating circumstances or grounds to doubt the fairness of the judicial process. We do so exceptionally, and when all other avenues have been exhausted.

### Mr. Charles Bester

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review his decision on the Charles Bester case; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** No.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his reasons for refusing to make representations on behalf of Mr. Charles Bester to the South African Government.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 21 December 1988.

### Chemical Weapons

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has given consideration to the results of the international nuclear non-proliferation treaty in the drafting of proposals from the United Kingdom for a parallel international chemical weapons non-proliferation and disarmament treaty.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Where appropriate, we draw on the experience gained in the negotiation and implementation of existing arms control agreements, including the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

However, we do not believe that a chemical weapons non-proliferation treaty along the lines of the NPT would effectively remove the threat of chemical weapons. With other states we are, therefore, pursuing an effectively verifiable global convention, completely prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling or retention, and transfer of chemical weapons.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Iran

Q20. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on relations between Her Majesty's Government and Iran.

**The Prime Minister:** Our position on all the issues involved was explained fully to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on 21 February.

### Homelessness

Q140. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what action she is taking to co-ordinate departmental action to provide secure accommodation for all homeless people.

**The Prime Minister:** All appropriate Departments are being consulted as part of the current review of the homelessness legislation.

### Government Information Service

Q173. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will set out the duties of the head of the Government information service and the Minister to whom he is responsible.

**The Prime Minister:** The head of the Government information service has a general responsibility for its leadership and well-being. He is available personally to help Departments, who are responsible for the day-to-day management of their own information staff, on both general and individual management problems. He has a general responsibility for recruitment, training and career development policies. The head of the Government information service is responsible to the head of the home Civil Service for these duties, and, through him, to me.

### Broadwell, Rugby

Q186. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Broadwell, near Rugby.

**The Prime Minister:** I have present no plans to do so.

### Engagements

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 March.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I also attended the closing session of the ozone layer conference. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

## SCOTLAND

### Scottish Office (Profile)

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made with the brief "the Scottish Office and its activities" issued in June 1988; whether he still intends to appoint consultants in terms of that brief to raise the profile of the Scottish Office; what is the intended budget for this project; when such an appointment will be made; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am giving careful consideration to the nature of any commission which might be given to consultants in the light of the brief issued in June 1988 and the responses to it; and I shall make my conclusions known in due course.

### Procurators Fiscal

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reports submitted by the police to procurators fiscal were marked "no proceedings" in each fiscaldom in Scotland for the whole of 1987 and 1988.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* The number of reports submitted by the police and other reporting agencies to procurators fiscal which were marked "no proceedings" in each fiscaldom in Scotland for the whole of 1987 and 1988 is as follows:—

| | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen | 3,604 | 1,536 |
| Airdrie | 487 | 640 |
| Alloa | 251 | 343 |
| Arbroath | 177 | 229 |
| Ayr | 1,350 | 1,344 |
| Banff | 145 | 93 |
| Cambeltown | 91 | 67 |
| Cupar | 207 | 265 |
| Dingwall | 241 | 270 |
| Dornoch | 69 | 48 |
| Dumbarton | 842 | 809 |
| Dumfries | 280 | 273 |
| Dundee | 848 | 1,082 |
| Dunfermline | 1,263 | 1,325 |
| Dunoon | 187 | 196 |
| Duns | 137 | 188 |
| Edinburgh | 10,903 | 4,933 |
| Elgin | 760 | 688 |
| Falkirk | 1,626 | 1,976 |
| Forfar | 87 | 37 |
| Fort William | 270 | 122 |
| Glasgow | 19,772 | 18,514 |
| Greenock | 1,046 | 762 |
| Haddington | 825 | 606 |
| Hamilton | 2,184 | 4,271 |
| Inverness | 859 | 655 |
| Jedburgh | 144 | 238 |
| Kilmarnock | 1,351 | 1,530 |
| Kirkcaldy | 1,399 | 1,217 |
| Kirkcudbright | 89 | 33 |
| Kirkwall | 80 | 78 |
| Lanark | 213 | 574 |
| Lerwick | 110 | 129 |
| Linlithgow | 409 | 575 |
| Lochmaddy | 11 | 8 |
| Oban | 138 | 123 |
| Paisley | 2,277 | 2,654 |
| Peebles | 56 | 47 |
| Perth | 1,670 | 1,641 |
| Peterhead | 515 | 647 |
| Portree | 66 | 56 |
| Rothesay | 71 | 39 |
| Selkirk | 315 | 268 |
| Stirling | 675 | 466 |
| Stonehaven | 238 | 199 |
| Stornoway | 65 | 36 |
| Stranraer | 178 | 194 |
| Tain | 242 | 250 |
| Wick | 196 | 223 |

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of reports submitted by the police to procurator fiscal were marked "no proceedings" for the whole of 1987 and 1988.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The proportion of reports submitted by the police and other reporting agencies to procurators fiscal which were marked "no proceedings" for the whole of 1987 and 1988 were 16·69 per cent. and 14·97 per cent. respectively.

### Rents

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what he treats as a reasonable affordable rent in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Rent-setting is a matter for the landlord concerned, having regard to a range of factors including the nature and size of the property, and to conditions in the particular segment of the rented market which the landlord seeks to serve. Affordability is an important factor, but it cannot be determined mechanically and will vary according to the circumstances. Financial assistance, available to tenants through housing benefit and to housing association and public sector landlords through grants and subsidies, is designed to create the conditions in which the requirements of both landlord and tenant in terms of affordability can be met.

### Training

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to assist training in Greenock and Port Glasgow with a view to ensuring that jobs go to local people.

**Mr. Lang:** The full range of Training Agency training programmes is available in Greenock and Port Glasgow to assist local people in competing for jobs in the local labour market. The creation of the Inverclyde enterprise zone will generate greater economic activity in the Greenock and Port Glasgow area, leading to increased employment opportunities. However, it is a matter for individual employers to decide whom they will employ.

### Housing

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Her Majesty's Government's policy for housing those citizens who cannot afford to buy or rent houses in the open market.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The policies which the Government are pursuing, including the allocation of substantially increased resources both to the housing association movement and to local authorities for capital expenditure on housing, together with the deregulation of the private rented sector, are designed to increase the availability of housing to let particularly at rents within the means of those in lower paid employment. The housing benefit system is available to assist those who are unable to meet their housing costs.

### Rating Reform

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received about payment of the community charge by agricultural workers and their spouses in tied housing.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of inquiries and representations from Members of Parliament and individuals about this issue.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many agricultural workers in tied housing by district in Scotland will have to pay the personal community charge.

**Mr. Lang:** This information is not held centrally.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to give financial assistance to agricultural workers in tied housing over the payment of the community charge.

**Mr. Lang:** I refer to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 18 February 1989.

### Crofters

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to allow crofters to take full advantage of the farm woodlands and woodland grant schemes for plantings on common grazings.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. and learned Friend has indicated that, if the various crofting interests can agree, he will give sympathetic consideration to proposals for a private Member's Bill which would allow crofters to participate in these schemes through planting on common grazings.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Legal Departments

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals to establish a Select Committee to oversee the work of the Government's legal departments.

**Mr. Wakeham:** No.

### Parliamentary Pension Fund

**Sir Peter Hordern:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what has been the Treasury contribution to the parliamentary pension fund, expressed as a percentage, in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Wakeham:** The Exchequer contributions to the parliamentary pension fund expressed as a percentage of total contribution income of the fund are as follows:

*Exchequer contribution as a percentage of contribution income*

| *Year* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | [1]66·7 |
| 1986-87 | 69·7 |
| 1985-86 | 76·7 |
| 1984-85 | 76·7 |
| 1983-84 | 76·7 |

[1] Provisional—subject to audit.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Single European Act

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the impact that the Single European Act will have on his Department's operation of domestic policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Single European Act will have no direct impact on the operation of domestic social security policy. Although the Act introduced qualified majority

voting in the Council of Ministers, instead of unanimity, for certain decision concerning the establishment of the internal market, unanimity still applies to any measures concerning the free movement of persons, or the rights and interests of employed persons, which are the aspects of relevance to the Department.

### Girocheques

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what reviews are taking place in dealing with the payment of pensions and benefit girocheques.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Developments in money transmission systems are constantly monitored with a view to considering improvements to the methods of paying social security benefits.

### Public Service Pensions

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his best estimate of the number of widows of post-retirement marriages with public servants who do not receive a widow's pension;

(2) what would be the cost of extending the payment of widow's pensions to all widows of post-retirement marriages with public servants.

**Mr. Brooke:** I have been asked to reply.

Information on the numbers of widows of post-retirement marriages of public servants before 6 April 1978 was not required to be held. I regret that an estimate of the cost of extending the payment of widow's pensions to all widows of post-retirement marriages of public servants could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## HEALTH

### "Working for Patients"

**Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what specialties the 100 extra consultants posts mentioned in the White Paper "Working for Patients" will be engaged.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** We will shortly be writing to regional health authorities to invite them to submit their proposals for the 100 additional consultant posts referred to in "Working for Patients". Authorities will be expected to target their proposals on the specialties and districts in which the longest waiting times are experienced. The specialties will be general surgery, traumatic and orthopaedic surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, urology, otolaryngology, opthalmology and general medicine.

### Cryptosporidia

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what information he has on the incidence of illness related to the organism, cryptosporidia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** The public health laboratory service's communicable disease surveillance centre first received reports of cryptosporidium infection from laboratories in England and Wales in 1983. Sixty-one reports were received that year. Since then annual totals have been 876 (1984), 1,874 (1985), 3,560 (1986), 3,277 (1987), 2,757 (1988) and 633 in 1989 to the end of February. The increase from 1983 to 1986 reflects to a great extent increased reporting resulting from development of techniques to identify the organism in the laboratory and increasing awareness of the association of cryptosporidium with diarrhoeal illness. The figures for 1988 and 1989 (first eight weeks) are provisional.

### AIDS

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what continued observation there has been in the United Kingdom of the babies and others contaminated with SV40 in the late 1950s; and what proportion of those people now have AIDS.

**Mr. Mellor:** There has been no separate continued observation of those people in the United Kingdom who might have received vaccine contaminated with SV40. We have relied on the results of studies in the United States of America.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the results of any experiments conducted during preventive vaccination programmes have shown the human leukocyte type antigens (HL-A) in the immune response, both humoral and cellular, to be clearly linked to specific bacterial and viral antigens.

**Mr. Mellor:** I am not aware of any experiments conducted during preventive vaccination programmes to investigate HLA and bacterial and viral antigens.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the two large studies referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Erewash, 25 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *139*, conducted in the United States of America on the contamination of polio vaccine by SV40 in the late 1950s and early 1960s referred to AIDS or carcinogenicity.

**Mr. Mellor:** AIDS had not been identified in the human population at the time the studies referred to were undertaken. The studies were directed to look for evidence of carcinogenicity in the population exposed to SV40.

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effort has been made to identify SV40 genomes in people with AIDS.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** I have been asked to reply.

No work has been done in the United Kingdom to identify SV40 genomes in people with AIDS, since there is no evidence that it gives rise to any untoward effects in normal individuals.

### Dentists

**Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when technical discussions with the British Dental Association on a new dental contract last took place; when he expects formal negotiations on a new contract to commence; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) on 2 March at column *317*.

### Autism

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support his Department provides *(a)* for autistic societies and *(b)* for research into autism: and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Department grant aided the National Autistic Society by £10,000 a year for 1985-86, 1986-87, and 1987-88, and in 1987 made an additional special grant of £5,500. Since May 1987 the Department has spent over £60,000 on a descriptive study of the current education, treatment and handling of autistic children and adults.

### Chiropody

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement concerning the future of the chiropody service within the district of Easington.

**Mr. Mellor:** Chiropody services will be provided independently by Durham, Sunderland and Hartlepool health authorities following the introduction on 1 April 1989 of revised management arrangements for health services in Easington.

### Health Services (Hartlepool)

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate the level of chiropody and nursing services to be provided for patients transferring from Durham to the Hartlepool health authority; and if the extra funding for these services will be allocated pro-rata to the appropriate department.

**Mr. Mellor:** The level of chiropody and nursing services provided for patients transferring from Durham to Hartlepool health authority will be the same as that provided before the transfer and patients should not see any change. Funds will be transferred to reflect this existing level of service.

### Community Health (Easington)

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations have taken place with staff of all disciplines following the Northern regional health authority's reorganisation of community health services in the Easington district.

**Mr. Mellor:** A schedule of proposed transfers was sent to every individual member of staff and to all relevant staff organisations. Discussions then took place with individual staff members and local representatives of the staff organisations prior to final decisions being made about transfers.

### NHS Costs

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to the National Health Service of employing *(a)* a consultant, *(b)* a registrar, *(c)* a junior doctor, *(d)* an A-grade nurse and *(e)* a G-grade nurse.

**Mr. Mellor:** The information requested is as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Consultant | 41,800 |
| *(b and c)* Junior Doctors: | |
| Senior registrar | 30,000 |
| Registrar | 26,200 |
| Senior House Officer | 23,500 |
| House Officer | 18,200 |
| *(d)* A Grade Nurse | 8,600 |
| *(e)* G Grade Nurse | 17,900 |

*Notes:*
1. Figures include basic pay, employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions and exclude London Weighting and London Supplements.
2. Figures are for 1988-89 England and Wales and are based on estimates of paybills for Nurses and estimates of average contracted hours for junior doctors both costed 1988-89 pay rates.
3. Figures for consultants exclude Distinction Awards.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average costs of *(a)* a tonsillectomy, *(b)* herniotomy, *(c)* an appendectomy, *(d)* a double hip-joint replacement and *(e)* a coronary graft by-pass.

**Mr. Freeman:** The latest cost estimates are as follows:

| | *£ 1987-88 prices* |
|---|---|
| Tonsillectomy (tonsils and adenoids) | 360 |
| Herniotomy (inguinal hernia) | 710 |
| Appendectomy | n/a |
| Total hip replacement | 2,390 |
| Coronary artery by-pass graft | 3,580 |

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the cost of *(a)* a kidney dialysis machine, *(b)* optical laser equipment, *(c)* a lithotripter and *(d)* a CAT scanner.

**Mr. Freeman:** The costs of these items of medical equipment vary according to the type and use to which each is put.

However the following gives an indication of the likely range of costs in each case:

| | *(£000's)* |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Kidney dialysis | 6-13 |
| *(b)* Optical laser | 12-52 |
| *(c)* Lithotripter (ESWL) | 500-800 |
| *(e)* CAT Scanner | 330-500 |

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether in the light of the possible relationships between bovine spongiform encephalopathy and Creutsfeldt-Jacob dementia he intends introducing reporting procedures for the latter.

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Food to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 27 February at columns *89-91*. Active consideration is being given to the Southwood committee's recommendation about reporting cases of Creutsfeldt Jacob dementia.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the dangers to human health of vaccines from bovine spongiform encephalopathy infected cattle.

**Mr. Mellor:** The comments in the recent report by the working party chaired by Sir Richard Southwood that there may be a remote theoretical risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy being transmitted to patients by the use of injectable medicines derived from bovine material, have been carefully considered by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. The committee agreed with the working party that any such risk from injectable medicines

including vaccines is both theoretical and remote. We have accepted this advice. As a purely precautionary measure, further guidance on good manufacturing practice in this area is about to be issued to manufacturers of all medicines including vaccines.

### Benefit Claims

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will extend the rules to make sure that people whose application forms for help with National Health Service costs have been awaiting the outcome of a review of the relevant statutory instruments will not be disbarred from claiming a refund although it is longer than one month since the relevant expenditure occurred;

(2) when he will make a revised statutory instrument covering claims for help with National Health Service costs; and how many applications for help with National Health Service costs from people with non-dependent people living with them are being stockpiled at Newcastle, awaiting such an instrument;

(3) why the agency benefit unit in Newcastle dealing with claims for help with National Health Service costs is unable to deal with claims relating to people who have non-dependents living with them.

**Mr. Mellor:** The agency benefits unit has stockpiled 9,809 cases involving non-dependants because they are awaiting permission from this Department not to make inquiries of local authorities in cases where housing benefit in the form of rent rebate or rent allowance is payable. This request is being given urgent attention. Sympathetic consideration will be given to any claims for refunds outside the one month time limit where claims for help have been delayed at the agency benefits unit.

Amendment of the National Health Service (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations 1988 will be necessary to give effect to the Government's intentions when making these regulations.

### Milk

**Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases have been reported in each of the past five years for which figures are available of salmonellosis or cympylobacter infection resulting from drinking or consuming untreated milk or milk products supplied by dairy farmers direct to consumer or consumed within the dairy farmer's family.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

| | *Salmonellosis* | *Campylobacter* |
|---|---|---|
| 1983 | 200 | 85 |
| 1984 | 315 | 79 |
| 1985 | 54 | 178 |
| 1986 | 323 | 24 |
| 1987 | 34 | 332 |
| 1988[1] | 22 | None |

[1] Provisional.

### Waterborne Diseases

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the source of the present outbreak of cryptosporidium in Oxford and Swindon;

(2) if he will make a statement on current procedures for dealing with outbreaks of disease associated with public water supplies in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Freeman** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning on 2 March at column *286*.

### General Practitioners

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the requirement to spend 20 hours in a surgery over five days, at hours convenient to patients, as outlined in "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract", will apply to general practitioners with more than one surgery site; whether the time travelling between site will be taken into account; whether set hours will be required at each surgery site; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor:** The detailed implementation of the policies set out in "General Practice in the National Health Service: A New Contract", including the arrangements for surgery hours, will be the subject of consultation between my officials and the British Medical Association's general medical services committee.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a detailed breakdown of how the new standard capitation fees for general practitioners used in the examples contained in the document "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract" have been arrived at.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* The new capitation fee levels used for illustrative purposes in appendix F of "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract" have been calculated to give effect to the Government's policy, set out in paragraph 7.3 of "Working for Patients", that capitation fees should form at least 60 per cent. of a GP's income. The average standard capitation fee per patient has, therefore, been notionally increased from £8·81 to £11·85. For the purposes of the examples it has been assumed that the increased proportion of income represented by capitation will be paid for by redistributing funds from out-of-date fees and allowances, such as seniority payments and group practice allowance. When the new remuneration system is introduced from 1 April 1990, the level of fees and allowances will have been increased by the 1989 and 1990 awards and by the increased investment in family practitioner services announced in "Promoting Better Health".

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Senior Principals (Salaries)

**Sir Peter Hordern:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the salary of a senior principal of the Civil Service *(a)* including the contributions to the superannuation scheme and *(b)* net of such contributions at the latest convenient date.

**Mr. Brooke:** A grade 6 (senior principal) civil servant on the scale maximum is paid a national rate of £27,087

per annum and, in common with other civil servants, a pension contribution of 1½ per cent. of pay is made towards the cost of family benefits.

### Relocation

**Mr. Bright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has considered relocating any of the Inland Revenue or Customs and Excise establishments for which he is responsible in Luton.

**Mr. Brooke:** Both the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have in hand the serious and substantial relocation reviews referred to in the answer I gave on 9 February, 1989, at columns *751-2*, to my hon. Friend, the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran), but at present neither has specific plans to relocate activities either to or from Luton.

### Strip Searches

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will instruct Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in their central records on strip searches of persons to identify them in future by sex; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lilley:** No. There is no reason to record such information.

## ERNIE

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the total administrative costs per annum of running ERNIE.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* The total administrative cost of running the ERNIE prize draw operation was £1·7 million in the financial year 1987-88.

### Premium Bonds

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the money taken by the purchase of premium bonds is spent on *(a)* administration and *(b)* prize money.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* None of the money taken by the purchase of premium bonds is spent on administration or prize money. The administrative costs of running premium bonds, which amounted to £20·5 million in 1987-88, is paid from the Department for National Savings vote. Prize money, which totalled £139 million in 1987-88, is a charge on the Consolidated Fund. The prize money is calculated as a percentage of the value of all eligible bonds in the prize draw. In 1987-88 this was 7¾ per cent. per annum to 31 July and 7 per cent. per annum from 1 August.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Industrial Relations

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff in his Department provide advice to companies on good industrial relations practice.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Provision of advice to companies on good industrial relations practice is the responsibility of the independent Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. Precise information is not available in the form requested but information on the estimated proportion of resources allocated to advisory work is set out in the ACAS annual report, copies of which are in the Library.

### Industrial Safety

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what evidence is available to him on the possible long-term effects on the health of local residents evacuated during the fire involving chemicals at BDH Poole on 21 June 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nicholls:** I am not aware of any evidence of significant long-term health effects and there is no reason to suppose that any such effects will occur.

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, whether he has any plans to change the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc., Act 1974 so that reports similar to that prepared following the fire at BDH Poole on 21 June 1988 are made public.

**Mr. Nicholls:** A substantial account of the fire at BDH Poole on 21 June 1988 was attached to the Health and Safety Executive's news release of 17 October 1988 and it contained all of the facts necessary to inform the public fully of HSE's investigation and conclusions. The internal report included in addition personal information, comments and opinion which it is not helpful or appropriate to make public.

I have, however, asked the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission to consider whether there is scope for any improvements in the present arrangements for informing the public of health and safety issues.

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for ensuring that any improved safety measures required by the Health and Safety Executive in industrial premises are implemented in existing as well as new premises.

**Mr. Patrick Nicholls:** The Health and Safety Executive already updates guidance on a regular basis to ensure that advice on improved safety measures is widely available for application in existing and new industrial premises. New guidance documents are publicised in press notices and referred to by inspectors, where relevant, during their visits.

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect the amendment of directive 82/501/EEC on major accidental hazards of certain industrial activities as published in EEC *Official Journal* L336, 7 December 1988, will have in preventing fires similar to that at BDH Poole on 21 June 1988.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The amendment (88/610/EEC) to directive 82/501/EEC will be implemented in Great Britain by means of a further amendment to the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984. These regulations, like the directive, aim to prevent major industrial accidents to people and the environment and to limit the consequences of any which do occur. One of the main effects of the amendment will be that many warehouses of the type involved in the fire at BDH Poole storing hazardous substances will be brought within the scope of these important major hazard controls.

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to extend the amendments to the Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 to a greater range of premises as promised in column 1001 of the *Official Report* for 1 November 1988.

**Mr. Nicholls:** By 1 June 1990. This is the implementation date for EC directive 88/610/EEC, which amends the "Seveso" directive 82/501/EEC. This amending directive will be implemented in Great Britain by the amendment to the CIMAH regulations to which my hon. Friend refers.

## TRANSPORT

### Single European Act

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact that the Single European Act will have on his Department's operation of domestic policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The Government's policies since 1979 have provided the liberalised transport conditions necessary for the country to take full advantage of opportunities offered by the Single European Act.

### British Rail Investment

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require British Rail to earn a net real rate of return of at least the Autumn Statement's current forecast rate of return of 12 per cent. in respect of all new investment projects including the proposed high-speed rail link to the Channel tunnel.

**Mr. Portillo:** British Rail needs to demonstrate that all investments by its commercial sector are capable of producing a commercial return: this would include any high-speed line to the Channel tunnel, should it be financed by the board. The discount rate used to test investments is agreed between British Rail and the Department and is currently 7 per cent. It reflects the Treasury's required rate of return which is intended to ensure that commercial public sector investment programmes (such as British Rail's) provide a rate of return which is broadly equivalent to that which could be achieved in the private sector. The required rate of return was set in 1978 and is currently under review.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** An information technology steering committee oversees the cost effective development of the Department's information technology and communications strategies. The Department will continue to build on the existing uses of information technology and communications network, to expand the use of modern office facilities and to improve the provision of information to the public in areas such as statistics and driver and vehicle licensing.

Recent examples include the development of systems at the DVLC, Swansea to give staff ready access to central databases and thus enable them to deal better with inquiries from the general public about driving licences, vehicle registration documents, etc; in the statistical field, more extensive and rapid analyses of information have become possible and desktop publishing methods have reduced the time taken to publish results; similar improvements are being sought in the publication of research reports by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, who are increasingly using video to illustrate the results of their work.

### North Report

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on the North report on road traffic law; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The proposals we announced on 7 February to reform road traffic law in the light of the North report have been widely welcomed. There has been general agreement about the need to simplify the law and influence driver behaviour. The measures proposed form part of our drive to cut by one third by the year 2000 the present toll of 5,000 dead and 300,000 injured each year on Britain's roads.

Further work to implement the proposals is being taken forward in consultation with all the interested bodies who have a part to play.

### Coastal Waters (Pollution)

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether surveillance aircraft were undertaking regular patrols at the time of the oil pollution in the English Channel in January; if it has yet been possible to identify the cause; and if he will make a further statement.

**Mr. Portillo:** An aircraft of my Department's marine pollution control unit was carrying out a routine Channel navigation surveillance patrol on 27 December 1988 when an oil slick was sighted. Patrols on 30 December and 5 January 1989 were mounted in direct response to further pollution reports received.

Samples of beached oil and oiled bird feathers have been analysed by the laboratory of the Government chemist to determine whether they had a common source. The initial findings have proved inconclusive and a more detailed analysis is now being carried out.

### Traffic Congestion

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has undertaken to assess the economic cost to the nation of congested traffic flows on both road and rail.

**Mr. Portillo:** The Department does not calculate the costs of congestion on roads and rail in total because of the difficulty of defining the base case against which congestion would be compared. However, it is our policy to reduce the economic costs of traffic congestion by cost-effective rail and road schemes in which the relief of traffic congestion on roads and the reduction in overcrowding on the railways are taken into account in the assessment of benefits. Planned spending on new

construction and improvement of motorway and trunk roads over the next three years amounts to some £2·6 billion (excluding VAT), an increase of 40 per cent. on the three years ending 1988-89. British Rail investment is at its highest level since the 1960s, with over £3·5 billion planned for the next five years, including investment in additional rolling stock to relieve overcrowding. We have also undertaken the central London rail study, which has identified options for relieving congestion.

### East Midlands Line

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the case for electrification of the east midlands line of British Rail.

**Mr. Portillo:** We have received another four representations since my answer to a similar question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 14 November 1988 at column *467*.

### Merchant Navy

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has taken to arrest the decline in the number of cadets entering the British Merchant Navy.

**Mr. Portillo:** A scheme for providing financial assistance towards the costs of training future Merchant Navy officers has been set up under the powers in section 26 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1988.

This scheme is beginning to show encouraging results and the cadet intake at colleges has almost doubled to 279 in the current academic year.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British seamen are in the Merchant Navy at the present time.

**Mr. Portillo:** At 31 December 1988 the numbers of seafarers registered with the Merchant Navy establishment was 22,629.

### Container Ships

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made for adapting container ships with sea sheds and heavy duty flatracks to carry dry cargo in military operations.

**Mr. Portillo:** Container ships need no adaptation to carry heavy duty flatracks, which are widely used commercially. Only minor adaptation is needed to permit container ships to carry sea sheds. No provision has been made by the United Kingdom.

### East London Rail Study

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the geographical limits of the east London rail study; and if the terms of the study will be to examine the links from Stratford to docklands.

**Mr. Portillo:** The study is examining the best options for improving access from central London to docklands and other Thames-side areas of the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. It will include examination of links from Stratford to docklands.

### Sea Pollution

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign-owned vessels polluted United Kingdom territorial waters in each year since 1974; on how many occasions in each year the relevant flag administrations were asked to consider prosecutions and on how many occasions in each year were prosecutions instigated by the relevant flag administrations.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions since 1979 when his Department has made representations to the maritime transport authority of a foreign state concerning alleged infringement of international or pollution conventions by a ship registered in that state while at sea in waters under United Kingdom surveillance and jurisdiction.

**Mr. Portillo:** The number of reported oil slicks in United Kingdom territorial waters in which foreign owned vessels were the possible source are as follows:

| | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1985 | 2 |
| 1986 | 1 |
| 1987 | 1 |
| 1988 | 5 |

The figure for 1988 reflects the extension of United Kingdom territorial limits from three to 12 miles. Figures prior to 1985 are not readily available.

Four of the reported incidents have been referred to the competent authorities in the relevant flag states for investigation—one in 1986 and three in 1988—but to date we have not been advised of any prosecutions that may have been instigated. Oil sample evidence in another case is still being analysed, prior to referral. In the remaining four incidents the evidence did not justify asking the flag states to investigate further.

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward legislative proposals to enable legal action to be taken against the owners of foreign vessels which cause pollution within United Kingdom territorial waters in the British courts if no action is undertaken by the relevant flag administration.

**Mr. Portillo:** No, the concept would be contrary to the fundamental principles of United Kingdom criminal law and not practically possible. However, I am satisfied that the recovery of clean-up costs from the polluter represents a significant sanction.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken by his Department in respect of paragraph XVI, 29 of the ministerial declaration of the second international conference on the protection of the North sea.

**Mr. Portillo:** Nationally, procedures have been strengthened to ensure that all reports received by my Department of suspected operational violations of pollution regulations are transmitted to parties to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) on port state control to ensure that ships alleged to have committed an offence are inspected when they call at an MOU port. At United Kingdom ports, a full inspection of suspected offenders is carried out in accordance with port state control procedures.

Internationally, contracting parties to the Bonn agreement, who are responsible for receiving reports of oil pollution, are liaising with parties to the MOU on port state control to ensure that there is close co-operation between their respective activities, that all ships suspected of an operational violation are rigorously inspected, and that where the circumstances warrant it, evidence is collected in accordance with procedures recommended by the International Maritime Organisation.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his Department will be represented at the meeting in May 1989 of parties to the memorandum of understanding on port state control.

**Mr. Portillo:** My Department will be represented at the meeting of the port state control committee by an official from the marine directorate.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will identify the constraints preventing his Department from initiating a prosecution for an oil pollution offence against the master of a foreign-flagged vessel in his capacity as an agent of the vessel's owner.

**Mr. Portillo:** The master of a ship does not act as an agent for the vessel's owner. Under criminal law, service of a summons on the master does not serve summons on the owner. Prosecution of the master can only be in his capacity as master; he cannot be made a surrogate of the owner.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many detections and prosecutions of operational violations under the Marsol 73/78 convention have taken place.

**Mr. Portillo:** I refer the hon. Member to the final paragraph of my answer to him of 10 January at column *625*.

### Motor Insurance

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State of Transport whether any steps have been taken to help those whose property is damaged by uninsured drivers in the light of the new regulations requiring motor insurance policies to cover liability for property damage.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** A new agreement with the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) came into force on 31 December 1988, to coincide with the introduction of the new regulations. Under the agreement the MIB pay compensation to people whose property is damaged by uninsured drivers, as well as those who suffer personal injury. The MIB have produced a leaflet giving information about the new arrangements. We greatly welcome these new arrangements with the insurance industry to give better protection to the victims of road accidents. Copies of the new agreement, and of the short MIB leaflet will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Transport Tribunal

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who holds responsibility for the administration of the transport tribunal.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The responsibility for the transport tribunal currently rests with the Department of Transport. The Prime Minister has agreed that it would be more appropriate for responsibility to fall to the Lord Chancellor's Department. A transfer of functions order giving effect to this will be made shortly. It will come into effect from April. No changes in the arrangements for appointments to the tribunal are involved.

### Cross-Channel Ferries

**Mr. Mudd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirements are placed by his Department that it shall be the duty of cross-Channel ferry operators that, prior to sailing, the operational capability of public address systems shall be tested and proved to be audible for routine and emergency advice to passengers; and what action is taken in the event of reports being lodged that technical break-up and background noise make such advice indecipherable to passengers.

**Mr. Portillo** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* The procedures adopted by the ferry operators to bring the passengers attention to emergency instructions in accordance with advice issued by the Department's marine directorate should ensure that the system is in frequent use and good order.

The systems are thoroughly tested at least once a year by surveyors. All reports of difficulties with PA systems are thoroughly investigated by marine surveyors.

### Leg Protectors

**Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what report he has received on the field tests being carried out on motorcycle leg protectors; when he intends to publish it; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* An extensive programme of test work is still being carried out. The findings will continue to be made public.

An in-depth study of motorcycle injury accidents carried out by the TRRL suggests that some 70 per cent. of motorcyclist casualties sustain some form of leg injury.

I believe that major motorcycle manufacturing firms recognise the urgent need to improve motorcycle safety. There is increasing concern worldwide over the risks of motorcycling. The United Kingdom represents only a small part of the global market for motorcycles; there is a limit to the contribution any one country can make.

We are keen to see all road users respect each other and use the roads safely. We are also keen to see road users protected as far as possible from the consequences of crashes.

The prime responsibility for designing secondary protection in cars and motorcycles must be with the manufacturers and their designers.

## DEFENCE

### Trident Submarine

17. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the order for the third Trident submarine, SSBN07.

47. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the order for a third Vanguard class submarine.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The formal response from Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. to the tender invitation for the construction of SSBN07 was received by my Department on 19 February. It is planned to place the order for the submarine later this year.

### Lance Missile

18. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met a representative of the United States Department of Defence to discuss a follow on to the Lance missile.

27. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met a representative of the United States Department of Defence to discuss a follow on to the Lance missile.

124. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met a representative of the United States Department of Defence to discuss a follow on to the Lance missile.

**Mr. Younger:** I last met Mr. Carlucci at the meeting of the Defence Planning Committee in Brussels on 1 December, when a range of subjects of mutual interest were discussed, including modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

### Low Flying

19. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties took place over Britain in 1988.

78. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties took place over Britain in 1988.

123. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties took place over Britain in 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** A total of 151,291 military low-flying training sorties were flown in the United Kingdom low flying system in 1988.

28. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will conduct a departmental inquiry into military low flying in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** No.

72. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the joint study with his West German counterpart on reducing the impact of low-flying training to be completed.

80. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the joint study with his West German counterpart on reducing the impact of low-flying training to be completed.

**Mr. Neubert:** In due course.

77. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Commander-in-Chief Allied Air Forces Europe on measures to reduce low flying in Europe.

133. **Mr. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Commander-in-Chief Allied Air Forces Europe on measures to reduce low flying in Europe.

**Mr. Neubert:** My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

### Warsaw Pact (Offensive Operations)

20. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Warsaw pact has reduced its capability to conduct large-scale offensive operations.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Warsaw pact has not reduced its capability to conduct large-scale offensive operations since, as yet, there has been no movement rearward of the relevant manpower or equipment. Even if all the reductions recently announced by the Soviet Union and other Warsaw pact countries are implemented the Warsaw pact forces will still enjoy a considerable superiority in Key offensive weapon systems, such as tanks and artillery, in the central region.

### Soviet Union (Naval Threat)

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Soviet naval threat in the northern Atlantic has reduced in the past year.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No, we do not consider that the Soviet naval threat in the northern Atlantic has reduced in the past year. Modernisation of both the Soviet northern and Baltic fleets has continued. New, increasingly sophisticated submarines and surface ships have entered the Soviet naval order-of-battle, more than offsetting the vessels from older classes which are being scrapped. The Soviet navy is now better placed than ever before to conduct wartime operations in the northern Atlantic.

### Conventional Forces

22. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discuss with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation colleagues proposals to achieve a lower level of conventional forces in Europe, incorporating parity with the Warsaw pact over the whole range of such forces and dual capable forces.

117. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discuss with his NATO colleagues proposals to achieve a lower level of conventional forces in Europe incorporating parity with the Warsaw pact over the whole range of such forces and dual capable forces.

134. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discuss with his NATO colleagues proposals to achieve a lower level of conventional forces in Europe incorporating parity with the Warsaw pact over the whole range of such forces and dual capable forces.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discuss with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation colleagues proposals to achieve a lower level of conventional forces in Europe incorporating parity with the Warsaw pact over the whole range of such forces and dual capable forces.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Proposals for the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe were discussed by NATO Ministers at their meeting in Brussels on the 8 and 9 December 1988. Close consultation on all aspects of the negotations will continue.

### US Bases

23. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further information he has on United States proposals to build new, and upgrade existing nuclear vaults at their bases in the United Kingdom.

29. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further information he has on United States proposals to build new, and upgrade existing, nuclear vaults at their bases in the United Kingdom.

132. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further information he has on United States proposals to build new, and upgrade existing, nuclear vaults at their bases in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 3 March at column *357*.

### Reserve and Auxiliary Forces

24. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in expanding the reserve and auxiliary forces.

**Mr. Neubert:** The combined strength of the volunteer reserves, not including the Ulster Defence Regiment, stands at almost 84,500. This represents an increase of over 28 per cent. since 1979 when expansion measures were first set in hand. Over that period the strength of the TA has increased by 13,500 and the HSF has added a further 3,000. Comparable increases in the strengths of other services are RAux AF and RAFVR, 1,330 and RMR, over 400. In addition, the RNF has raised its strength by about 400 since the decision was taken to expand it in 1984.

### United States National Security Adviser

25. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet General Scowcroft, the United States national security adviser, to discuss defence matters.

73. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet General Scowcroft, the United States national security adviser, to discuss defence matters.

122. **Mr.David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet General Scowcroft, United States national security adviser, to discuss defence matters.

**Mr. Younger:** I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith).

### Nuclear Weapons

26. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now reconsider his policy towards the modernisation of short-range nuclear weaponry.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 29 November 1988 at column 567.

32. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

76. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

114. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

116. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

**Mr. George Younger:** I last met the German Defence Minister at the Anglo-German summit in Frankfurt in February. We discussed a range of issues including the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

55. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Norway to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

69. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Norway to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

107. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Norway to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

119. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Norway to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

**Mr. Younger:** I last met Mr. Holst during the Defence Planning Committee meeting in Brussels on 1 December when a range of subjects of mutual interest were discussed.

57. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the circumstances in which United Kingdom nuclear weapons may be used against *(a)* a non-nuclear state and *(b)* another nuclear nation.

82. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the circumstances in which United Kingdom nuclear weapons may be used against (1) a non-nuclear state and (2) another nuclear nation.

127. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the circumstances in which United Kingdom nuclear weapons may be used against *(a)* a non-nuclear state and *(b)* another nuclear nation.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

65. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Denmark to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

101. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Denmark to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

121. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of Denmark to discuss modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

**Mr. George Younger:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie).

106. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on recent discussions with the United Kingdom's NATO allies on proposals to modernise short-range nuclear weapons.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend has frequent meetings with his NATO colleagues, during which a wide range of issues affecting the defence and security of the Alliance are discussed, including the need to modernise short-range nuclear weapons.

### Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

30. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

81. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

86. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

115. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Younger:** I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave earlier to my hon. Friends the Members for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

### RAF Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre

31. **Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the proposed transfer of the Royal Air Force officer and aircrew selection centre from Biggin hill to RAF Cranwell; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neubert:** My Department has received representations from both the local and departmental (non-industrial) trades union sides whose members are affected by the transfer, from the London borough of Bromley council, from local branches of the Aircrew Association and Royal Marines Association, on behalf of Belgian pilots based at Biggin hill during world war 2, and from members of the public.

**Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on whether, following the transfer of the Royal Air Force officer and aircrew selection centre from Biggin hill to RAF Cranwell, suitably qualified personnel will be available in the Cranwell area to undertake the required work.

**Mr. Neubert:** It is not anticipated that there will be any difficulties recruiting suitably qualified staff in the Cranwell area.

**Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the arrangements which he intends to make in order to ensure the retention of the Air Training Corps unit at RAF Biggin hill following the transfer of the officer and aircrew selection centre to RAF Cranwell.

**Mr. Neubert:** All options available to retain the Air Training Corps unit at RAF Biggin hill will be considered.

**Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of the redundancy payments to be made to those civilian personnel at Royal Air Force Biggin hill who will not be moving to RAF Cranwell following the transfer of the Royal Air Force officer and aircrew selection centre from Biggin hill.

**Mr. Neubert:** Until such time as the intentions of the individual members of the staff are known it is not possible to estimate the likely cost of redundancy payments.

**Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use is currently made of the Royal Air Force officer and aircrew selection centre at Biggin hill for flying aptitude and medical tests by Army and Royal Navy

personnel; to what extend such facilities would continue to be used by these service personnel following the transfer of the centre to RAF Cranwell; and if he anticipates the provision of additional facilities at any other location for these tests.

**Mr. Neubert:** In addition to its own selection task, the Royal Air Force officers and aircrew selection centre at Biggin hill annually undertakes about 400 aptitude tests and aircrew medical examinations for prospective Army pilots, and flying aptitude tests for about 750 pilot and observer candidates for the Royal Navy. Facilities will continue to be offered to the other services when the centre is transferred to RAF Cranwell.

### Procurement Expenditure

33. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the relative priority in terms of procurement expenditure his Department gives to *(a)* the British Army of the Rhine and *(b)* warships for the Royal Navy.

51. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the relative priority, in terms of procurement expenditure, his Department gives to *(a)* the British Army of the Rhine and *(b)* warships for the Royal Navy.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths).

112. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to re-consider procedures for defence procurement expenditure.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Our procurement procedures are kept constantly under review. Substantial benefits are being achieved by greater use of competition and by insistence on fixed prices, payments linked to achievement milestones and other incentive measures.

### Defence Contractors

34. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many firms are now on the defence contractors' list; how many of these are small firms; and what were the comparable figures for 1986.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The number of companies currently on the defence contractors list is approximately 9,800. The comparable figure for 1986 was some 8,100. Information on the number of small firms within these figures is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

94. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the transfer to foreign ownership of those parts of companies engaged in activities affecting national security.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Changes in the ownership of a defence contractor are considered by the Department on a case-by-case basis. Part of the MOD's consideration includes national security issues. The MOD is able to make certain specific provisions in respect of United Kingdom companies in foreign ownership where it is necessary to restrict access to classified equipment or information.

### Iraq

35. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment the defence export sales organisation has made of the potential value of current Iraqi requirements for armaments.

36. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment the defence export sales organisation has made of the potential value of current Iraqi requirements for armaments.

89. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment the defence export sales organisation has made of the potential value of current Iraqi requirements for armaments.

99. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment the defence export sales organisation has made of the potential value of current Iraqi requirements for armaments.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** We have not judged it appropriate in the present circumstances to carry out such an assessment. We continue to keep the guidelines on the export of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq, announced in the House by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985 Vol. 84, column 454, under constant review in the light of the ceasefire, and developments in the peace negotiations.

### United States (Members' Visits)

37. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what briefing is given by his Department to right hon. and hon. Members who visit the United States of America.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend would be happy to consider any request for briefing from hon. or right hon. Members undertaking visits to the United States of America.

### European Fighter Aircraft

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the policy of the West German Government towards the procurement of radar for the European fighter aircraft.

38. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the procurement policy of the West German Government in connection with radar for the European fighter aircraft.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** We are in frequent contact with the West German Government on all aspects of the European fighter aircraft programme, including the selection of the radar. It remains the objective of the four participating Governments to achieve maximum commonality.

126. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent decisions he has made in respect of procurement of a radar system for the European fighter aircraft.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

**Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed the European fighter aircraft project with his West German counterpart; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 7 February at column *146*.

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans for development of joint European defence procurement, especially in the field of the next generation of fighter aircraft.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** In the interest of achieving value for money and improved interoperability, the United Kingdom actively promotes co-operation on European defence procurement, both with other countries on a bilateral basis and through the independent European programme group, which we currently chair. The European fighter aircraft project is an excellent example of the collaborative programmes in which we are involved.

### Defence Products Company (Takeover)

39. **Mr. Bendall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy in relation to a business with defence products which it is currently not allowed, for security reasons, to sell to West Germany being taken over by a West German company.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Changes in the ownership of a defence contractor are considered by the Department on a case-by-case basis. Part of the MOD's consideration includes national security issues. The MOD is able to make certain specific provisions in respect of United Kingdom companies in foreign ownership where it is necessary to restrict access to classified equipment or information.

### Unreliable Equipment

40. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the annual cost to his Department of unreliable weapons, aircraft and military equipment.

90. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the annual cost to his Department of unreliable weapons, aircraft and military equipment.

102. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the annual cost to his Department of unreliable weapons, aircraft and military equipment.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell).

### Arms Control

41. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made by his Department in formulating a United Kingdom contribution to NATO's comprehensive concept on arms control.

46. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made by NATO Defence Ministers in discussions on the overall concept; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The task of producing a report on the comprehensive concept of arms control and disarmament falls to the North Atlantic Council in permanent session. Both the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have contributed fully to this exercise throughout. When Alliance Foreign Ministers met in Brussels on 8-9 December 1988, they received a written report on the further development of the comprehensive concept. They reviewed the state of work, welcomed the progress achieved to date, and called for a complete record by the time of their next meeting later this year.

### Heliborne Forces

42. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of NATO's ability to match the Warsaw pact threat from heliborne forces.

62. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the ability of NATO to match the Warsaw [redacted] threat from heliborne forces.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 3 March at column *356*.

### Estimates

43. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next "Statement on the Defence Estimates" will be published.

108. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next "Statement on the Defence Estimates" will be published.

111. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next "Statement on the Defence Estimates" will be published.

128. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next "Statement on the Defence Estimates" will be published.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** In due course.

### Obsolete Nuclear Warheads

44. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many obsolete nuclear warheads have been scrapped by Her Majesty's Government as a consequence of the NATO Montebello agreement.

61. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many obsolete nuclear warheads have been scrapped by Her Majesty's Government as a consequence of the NATO Montebello agreement.

105. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many obsolete nuclear warheads have been scrapped by Her Majesty's Government as a consequence of the NATO Montebello agreement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 3 March at column *357*.

### Mine Warfare

**Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the mine warfare modernisation programme; and when he expects to place orders for the next four vessels of the SRMH type.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Further orders for single-role minehunters are planned, but no decisions have yet been taken on the size and timing of orders. The Government have plans to maintain the United Kingdom's defensive mining capability, which is currently represented by the Royal Navy's ground mine. An update programme for these mines is in progress.

### Disarmament

48. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received advocating a defence policy of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral disarmament.

100. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received advocating a defence policy of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral disarmament.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Ministry of Defence has received 32 letters and 18 postcards regarding general disarmament matters since last year's summer recess.

### Battlefield Nuclear Weapons

49. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to United Kingdom armed forces to fight on a battlefield upon which nuclear weapons are used.

136. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to United Kingdom armed forces to fight on a battlefield upon which nuclear weapons are used.

86. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to United Kingdom armed forces to fight on a battlefield upon which nuclear weapons are used.

**Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to the United Kingdom armed forces to fight on a battlefield upon which nuclear weapons are used.

**Mr. Neubert:** The United Kingdom armed forces are trained to fight in a variety of battlefield scenarios.

### Western European Union

50. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the secretary general of the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

96. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends meeting the Secretary General of the Western European Union; and what will be discussed.

118. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the Secretary General of the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend next intends to meet the Secretary-General of the Western European Union on the occasion of the ministerial Council of the Western European Union in April 1989. They will discuss a number of issues of mutual interest.

### Reciprocal Unilateralism

52. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received advocating a defence policy of reciprocal unilateralism.

67. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received advocating a defence policy of reciprocal unilateralism.

84. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received urging him to adopt a defence policy of reciprocal unilateralism.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs).

### Monopoly Suppliers

53. **Mr. Neil Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he seeks to obtain value for money in those sectors where there is a monopoly United Kingdom supplier.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Our policy is to seek the best long term value for money in our purchases and to use competition wherever possible to achieve this. Where there is a monopoly United Kingdom supplier it may be possible to seek competition from overseas. In those cases where overseas competition is not possible we aim to negotiate taut contract conditions with the prime contractor and ensure that there is the maximum competition at the sub-contract level.

### Chemical Weapons

54. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the accuracy of Mr. Gorbachev's estimate of the Soviet chemical weapons stockpile as 50,000 tonnes.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw).

### Falkland Islands

56. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy for wives and families wishing to accompany service men posted to the Falkland Islands.

**Mr. Neubert:** Most service men in the Falkland Islands are on four or six-month tours and are required to serve unaccompanied. The small number of personnel on 12-month tours are encouraged to take their families with them and are provided with married quarters.

### Afghanistan

58. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the level of Soviet troops in Europe of the recent withdrawal of such troops from Afghanistan.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Soviet forces withdrawn from Afghanistan comprise a complete army of four fully manned and equipped divisions, one of which is an airborne division, and a large number of other units. The

whole force amounts to some 110,000 personnel. It is not clear whether any of the troops withdrawn from Afghanistan have been or will be transferred to the European theatre. The Soviets have given us no indication of their intentions.

### Stocks

59. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of *(a)* spares, *(b)* food, *(c)* ammunition and *(d)* all other stocks held by his Department at the latest convenient date.

**Mr. Neubert:** The information cannot be provided in the exact form requested without disproportionate cost. For management purposes, stocks are categorised by equipment range or commodity. The value of stocks of spares held within each category is, however, not separately maintained.

The assessed total value of stocks held by MOD in major depots as at 31 March 1988 amounted to a total of £10,249 million, the breakdown of which, by supply management category, is as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Ammunition and armament stores | 3,109 |
| Food | 13 |
| Fuel (including lubricants) | 114 |
| Clothing | 127 |
| General stores | 273 |
| Technical stores | 6,604 |
| Medical stores | 9 |
| | 10,249 |

The figures do not include the value of stocks held in units and establishments forward of the main stores depots, details of which are not maintained centrally.

### Representations (Trade Unions)

60. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on responding to representations on defence matters from trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

68. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on responding to representations on defence matters from trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

87. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on responding to representations on defence matters from trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** We receive frequent representations from the trade unions on matters affecting their members employed in the Ministry of Defence and these are handled in accordance with the normal Civil Service consultative procedures. Representations on defence matters are handled in the normal way as they arise.

### Soviet Union (Nuclear Forces)

63. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether the Soviets are continuing to modernise their strategic nuclear forces.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Soviet Union continues to modernise its strategic nuclear forces. On land an additional 200 SS-25 inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are expected to become operational within two or three years. The ten-warhead SS-24 ICBM has been deployed, both in silos and on rail-mobile launchers, and a modified version of the SS-18 heavy ICBM is entering service. At sea, five Typhoon and four Delta IV nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), carrying the multiple-warhead SS-N-20 and SS-N-23 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), are now operational, and a fifth Delta IV began sea trials during 1988. The SS-N-21 sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) is now operational.

In the air, a new strategic bomber, the Blackjack, has entered service; it can carry the AS-15 air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) as well as bombs and air-to-surface missiles. The AS-15 entered service in 1984 and is already deployed on the Bear H bomber, of which 70 are operational.

### Soviet Air Capability

64. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the threat posed by Soviet air capability to the United Kingdom home base.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** For details of the continuing development of the Soviet Union's air capability, I refer my hon. Friend to the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I), in particular chapter 6 and the essay entitled "The Conventional Balance". The Soviet air capability which could pose a threat to the United Kingdom is kept constantly under review. Details of such assessments are classified.

### West Germany

66. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the Defence Minister of the Federal German Republic; and what matters he plans to discuss.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend expects to meet the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany at a meeting of WEU Ministers next month. In the normal way a range of matters of mutual interest will be discussed.

75. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany; and what matters were discussed.

79. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his West Germany counterpart; and what was discussed.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend last met the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany at the Anglo-German summit on 20-21 February 1989. A range of matters of mutual interest was discussed.

### Nuclear Submarines

70. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans he has for the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines.

98. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans he has for the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines.

113. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans he has for the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 9 May at column *2*.

### France

71. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the French Defence Minister; and what he will discuss.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My right hon. Friend met M. Chevenement last week and, although he has no immediate plans for a further meeting, he expects to have a number of opportunities to discuss matters of mutual interest in the course of 1989.

### Defence Exports

74. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what successes have been achieved in defence exports during the past year.

125. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been achieved in defence exports during the past year.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The success achieved by our defence manufacturers in the past year, maintains Britain's position as a major world exporter of defence equipment.

104. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the policy considerations which underline his refusal to publish figures on an individual company's defence exports.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** It has never been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish figures on individual companies' defence exports for reasons of commercial and customer confidentiality.

### RAF Upper Heyford

83. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he expects to visit RAF Upper Heyford.

**Mr. Neubert:** I expect to visit RAF Upper Heyford when the full study into the costs and implications of realigning the runway at the base has been completed, which I hope will be shortly after Easter.

### Nuclear Defence Policy

85. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Government intend to change their policy on nuclear defence.

88. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to change their nuclear defence policy.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** There are no such plans.

### Estate Management

91. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he has taken to improve the management of the defence estate.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he has taken to improve the management of the defence estate.

**Mr. Neubert:** Following the announcement in May 1988 of changes in the relationship between the Property Services Agency and other Government Departments, the Ministry of Defence has resumed overall responsibility for the management of its estate. Bringing together responsibility and accountability within a single Department will enable us to manage our estate more efficiently and cost-effectively. We regularly review the utilisation of our land and property holdings to identify areas which are surplus or may become surplus to requirements and a number of major studies are currently taking place with a view to further rationalisation measures.

### Contracts

92. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for his policies on competition and value for money on defence contracts of a situation where the United States prime contractor and the United Kingdom prime contractor are one and the same company.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Our procurement strategy is intended to achieve the best possible value for money. We place our prime contracts as a result of competition wherever we can, but when this is not possible we aim to negotiate taut contract conditions with the prime contractor and ensure that there is the maximum competition at the sub-contract level.

### TGWU (Policy)

93. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations on defence policy he has received from the Transport and General Workers Union; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 3 March 1989 at column *356*.

### Warsaw Pact

95. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Warsaw pact has changed its military doctrine over the past year.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Recent public statements by Warsaw pact leaders have stressed the defensive nature of the pact's military doctrine but its armed forces continue to maintain a capability far greater than that required for solely defensive purposes. We look forward to the implementation of measures, such as reductions in the strength of the pact's armed forces and in the defence spending of its members, that would indicate a genuine shift to a defensive doctrine.

### Senior Staff

97. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's senior staff of grade 5 or over are employed *(a)* outside and *(b)* in the south-east of England.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The numbers of the Department's senior staff, at grades 5 and above, employed (a) outside the south-east of England is 102, and (b) in posts in the south-east of England is 285.

### Type 23 Frigates

**Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the number of, and the duration for which, type 23 frigates are expected to be at sea without an integrated computer command and control system being in operation.

103. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the number of and the duration for which, type 23 frigates are expected to be at sea without an integrated computer command and control system being in operation.

129. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the numbers of, and the duration for which, type 23 frigates are expected to be at sea without an integrated computer command and control system being in operation.

131. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the number of, and the duration for which, type 23 frigates are expected to be at sea without an integrated computer command and control system being in operation.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have nothing to add to the statement which I gave to the House on 28 February 1989.

### Naval Procurement

109. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement upon his policy on the United Kingdom contribution to naval procurement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The Government will continue to pursue a substantial procurement programme to meet the requirements of the Royal Navy in the most cost-effective way.

### Private Security Firms

110. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his policy is towards his Department's involvement with private security firms.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The use of private security firms in guarding establishments is an option open to MOD in those cases where their use can satisfy certain security criteria, and where it achieves better value for money.

### Falklands

120. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to bring into the public domain all records within his Department relating to the Falklands war.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No.

### Territorial Army

130. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last had discussions regarding the Territorial Army with the Chief of General Staff.

**Mr. Neubert:** The process of consultation on service matters is a continuous one, both through the formal Defence Committee structure and official channels. In addition my right hon. Friend and hon. colleagues take up a number of invitations to visit Territorial Army conferences and units. In this way the Territorial Army has been the subject of much discussion, reflecting the importance that we attach to the vital role it plays in the defence of the nation.

### RAF Pilots

135. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force pilots have left within 10 years of qualifying as pilots in each of the last three years.

**Mr. Neubert:** The number of RAF pilots who left within 10 years of qualifying as pilots in each of the last three years are:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1986 | 20 |
| 1987 | 49 |
| 1988 | 91 |

### Soviet Military Strength

137. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of Soviet nuclear military strength in short-range missiles and artillery west of the Urals; and what evidence he has of any reductions during the last 12 months.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer my hon. Friend to figure 19 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I), which shows a total of 1,400 missile launchers and 6,800 nuclear-capable artillery pieces. Athough the Soviet Foreign Minister announced in January that there were to be some reductions in the numbers of short-range nuclear forces in Eastern Europe, these reductions have not yet taken place, and they will involve only 24 missile systems and about 220 artillery pieces. The Warsaw pact retains an enormous advantage in such short-range systems.

### Nuclear Deterrent

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Britain's Polaris force remains fully operational and effective with at least one submarine on patrol at all times. Trident remains on programme to enter service in the mid-1990s.

Merchant Vessels (Emergencies)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the figures for the availability in March 1989 of British merchant vessels suitable for naval deployment in time of emergency.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The figures for March 1989 are not yet available. The number of vessels available on the United Kingdom and dependent territory registers at 31 December 1988 in the categories required for defence purposes was as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Fishing vessels (including large stern trawlers and offshore support vessels) | 348 |
| Product tankers | 120 |
| Break bulk cargo vessels | 162 |
| Cruise ships | 5 |
| Roll on-roll off ferries | 69 |
| Tugs | 91 |

### Counter-mine Operations

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to convert offshore support vessels for the purpose of counter-mine operations in time of emergency; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No, but we keep such matters under review.

### Nuclear Strategy

**Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South of Thursday 2 March on nuclear strategy, *Official Report*, column *254*, if he will identify the paragraphs which contain the requested information.

**Mr. Neubert:** The essays referred to in my reply of 2 March should be read in toto.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 8 March 1989*

## ENVIRONMENT

### PSA Office, Newmarket

**Sir Eldon Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what study he has made of the feasibility of replacing the present accommodation at the Property Services Agency office at Falmouth avenue, Newmarket, with a two-storey extension; how many civil servants could be accommodated in such an extension; how many cars could be parked in the remaining space; and how much more or less this option is estimated to cost than the cost of moving the Property Services Agency staff now working in Newmarket to Cambridge.

**Mr. Chope:** The possibility of redeveloping the site at Falmouth avenue in Newmarket to accommodate PSA's eastern region headquarters was considered at an early stage in reorganisation planning in 1986. A detailed study was not carried out because the site was too small.

### Relocation

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet executives of Nottingham development enterprise to discuss the relocation of parts of his Department to Nottingham as part of the policy on relocation of such posts away from the south-east.

**Mr. Ridley:** My Department already has nearly 200 staff in Nottingham. Under the policy which my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced on 31 March 1988, my Department is now reviewing the location of parts of its work with a view to finding sites offering easier labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Where appropriate, areas which are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies, such as Nottingham, will be considered.

### Hedgerows

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of hedgerow have been destroyed in the last 20 years; how surveys of landscape change are carried out; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) on 24 January at column *500*.

### Drinking Water (Yorkshire)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and location of breaches in the precautionary standard for pesticides in drinking water in 1988, in supplies provided by Yorkshire water authority; and if he will also list by location how much these breaches exceeded the standard laid down.

**Mr. Moynihan:** During the period December 1987 to November 1988 there were breaches of the standard of 0·1 microgramme per litre for pesticides, specified in the European Community drinking water directive, in water supplies leaving the following four treatment works of the Yorkshire water authority:

Ripon Camp
Blackhouse Spring
Boltby
Tophill Low

Breaches of the standard at Blackhouse Spring, Boltby and Tophill Low were transient, and I am informed that recent samples from these works complied with the directive. The levels at which the standard was exceeded were below those which would be considered a risk to health.

### Sewage Works (Yorkshire)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long he intends to let Yorkshire water authority relax legal controls under the criteria spelled out by his Department in a letter to water authority chief executives last November at *(a)* the sewage works at Hickleton in Don Valley constituency, and *(b)* the other sewage works in Yorkshire under the control of Yorkshire water authority; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The Department has not received any applications for temporary variations in consent conditions from the authority. Each application is considered on its merits. The duration of any temporary variation granted in individual cases will, within the constraints set out in the Minister for Water and Planning's announcement on 7 December 1988, reflect the expected time scale of the capital improvements to be carried out.

It is understood that the works at Hickleton will not be the subject of an application for a temporary variation as it is the authority's intention to close the works and pump all sewage to their works at Bolton on Dearne for treatment.

### London Docklands

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedure there is to monitor the achievement of the objective of 25 per cent. of new jobs created in the royal docks going to Newham residents as set out in the memorandum of agreement between the London borough of Newham and the London Docklands development corporation.

**Mr. Trippier:** The London Docklands development corporation and the London borough of Newham plan an employment monitoring unit, staffed by the borough, in an LDDC building in the royal docks. This building, which will also accommodate employment and training counselling, is to be refurbished by LDDC, and should be completed by the end of the year.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the 1989-90 London Docklands development corporation corporate plan will be published.

**Mr. Trippier:** The LDDC aims to publish the 1989 corporate plan in September.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has taken any action with regard to the

London Docklands development corporation following the National Audit Office report on urban development corporations; whether he will be taking any action in the future; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Trippier:** The effectiveness of the LDDC, and of the Department's controls, are kept under continuous review. The NAO's findings are influencing that process. The report of the Public Accounts Committee is awaited, and the Government will respond to that at the appropriate time.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of London Docklands development corporation spending on support of provision of education, training, community health care, and community and recreation facilities noted in the National Audit Office report on urban development corporations, paragraph 2.27; if he will give a breakdown by type of the proposed expenditure over the period 1988 to 1993; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Trippier:** The corporation is currently preparing this information for its next corporate plan, which will then be submitted to the Department for consideration. Expenditure from 1 April 1987 to 31 January 1989 on these items was as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Voluntary sector | 1·375 |
| Health | 0·092 |
| Education and training | 2·840 |
| Other social | 6·421 |
| TOTAL | 10·728 |

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding allocation for the construction of the Docklands light railway eastern extension to Beckton has been made to the London Docklands development corporation.

**Mr. Trippier:** No public expenditure has been allocated. The Beckton extension of the docklands light railway will be funded from land sales.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to approve a deferred purchase or payment scheme to fund the construction of the Docklands light railway eastern extension to Beckton; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Trippier:** The DLR Beckton extension will be financed from land sales. No decision has been reached on the precise funding mechanism.

## Common Land

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of his policy in relation to common land following the report of the Common Land Forum.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** We intend to introduce legislation based broadly on the report of the Common Land Forum at a suitable opportunity when parliamentary time permits. We are having discussions with various bodies and will make a further statement as soon as possible.

## London Green Belt

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenanted properties there were in the London green belt estate of the former Greater London Council at the time of its dissolution; if he will publish a list of such properties in the *Official Report*; and what is his policy towards the future ownership of these properties.

**Mr. Chope:** The Department does not keep records relating to these properties, title to which passed to successors to the GLC. The future ownership of the properties is a matter for those who hold title.

## Retail Developments

**Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following his decisions on Cripps Causeway, Bristol, and Bricket Wood, St. Albans, he will make a statement about his policy on retail development in *(a)* out-of-town locations and *(b)* the green belt.

**Mr. Howard:** The Government's policy on major retail development remains as set out in "Planning Policy Guidance Note 6", a copy of which is in the Library. Ministers have repeatedly warned, and have demonstrated in the Bricket Wood case, that those who pursue to appeal proposals in flagrant breach of established green belt policy risk having costs awarded against them.

## Park Side House, Enfield

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the report of the public inquiry into an application to purchase under the Housing Act 1985 the tenancy of Park Side house, Hadley road, Enfield, Middlesex, being part of an estate acquired under the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act 1938.

**Mr. Trippier:** The inspector's report of the inquiry into an application by the London borough of Enfield under section 5 of the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act 1938 for consent to dispose of the property known as Park Side house, Hadley road, Enfield is being considered. The decision will be issued as quickly as possible.

## Barium Sulphate Waste

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conway, *Official Report*, February, column *600*, what is the weight and volume of residual radioactive barium sulphate waste at Amersham.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The weight of residual radioactive barium sulphate waste safely stored in the site effluent treatment plant at Amersham is estimated at about 400 kg, associated with about one cubic metre of slurry. These figures are approximate. More precise figures will not be available until the site effluent plant is decommissioned.

## Dioxins

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he intends to publish his report on the investigations that he has carried out within his areas of responsibility into chlorine-bleached packaging, dioxins and food.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** As announced on 14 February at columns *189-90*, the Department of the Environment in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is preparing a statement on dioxins in the environment. Publication is intended within two months.

### Chimneys

**Sir Dudley Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current estimate he has of the approximate percentage of the housing stock which has chimneys.

**Mr. Trippier:** The 1986 English house condition survey showed that approximately 75 per cent. of the housing stock in England had chimneys.

### Grant-related Expenditure

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes were made to the method of calculating grant-related expenditure in each rate support grant settlement from 1981-82 to 1989-90.

**Mr. Ridley:** The changes are set out in the rate support grant report (England) for each year. Further information is contained in the "Blue Book", "Grant Related Expenditure: How the expenditure needs of local authorities are assessed for block grant", and the "Green Book", "The technical handbook of grant related expenditure", published each year. Copies of these publications for years up to 1988-89 are in the Library. Blue and Green Books for 1989-90 will be published shortly.

### Farms (Rate Rebates)

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many farms in England and Wales which border Ministry of Defence or visiting forces' airports receive rate rebates.

**Mr. Gummer:** Agricultural land and buildings are not rateable, though farmhouses are. Information on the number of occupants of farmhouses receiving rate rebates is not available. In any event the location of a hereditament has no effect on the ratepayer's eligibility for rate rebate.

### Planning Control

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to planning authorities in London on planning control of residential densities.

**Mr. Chope:** "Planning Policy Guidance Note 12" gives advice on the circumstances in which it may be appropriate to include policies on residential densities in development plans. As the PPG makes clear, that advice applies generally. More specific advice on densities in London is proposed in the draft strategic planning guidance for London which my right hon. Friend published for consultation on Monday. This indicates that each borough is responsible for setting its own general guidelines on densities and dwelling mix for their area as appropriate in the light of local circumstances, bearing in mind the requirement for additional housing in the borough. Provision for new housing should respect established conservation policies, and the interests of existing communities; but this has to be balanced by recognition of the important contribution that can be made to overall housing supply in London by conversion of existing houses into smaller units and redevelopment at higher densities.

### Tenants Choice (Leaflet)

**Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if pursuant to his statement of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *418*, he has any further information on the originator of the leaflet referred to; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Trippier:** The leaflet was sent to me on 18 October by a correspondent who drew my attention to its availability in libraries under the control of Nottinghamshire county council. I apologise for having mistakenly told the House on 2 March at column *418* that the county council had itself produced this inaccurate and misleading document: I should have said only that I understood that the county council had made it publicly available through its libraries.

### Compulsory Purchase (Compensation)

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to introduce legislation to provide for reductions in the level of compensation payable on a claim relating to the compulsory acquisition of land in respect of the increase in the value of other land owned by a claimant, in line with the provisions applying in Northern Ireland by virtue of section 9 of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 (S.I., 1973, No. 1896); and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Chope:** Section 7 of the Land Compensation Act 1961 has, in England and Wales, the same effect as the provision referred to by the hon. Member.

### Havant Town Centre

**Sir Ian Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to announce his decision on the planning inquiry into the future of Havant town centre development without further delay.

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* My right hon. Friend is considering the Havant Town Centre (Shopping Development) Compulsory Purchase Order, submitted for confirmation by Havant borough council, and the report of the inspector who held a public inquiry into objections. He will issue his decision as soon as possible.

### Sewage Disposal

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish details of the number of sewage works which breached their discharge consents in 1988.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* The latest year for which detailed figures on non-compliance of sewage treatment works are available is 1987, in which 887

works out of 4,238 tested (21 per cent.) were in breach of their consents. This compares with 23 per cent. failing their consent conditions in 1986.

The figures for 1988 are not yet available, but indications are that they will show a further improvement.

Water authorities have drawn up capital programmes, at a total cost of between £900 million and £1 billion, with the aim of bringing sub-standard works into full compliance with discharge consents in 1992.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Rain Forests

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the measures adopted by Her Majesty's Government or by European Community countries for the protection of rain forests; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Chris Patten:** Details of Her Majesty's Government's activities to protect rain forests are given in a supplement to the December 1988 issue of "British Overseas Development", a copy of which I have placed in the Library. We have no record of the action taken by other countries to protect the rain forests. We and other members of the European Community support the tropical forestry action plan, which promotes action to conserve the tropical forests. As signatories to the international tropical timber agreement the United Kingdom and 10 other Community countries are pledged to encourage the development of international policies aimed at the sustainable use and conservation of tropical forests. The European Community's aid programme finances several rain-forest-related projects.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Student Loans

**Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* his response to the submission made by the National Union of Students on top-up loans for students.

**Mr. Jackson:** The submission from the NUS has been acknowledged, and my right hon. Friend will consider it with the other responses to the White Paper (Cm. 520). The Government will comment on these responses in due course when they make a further statement on the implementation of their plans.

### Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** In the one departmental Select Committee report completed since June 1987, to which the Government have responded, 21 recommendations were made, of which 17 have been accepted in whole or in part by the Government, or noted, where no further action by Government was sought.

### Education Reorganisation, Trafford

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on secondary schools and the opting-out provisions as they affect the reorganisation of education in the borough of Trafford.

**Mr. Butcher:** The consideration by my right hon. Friend of proposals by Trafford LEA to reorganise secondary schools in its area was suspended whilst the parents of pupils at Sale boys' grammar school voted on whether the school should apply for grant-maintained status. The parents voted against such an application in January 1989, and my right hon. Friend has, therefore, resumed his consideration of the LEA's reorganisation proposals, and will announce his decision in due course.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the implications of the recent judgment on sex discrimination in Birmingham selective schools as it affects the reorganisation of education in Trafford.

**Mr. Butcher:** The judgment by the House of Lords that the Birminghan LEA was in contravention of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 by providing fewer grammar school places for boys than for girls has no implications for the proposed reorganisation of county schools in Trafford as the current proposals in Trafford LEA will provide equal opportunities for selective places for boys and girls.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the reorganisation of Roman Catholic secondary education in the borough of Trafford.

**Mr. Butcher:** In March 1988 the Salford Roman Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission published statutory reorganisation proposals for three Roman Catholic secondary schools in Trafford. My right hon. Friend was not satisfied that the proposed arrangements offered improved educational prospects for pupils of all abilities, nor that the high capital cost was justified. He accordingly rejected the proposals on 16 February 1989.

### Institute of Food Research

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the membership of the advisory board to the Institute of Food Research; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jackson:** Members of the advisory board are:

Mr. S. G. Metcalfe (Chairman), Deputy Chairman and Managing Director, Rank Hovis McDougall plc.
Professor D. C. Burke, Vice Chancellor, University of East Anglia and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes.
Dr. J. Edelman, CBE, Chairman of Council, British Nutrition Foundation.
Mr. J. A. Lusher, Director, Food Division, Marks and Spencer plc.
Professor J. R. Norris, Director of Group Research, Cadbury Schweppes plc.
Dr. E. S. Page, Vice Chancellor, University of Reading and Chairman of the Food Advisory Committee.
Mr. G. T. Pryce, Chief Executive, Dalgety plc.
Mr. A. Sheppard, Chairman, Grand Metropolitan plc.
Mr. W. G. Walker, Chairman, Van den Berghs & Jurgens Ltd.
Mrs. R. E. Waterhouse CBE, Chairman, Consumers' Association.

The advisory board comprises a unique mix of senior

executives reflecting the interests of industry, academia and consumers. It advises the director and management of the Institute of Food Research on strategic issues concerning the food industry nationally and internationally, on trends and developments on food supply and consumption patterns, marketing, manufacturing, and other aspects influencing the choice of the Institute's Research and Development programmes.

### Replan

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of the replan programme for the adult unemployed.

**Mr. Jackson:** Replan has been successful in focusing the attention of the education service on the needs of the adult unemployed, and is having wider benefits in encouraging new approaches by providers. The programme will continue in its present form until October 1991. The Government will conduct a policy review of the programme and its objectives later this year, drawing on the available evaluations of replan initiatives and taking into account changes in the context of employment and training. Decisions about the future of the programme after 1991 will be announced in the autumn.

## PRIVY COUNCIL

### Consumers (Consultation)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what arrangements there are for consulting consumers in the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Wakeham:** The Privy Council Office neither provides nor regulates services to the general public and consultation with consumer organisations would not be appropriate to its work or decisions.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Court of Protection

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the total number of patients whose affairs were administered by the Court of Protection in each of the last five years.

**The Attorney-General:** The total number of patients whose affairs were administered by the Court of Protection for the last five financial years are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1983-84 | 18,848 |
| 1984-85 | 22,030 |
| 1985-86 | 22,134 |
| 1986-87 | 23,080 |
| 1987-88 | 25,778 |

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the total income received by the protection division in respect of *(a)* commencement fees and *(b)* annual administration fees for the Court of Protection in each of the last five years.

**The Attorney-General:** The total income received by the protection division for the last five calendar years was as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| *(a)* Commencement Fees | |
| 1984 | 480,482·00 |
| 1985 | 337,465·67 |
| 1986 | 316,304·53 |
| 1987 | 285,449·40 |
| 1988 | 307,256·10 |
| *(b)* Annual Administration Fees | |
| 1986 | 2,992,743·20 |
| 1987 | 3,148,927·00 |
| 1988 | 3,858,094·60 |

The figures for 1984 and 1985 calendar years are not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

### Patients (Receiver)

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the total number of patients for whom a receiver was appointed where the annual income of the patient was insufficient for any fee to be payable in each of the last five years.

**The Attorney-General:** Historical data on the total number of patients whose annual income are insufficient for any fee to be payable is not collected. The current figure is 1,410.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Environmental Research

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister what information she has on Government spending on environmental research in (i) Britain, (ii) West Germany and (iii) the EEC countries as a whole.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government of the United Kingdom will spend £161·2 million in 1988-89 on environmental research. Comparable figures are not available for West Germany and other EC countries.

### Special Advisers

**Mr. David Blunkett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the Civil Service salary scales on which special advisers attached to Government Ministries are paid, giving by Department employing the special advisers the scale upon which they are placed.

**The Prime Minister:** Special advisers are not paid on Civil Service salary scales but, with some exceptions, on a special advisers spine comprising 28 points, as follows:

| *Scale point* | *Salary (inclusive)* £ |
|---|---|
| 28 | 40,520 |
| 27 | 39,570 |
| 26 | 38,625 |
| 25 | 37,420 |
| 24 | 36,210 |
| 23 | 34,560 |
| 22 | 33,280 |
| 21 | 32,000 |
| 20 | 30,660 |
| 19 | 29,310 |
| 18 | 27,960 |

| Scale point | Salary (inclusive) £ |
|---|---|
| 17 | 26,620 |
| 16 | 25,015 |
| 15 | 23,995 |
| 14 | 23,185 |
| 13 | 22,375 |
| 12 | 21,530 |
| 11 | 20,755 |
| 10 | 20,120 |
| 9 | 19,225 |
| 8 | 18,545 |
| 7 | 17,945 |
| 6 | 17,350 |
| 5 | 16,740 |
| 4 | 15,850 |
| 3 | 15,305 |
| 2 | 14,845 |
| 1 | 13,975 |

The two most senior special advisers are paid personal salaries above the spine limit of £40,250; two other special advisers are unpaid; four are on secondment terms from the private sector and their previous employers are reimbursed for their services. The same salary spine is used by all Departments. It is not our practice to reveal the spine position of any adviser as it is negotiated individually in relation to previous earnings and is therefore confidential.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Research

**Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in each of the last 10 years, what was spent on research by *(a)* the Government and *(b)* the private sector on *(a)* agriculture as a whole, *(b)* horticulture, *(c)* the apple and pear industry and *(d)* the soft fruit industry.

**Mr. Ryder:** The information requested in respect of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's expenditure in the last 10 financial years is shown in the table.

*Expenditure on research and development in England and Wales by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.* *£ million*

| Financial Year | Agriculture | Horticulture | Top Fruit[1] | Soft Fruit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978-79[2,4] | 41·8 | 9·5 | 2·3 | 0·7 |
| 1979-80[2,3] | 46·8 | 10·5 | 2·3 | 0·7 |
| 1980-81[2] | 59·6 | 13·4 | 2·6 | 1·0 |
| 1981-82[2] | 71·8 | 13·7 | 2·9 | 1·0 |
| 1982-83 | 83·7 | 17·3 | 3·0 | 1·5 |
| 1983-84 | 85·5 | 17·1 | 3·2 | 1·5 |
| 1984-85 | 88·4 | 18·6 | 3·3 | 1·6 |
| 1985-86 | 84·3 | 18·2 | 3·3 | 1·5 |
| 1986-87 | 84·7 | 19·1 | 3·3 | 1·2 |
| 1987-88 | 75·3 | 18·1 | 3·5 | 1·3 |

[1] Top fruit is primarily apples and pears but includes other fruits such as plums and cherries.
[2] For these years certain expenditure now classified as research and development was excluded.
[3] These figures include payments which should have been made in 1978-79.
[4] These figures exclude payments which were delayed until 1979-80 as a result of industrial action.

Agricultural research and development is also funded through the votes of the Department of Education and Science, Department of Agriculture for Scotland and the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

My Department does not hold information on the expenditure on research undertaken privately other than research funded by industry since 1986 through levies. This expenditure is shown in the following table:

*Levy-funded Expenditure on Research and Development by Industry*

| Financial Year | 1986-87 £ million | 1987-88 £ million |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | [4]5·0 | 9·4 |
| Horticulture | 0·2 | 1·0 |
| Top Fruit[1,2] | 0·1 | 0·1 |
| Soft Fruit[3] | 0·1 | 0·1 |

[1] Top Fruit is primarily applies and pears but includes other fruits such as plums and cherries.
[2] Funding by the Apple and Pear Development Council.
[3] Funding by the Horticultural Development Council.
[4] Approximate figure.

### Potatoes

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of permitted treatments of potatoes in store or pre-storage and their purposes, including any intended to prevent or discourage spoilage by rats.

**Mr. Ryder:** Post-harvest treatments of potatoes are controlled as pesticides under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

The following active ingredients are the most commonly used in storage on ware potatoes, and are listed with their purpose. There are no specific products approved to discourage spoilage of potatoes by rats, but rodenticides are available for use in stores, subject to label restrictions.

*Active Ingredient and Purpose*

1. Thiabendazole—Systemic fungicide used to reduce gangrene, dry rot, skin spot, silver scurf.
2. 2-Aminobutane—Fumigant for control of skin spot and gangrene.
3. Tecnazene—Fungicide for control of dry rot and Sprout suppressant.
4. Chlopropham—Sprout suppressant.

### Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** In the two Agriculture Select Committee reports published since June 1987, to which the Government have responded, 49 recommendations or observations were made. Of these 33 have been accepted, in whole or in part, by the Government or have been noted where no further action by Government was sought.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been paid out by his Ministry in compensation for bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Up to the end of February 1989, £862,177 has been paid in compensation.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has about the incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle by age, sex and breed.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* About 80 per cent. of cases of BSE have been confirmed in animals between three and five years of age; all but five, confirmed in bulls, have been female. There is no evidence of any particular breed pre-disposition to the development of BSE.

### Scrapie

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to introduce controls on the export of meat and bone meal which may have originated from scrapie-infected sheep.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Exports of meat and bone meal are subject to and must meet the health conditions laid down by the importing country.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that meat and other animal products from scrapie-infected sheep do not go for human consumption.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Scrapie has been present in this country for at least two centuries without any evidence to suggest that it has been, or can be, a risk to humans. Neither has research identified any such risk. Such measures are not, therefore, appropriate.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make scrapie a notifiable disease;

(2) what steps he is taking to eradicate scrapie in sheep.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** I have no plans to make scrapie a notifiable disease nor to introduce a slaughter policy.

### Fruit Growers

**Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received the results of the poll of growers conducted as part of the quinquennial review of the Apple and Pear Development Council.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Yes. The results of the poll are as follows:

| | *Growers* | | *Area* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Per cent.* | *Hectares* | *Per cent.* |
| In favour | 312 | 30·9 | 8,867·4 | 44·7 |
| Against | 547 | 54·2 | 9,107·5 | 45·9 |
| Spoiled forms | 9 | 0·9 | 130,5 | 0·7 |
| Forms not returned | 141 | 14·0 | 1,737·8 | 8·8 |
| Total registered at 9 February 1989 | 1,009 | — | 19,843·2 | — |
| Percentage of those voting who were in favour | — | 35·9 | — | 49 |

In reaching a decision on the future of the Apple and Pear Development Council, I shall take these results into account, along with the views of the bodies I am required to consult under the terms of the Industrial Organisation and Development Act 1947.

### Woodlands

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received about the farm woodlands and woodland grant schemes.

**Mr. Ryder** *[holding answer 7 March 1989]:* I have received no recent representations about the woodland grant scheme as such and very few about the farm woodland scheme. Those that I have received concerned technical points on the rules of the scheme.

### Fresh Meat (Inspections)

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on how many occasions for each year since 1980 establishments have provided meat for United Kingdom consumption whilst export licences had been suspended under the Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations;

(2) how many times he has used his powers under the Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations to suspend the export licence of any establishment approved under those regulations; and on how many occasions he has issued a warning of his intention to suspend such an export licence for each year since 1980.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* My Department suspends the export approval of establishments which fail to comply with the export regulations. Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the legislation on the supply of meat for consumption within the United Kingdom. Records of enforcement actions by local authorities are not maintained centrally.

The Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations apply in England and Wales and first came into force on 2 November 1981. The figures of suspension warnings, and suspensions since then are as follows:

| | *Suspension Warnings* | *Suspensions* |
|---|---|---|
| 1982 | 6 | 2 |
| 1983 | 12 | 6 |
| 1984 | 2 | 1 |
| 1985 | 11 | 7 |
| 1986 | 14 | 8 |
| 1987 | 22 | 11 |
| 1988 | 6 | 4 |

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects a European

Community inspector to visit the United Kingdom establishments under the Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations; and whether he will publish the results of the inspection.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]*: A visit by European Commission inspectors is taking place from 6 to 16 March. Reports made by inspectors following a visit refer to individual plants and must remain confidential. They are discussed with the inspectors, with the local authority concerned and with the plant management and any corrective action which is necessary is put in hand.

### Abattoirs

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of abattoirs in the United Kingdom; what proportion have been and will be visited by European Community inspectors; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Donald Thompson** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]*: At the end of 1988 there were 937 abattoirs in the United Kingdom, of which 99 were export-approved. European Commission inspectors aim to visit 10 per cent. of export-approved premises each year. The remainder is under the control of local authorities, which appoint environmental health officers for supervision.

### Listeria

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the evidence for non-pasteurised milk becoming prone to infection with listeria bacteria; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ryder** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]*: The results of a number of overseas surveys published in the scientific literature indicate that about 10 per cent. of raw milk may be infected with listeria species. It is possible that similar rates of infection exist in the United Kingdom milk supplies. Pasteurisation has however been shown to be an effective treatment for eliminating listeria and other more prevalent pathogens, such as salmonella and campylobacter.

Information from the communicable disease surveillance centre on the 1,600 cases of food poisoning associated with untreated milk in the five-year period 1983-87 indicates that the main health hazard associated with untreated milk is not listeria but salmonella (which accounted for just over half the cases) and campylobacter (which accounted for most of the remainder).

## TRANSPORT

### Channel Tunnel Rail Link

**Mr. Tony Banks** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received *(a)* in support of and *(b)* in opposition to the proposed high-speed Channel tunnel rail link.

**Mr. Portillo:** We have received a large number of letters, mainly from people who were opposed to British Rail's original proposals. BR is today announcing a revised route proposal which takes account of the comments received.

### Roads (Private Finance)

**Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the amount of private finances to be invested in Britain's road network during 1988-89.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We anticipate that about 30 agreements between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and private sector developers will be completed in 1988-89. Through these arrangements and the construction of the Dartford-Thurrock crossing the private sector will contribute an estimated £30 million in 1988-89 towards the funding of trunk road improvements in England.

Local highway authorities also enter into agreements with the private sector to fund road schemes. Information on these is not held centrally, but the indications are that the private sector makes a major contribution to local schemes.

Responsibility for roads in Scotland and Wales rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, respectively.

### Infrastructure (North-West)

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on plans by British Rail and other undertakings to improve transport infrastructure in the North West region in the period before the opening of the Channel tunnel.

**Mr. Portillo:** A partnership of public and private sector interests in the North-West, led by chambers of commerce there, is already carrying out a study into the region's requirements arising from the single European market and the Channel tunnel. Government Departments will assist with information and advice as necessary.

The plan that British Rail is required to prepare under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 on international passenger and freight services will cover all regions.

The impact of the Channel tunnel is one of the many factors taken into account in planning the national trunk road programme. There is already a number of schemes in the programme that will improve North/South links. A review of the trunk road programme is in progress, and we expect to make an announcement in the spring.

### Swansea Coastguard

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to correct the problem of breakthroughs on channel O which can affect radio communications for the Swansea coastguard station.

**Mr. Channon:** This problem has been traced to a change of frequency used by the police, and the Home Office are dealing with it by modifying the coastguard radio sites affected.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the Swansea coastguard watch is always at full strength.

**Mr. Channon:** The watch is kept at full strength as far as possible, though unforseen absences for sickness, accidents or other problems are from time to time

inevitable. The posting of additional staff to Swansea following the recent merger has ensured that the full watch of four regular officers has been maintained on all but a very few occasions, and at no time has the combined strength of regular officers and auxiliary support fallen below four.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the number of coastguard visits to the Hartland area from the Swansea station.

**Mr. Channon:** All watchkeeping staff from Swansea have spent a four-day period visiting the Hartland area. Each watch has an ex member of the Hartland staff within the watch, who accompanied them on the visit.

Further visits are planned during the summer, using a helicopter from RAF Chivenor, to gain maximum benefits from such a visit.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take measures to ensure the adequate working of the Hartland 641 telephone line to the Swansea coastguard station.

**Mr. Channon:** The Hartland 641 telephone number was installed when the station was closed so that local people could contact Swansea MRCC if they had general queries. British Telecom assures me that the problems with the line are being dealt with, and that the service will improve when new optical fibre cables are laid later this year.

The public have of course been advised that anyone wishing to make an emergency call to a coastguard station should always dial 999.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the movement of the Hartland tape unit to Swansea.

**Mr. Channon:** The unit was installed at Swansea on 6 December last to deal with additional radio and telephone lines following the closure of the Hartland station. After defects were discovered, the equipment was comprehensively overhauled on 21 February. Two further, minor faults were rectified within 24 hours, and the equipment is now fully serviceable.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the agreed local expertise required to maintain safety levels in local coastguard areas; and if he will ensure that the numbers of coastguard with Hartland coast experience in the Swansea station will meet this requirement.

**Mr. Channon:** All coastguards take the necessary steps to equip themselves with adequate local knowledge, wherever they work and whatever responsibilities they hold. At Swansea, one member of each watch is an ex-Hartland watchkeeper, so maintaining continuity while Swansea staff become fully acquainted with their increased area.

### Channel Tunnel

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the high-speed railway line to the Channel tunnel.

**Mr. Portillo:** British Rail is today announcing its revised route proposal which takes account of the comments received on their original proposals.

### Severn Crossing

**Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce further details of the second Severn crossing.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We announced on 28 February the shortlist of tenderers for the second Severn crossing. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) at column *116*.

We hope to be in a position to announce the successful tenderer by the end of the year.

### Thermal Neutron Activation

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the source of funding for development work on using the thermal neutron activation analysis technique for detecting explosives at Harwell; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* Research and development work at Harwell on using the thermal neutron activation analysis technique for detecting explosives is being funded by a commercial organisation in the private sector under a contract with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's Harwell laboratory.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Rape

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will elucidate the advice given in his Department's document on rape that women adopt secure common sense routines; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John Patten:** This advice is given in full in our crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime".

### Police (South Yorkshire)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the village and main police stations in the A (Doncaster) division of the South Yorkshire police area and which have *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed since 1979.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The police stations currently in use in the Doncaster division of the South Yorkshire police are:

*Main police stations*
- Adwick-le-Street
- Armthorpe
- Askern
- Bentley
- Conisborough
- Doncaster divisional and sub-divisional headquarters Edlington

*Police posts*
- Balby
- Belle Vue
- Cantley
- Doncaster market place
- Royal Infirmary Tickhill
- Mexborough
- Rossington
- Stainforth
- Thorne

The following police stations have opened or closed since 1979:

(i) In 1981, five police houses and offices were closed at Branton, Campsall, Clayton, Marr and Toll Bar and were not replaced;
(ii) In 1984, Doncaster market place police post was opened;
(iii) In 1985, Cusworth section station was closed and not replaced.

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire as to the number of police employed to cover the A division (Doncaster) of the South Yorkshire police area annually from 1979 to the latest date.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The information requested is as follows:

*Police strengths*
*South Yorkshire police—Doncaster division*

| *Year (as at 31 December)* | *Number of officers* |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 471 |
| 1980 | 479 |
| 1981 | 493 |
| 1982 | 479 |
| 1983 | 452 |
| 1984 | 488 |
| 1985 | 490 |
| 1986 | 509 |
| 1987 | 497 |
| 1988 | 504 |

## Juries

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the method of random selection of juries or to introduce legislation thereon.

**Mr. John Patten:** Provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which came into effect on 5 January this year have abolished the right to challenge jurors without cause, and ensure that a person summoned for jury service may not have it deferred indefinitely. We expect to bring into effect in July provisions enabling people up to the age of 70 to serve as jurors, if they are willing to do so. We will keep the working of the jury system under review but we have no present plans for further changes in the law.

## Cleveland Constabulary

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland as to what improvements have been made in the last five years to the effectiveness of the Cleveland constabulary.

**Mr. Douglas Hurd:** I understand that among the improvements made in the last five years by the chief constable and his police authority are the release of over 100 police officers for operational duty through the civilianisation of police posts; the implementation of a comprehensive information technology strategy; the amalgamation of two divisions; and the enhancement of the police estate. The chief constable would be pleased to discuss with my hon. Friend these and other examples of the effectiveness of the Cleveland constabulary.

## Armley Prison

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Howard League concerning conditions at Armley prison; and what reply he has sent.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The director of the Howard League wrote to my right hon. Friend on 25 January to express concern about conditions at Leeds prison. I replied on 21 February acknowledging her concern and informing her that the deputy director-general of the prison service has been asked to report to the Home Secretary on the young offender wing at Leeds. My right hon. Friend announced the main recommendations of the report and our response in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 7 March at columns *455-56*.

## Suicides in Custody

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the ages of all those who have committed suicide in custody since 1979, together with the prisons and units in which they were held at the time of their deaths.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The information that follows relates to those inmates of prison department establishments found by coroners' inquests to have committed suicide, and gives the establishments at which they were held and their ages; information as to the units within establishments where these inmates were held is not readily available. Information on those inmates who committed suicide after 1 January 1987 is contained in the reply given on 24 February to a question from the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) at columns *834-39*.

*1979*

Gartree, 36; Wormwood Scrubs, 33; Dartmoor, 39; Wandsworth, 37; Brixton, 32; Wandsworth, 25; Lincoln, 43; Wormwood Scrubs, 22; Brixton, 33; Lincoln, 43; Liverpool, 36; Shrewsbury, 62; Winchester, 22; Liverpool, 18; Leeds, 47; Pentonville, 34; Brixton, 26; Lewes, 20; Brixton, 52; Stafford, 24; Brixton, 32.

*1980*

Risley, 46; Wandsworth, 25; Brixton, 19; Liverpool, 35; Brixton, 33; Pentonville, 29; Risley,24; Wakefield, 31; Shrewsbury, 23; Brixton, 33; Brixton, 28; Leeds, 29; Leeds, 22; Canterbury, 28; Maidstone, 41; Featherstone, 23; Brixton, 39; Oxford, 46; Wormwood Scrubs, 25; Bristol, 38; Swinfen Hall, 19.

*1981*

Brixton, 42; Manchester, 37; Long Lartin, 22; Wakefield, 56; Winchester, 32; Wakefield, 58; Cardiff, 30; Birmingham, 53; Brixton, 39; Lincoln, 32; Long Lartin, 24; Winchester, 33; Dartmoor, 34; Exeter, 24; Brixton, 57; Rochester, 16.

*1982*

Canterbury, 18; Brixton, 29; Lancaster, 76; Wakefield, 34; Bristol, 56; Canterbury, 28; Durham, 46; Lewes, 22; Leeds, 28; Parkhurst, 47; Stoke Heath, 19; Parkhurst, 34; Nottingham, 24; Lewes, 18; Long Lartin, 42; Cardiff, 23; Cardiff, 35.

*1983*

Stafford, 45; Dartmoor, 52; Winchester, 36; Channings Wood, 28; Manchester, 16; Norwich, 58; Dartmoor, 40; Liverpool, 43; Maidstone, 46; Camp Hill, 26; Leeds, 20; Pentonville, 28; Liverpool, 25; Brixton, 42; Brixton, 33; Stafford, 43; Brixton, 25; Highpoint, 41; Winchester, 25; Brixton, 28; Gloucester, 45.

*1984*

Brixton, 44; Brixton, 31; Parkhurst, 33; Parkhurst, 37; Norwich, 27; Wormwood Scrubs, 53; Swansea, 17; Pentonville, 19; Brixton, 23; Durham, 47; Norwich, 26; Exeter, 22; Leeds, 37; Preston, 24; Kingston, 44; Exeter, 43; Leicester, 66; Brixton, 27; Shrewsbury, 37; Lewes, 26; Wakefield, 34; Wandsworth, 24; Brixton, 37.

*1985*

Pentonville, 31; Wormwood Scrubs, 40; Birmingham, 48; Leicester, 39; Pentonville, 24; Exeter, 33; Durham, 32; Manchester, 31; Wandsworth, 26; Preston, 79; Leeds, 35; Brixton, 46; Birmingham, 24; Leeds, 27; Lincoln, 31; Maidstone, 31; Brixton, 21; Durham, 21; Leicester, 29; Risley, 18; Wormwood Scrubs, 26; Gloucester, 48; Wandsworth, 34.

*1986*

Exeter, 19; Ashford, 19; Norwich, 32; Manchester, 71; Bedford, 37; Wymott, 24; Lincoln, 28; Cardiff, 23; Preston, 33; Preston, 25; Risley, 20; Brixton, 24; Wormwood Scrubs, 40; Brixton, 24; Wakefield, 28; Canterbury, 26; Manchester, 26.

### Broadcasting Sales (South Africa)

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the sales by *(a)* the British Broadcasting Corporation and *(b)* Independent Television companies to South Africa.

**Mr. Renton:** None.

### Prisoners' Pay

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now announce the form and scope of the review of prisoners' pay; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Hurd:** In response to recommendations contained in reports last year by the then deputy director general of the prison service and by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, I have decided to put in hand a review of the arrangements for paying earnings to inmates of prison service establishments in England and Wales.

Inmates are paid at pocket money levels for work done, from which they may purchase items such as tobacco, sweets, stamps, soft drinks and additional toiletries from the canteen. Within approved limits, prison income may be supplemented by private cash. The present arrangements have been subjected to two main criticisms: first, that rates of pay are inadequate, particularly where inmates have access to pay-telephones; secondly, that the system of pay differentials, for different types of work and as between different establishments, does not provide the right incentives. The review will examine these points and a number of detailed aspects of the inmate pay system about which representations have been made from time to time.

The vast majority of inmates employed at establishments are engaged in tasks for the prison service (including the manufacture of items for internal use, food production, cleaning, catering, building and grounds maintenance) and productivity is limited by the constraints of the prison routine, turnover of inmates and other factors. In the circumstances, I have decided that this review should not extend to the possibility of paying inmates full market rates of pay.

The review, which is to be conducted by the prison service's management services unit, is scheduled to start in April and I would expect to be in a position to reach conclusions by early next year.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Inner City Regeneration

**Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent contacts he has had with private sector organisations involved in inner city regeneration.

**Mr. Newton:** I frequently see representatives of private sector organisations involved in inner city regeneration. Since the beginning of 1989 I have seen the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, Business in the Community, British Urban Development, the Leeds chamber of commerce, the Wearside Opportunity, the Teesside Tomorrow Team, the Building Employers Confederation and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors. I have also visited inner city areas of Leeds, Doncaster, Sheffield, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Preston, Rochdale and Hackney, where I have met many local people and private sector organisations active in the regeneration of their cities.

### Business in the Community

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of Business in the Community; and what matters were discussed.

**Mr. Newton:** I last met representatives of Business in the Community at their president's committee meeting on 7 March 1989. The committee discussed how companies can contribute to community regeneration through their mainstream business activities, and what action companies can take to improve opportunities on housing estates.

### Estate Agents

**Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made in the regulation of estate agents.

**Mr. Forth:** I am currently considering the views of estate agency bodies and other interested parties as to whether it might be appropriate to supplement the existing consumer protection provisions of the Estate Agents Act 1979, perhaps with an effective self-regulatory system incorporating a code of practice. I hope to be in a position to announce the conclusion of my review soon.

### Teaching Company Scheme

**Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many programmes are financed under his Department's teaching company scheme; and what plans there are to increase the number of programmes.

**Mr. Forth:** The teaching company scheme is not a DTI scheme but is jointly funded by the DTI, the Science and Engineering Research Council, other public bodies and industry. Currently there are 350 programmes. The White Paper, "DTI—the department for Enterprise", (Cmd 278), states the Government's intention of substantially increasing the scheme's size by 1922 and of basing an increasing proportion of programmes in smaller and medium sized firms.

### Manufacturing Industry

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the medium-term prospects for manufacturing industry.

**Mr. Forth** Manufacturing industry is performing well. Output was at a record level in 1988, over 7 per cent. higher than in 1987. And with productivity growing at 7·5 per cent. a year and investment at near record levels, there is every prospect of continued strong performance from manufacturing industry.

### Tradeable Information.

**Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidelines are followed within the companies registration office with regard to tradeable information and collaboration with companies in the information services industry.

**Mr. Maude:** The guidelines within which the Companies House executive agency operates are set out in its policy and resources framework document, a copy of which is in the Library. The agency's chief executive tells me that there is close collaboration with his principal customers in the information services industry, both through the Companies House users' groups and discussions with individual companies. He would welcome an approach from my hon. Friend if he has any particular point in mind.

**Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if there have been any changes since 1986 in the description and guidelines concerning Government-held tradeable information, published by his Department in 1986;

(2) whether a review of policy on Government-held tradeable information has been completed since 1986;

(3) which Departments in accordance with the statement of policy contained in section 5 of "Government-held Tradeable Information—An Introduction," published by the Department of Trade and Industry in 1986, created a comprehensive list and description of departmental data and information holdings with a view to investigating the scope for commercial utilisation.

**Mr. Forth:** A review of the execution of the policy on Government-held tradeable information, whose description and guidelines are currently unchanged, is due to be completed by the summer. Departmental information surveys are a matter for individual Departments. Such a survey has been undertaken in my Department.

### Consumers (Consultations)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Forth:** The Office of Fair Trading, National Consumer Council, the nationalised industry consumer councils and consumer organisations such as the National Federation of Consumer Groups give advice to the Department on consumer matters. It is the Department's practice to consult bodies and organisations representing the consumer interest on any proposals for legislation or other action directly or indirectly affecting consumers.

### Tobacco Companies

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the financial assistance which has been given to tobacco companies under the various industry Acts in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales since 1979; if he will list other financial assistance that has been made to tobacco companies by the Government in the same period; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** Total payments to tobacco companies under the Industrial Development Act 1982 both on regional selective assistance and the revised regional development grant schemes are £6·5 million. These are the only schemes under parts II and III of the Act under which payments have been made to tobacco companies. It is not possible to provide a territorial breakdown for England, Scotland and Wales on the grouds of commercial confidentiality as such information would go beyond that which is published in *British Business*. It is also not possible to provide details of any payments under the original RDG scheme except at disproportionate cost.

So far as I am aware, no other Government financial assistance has been given to tobacco companies since 1979.

### Cinema Film Distributors

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to receive the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on cinema film distributors; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maude:** The last report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of cinema films was published on 11 May 1983. An order based on that report was laid before the House on 7 March.

### Awareness Programme

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out in the *Official Report* the approximate expenditure planned in respect of his 1992 awareness programme, together with the sums spent on each component of the programme; and what steps he has taken to acquaint each section of domectic industry or overseas visible or invisible trade interests with the final form of legislation of the European Economic Community relating to their activities.

**Mr. Maude** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* Expenditure to date on DTI's campaign to encourage firms to plan for the single European market has been over £12·5 million. Of this, some £8·75 million is represented by national advertising. The other £3·75 million has provided a detailed and comprehensive range of literature; a major series of business conferences; a national telephone inquiry service and mailing operation; the Spearhead computer database; video materials; and research into business preparations. The campaign represents a major and sustained effort to help Britain's firms prepare for the single market. Resources will continue to be allocated accordingly.

Government Deprtments seek to keep all sections of business fully up-to-date on the progress of relevant EC legislation. In addition, the DTI's Spearhead database provides details of all single market measures and other measures (such as environment proposals) of interest to business, including access to the full texts of the relevant

EC legislation. Where appropriate, spearhead gives details of how measures have been implemented in the United Kingdom. The DTI has also prepared a checklist showing in tabular form progress on the proposals in the Commission's 1985 White Paper on the single market.

### Elanco

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he or his officials have had with Elanco on the subject of a grant for a possible factory on Merseyside.

**Mr. Atkins** *[holding answer 7 March 1989]:* Neither I nor my officials have had any discussions with Elanco on the subject of a grant for a possible factory on Merseyside.

### Rattan

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will institute discussions with the Secretary for Commerce of the United States of America to bring about joint action under the general agreement on tariffs and trade to remove the ban by Indonesia on the export of rattan; and if he will make a statement

**Mr. Maude** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* It is for the Community to pursue this issue with Indonesia and if appropriate in the GATT in the light of the impact of the Indonesian action on Community interests. I would hope to have the support of other GATT members, including the United States, for any action initiated in GATT.

**Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action has been taken since 19 December 1988 by his Department to bring about the removal of the ban by Indonesia on the export of rattan; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maude** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* The European Commission, which has competence in external trade matters, discussed this issue with a delegation led by the Indonesian Vice-Minister for Agriculture in Brussels recently. I regret that no progress was made.

Further high-level consultations between the Commission and the Government of Indonesia are expected shortly, and my officials will be monitoring developments closely. The Community has also requested consultations with Indonesia under GATT dispute settlement procedures. The Indonesians have yet to agree a date for the consultations.

## ENERGY

### Fast Reactors

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent agreement on fast reactors between the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and their counterparts in France and the Federal Republic of Germany; for what time period the agreement will last; and if he has made any financial commitment to the agreement.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maciennan) on 27 February at column *85*. The United Kingdom organisations concerned signed these agreements on the basis of the Secretary of State for Energy's statement of 21 July 1988.

### Sellafield

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 9 February, columns *756-57*, on safeguards application at Sellafield, what period elapsed between 15 December 1986 and the resumption of reprocessing in separate campaigns.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** The next reprocessing campaign after 15 December 1986 was for unsafeguarded fuel from Calderhall and Chapel Cross reactors. It is not in the national interest to reveal the precise timing and operational details of such campaigns.

### Domestic Energy Resources

**Sir Dudley Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what current estimate he has of the number of households in England and Wales which are unable to obtain an electricity supply.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** This is a matter for the industry and I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to my hon. Friend.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Chile

17. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about encouraging the transition to democracy in Chile.

25. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about encouraging the transition to democracy in Chile.

42. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about encouraging the transition to democracy in Chile.

72. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about encouraging the transition to democracy in Chile.

**Mr. Eggar:** We have regular discussions on developments in Chile with the United States Administration, as we do with our European partners. All of us continue to encourage an orderly and peaceful transition to democracy in that country.

### Middle East

18. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards peace in the middle east.

24. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), to Israel.

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the visit by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), to Israel.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My visit to Israel, the occupied territories and Jordan included a constructive discussion of the peace process with my various hosts, and underlined the enduring strength of both Anglo-Israeli and Anglo-Jordanian relations.

28. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Israeli relations.

44. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

51. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Israeli relations.

52. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), to Israel.

63. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

80. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on any recent progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

## EC (Foreign Policies)

19. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend last met EC colleagues in the framework of European political co-operation in Madrid on 14 February. He will do so next at an informal weekend meeting in Granada on 15 and 16 April.

Political co-operation matters were also discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 and 21 February, which I attended with my right hon. and learned Friend.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### International Terrorism

20. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in achieving international co-operation to combat hijacking and other forms of international terrorism.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** In the last year major international agreements against terrorism have been adopted by the International Maritime Organisation and the International Civil Aviation Organisation. The United Kingdom has been instrumental in initiating work in ICAO on new international measures to combat hijacking and aircraft sabotage.

### Afghanistan

21. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the supply of arms to the anti-Government forces in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Eggar:** It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to comment on matters of this kind.

43. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects British diplomats to return to Afghanistan.

**Mr. Eggar:** British diplomats will return to Kabul as soon as circumstances permit them to do a useful job.

### Drug Trafficking

22. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government following the Vienna conference on a convention against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

**Mr. Eggar:** The United Kingdom signed the new convention on 20 December, subject to ratification. We are actively developing closer international co-operation in areas covered by the convention particularly over the tracing, freezing and confiscation of traffickers' assets.

### United States Secretary of State

23. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his meeting with the United States Secretary of State on 12 February.

**Mr. Eggar:** Secretary Baker and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State had most useful and wide-ranging talks on 12 February.

39. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the American Secretary of State and what was discussed.

**Mr. Eggar:** My right hon. and learned Friend last met Mr. Baker in London on 12 February. They exchanged views on a wide range of subjects.

### Romania

26. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the Romanian Government about human rights.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Certainly. We frequently raise human rights violations with the Romanians, both bilaterally and together with our EC partners. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State raised our concerns about Mrs. Doina Cornea and the 22 co-signatories to her open letter to President Ceausescu with the Romanian Foreign Minister in Vienna on 6 March. Regrettably, the Romanian authorities have rejected all our representations. We shall continue to raise such cases as appropriate with the Romanian authorities.

54. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador to Romania about human rights abuses in that country.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** We receive all-too-frequent reports of human rights violations in Romania, both from Her Majesty's embassy in Bucharest and from non-governmental organisations. Romania's human rights performance is unsatisfactory in many areas, and its observance of CSCE commitments, freely entered into at the Helsinki, Madrid and Vienna meetings, inadequate. We raise these matters with the Romanian authorities on all appropriate occasions.

### Soviet Union

27. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his Soviet counterpart; and what matters he will discuss.

67. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Edward Shevardnadze; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met Mr. Shevardnadze in Vienna on 6 March. He will meet him again during Mr. Gorbachev's visit to the United Kingdom on 5 to 7 April. He expects to discuss with him a wide range of bilateral and East-West issues, including human rights.

### Isle of Man

29. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met with representatives of the Manx Government; and what matters were discussed.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend has had no meetings with representatives of the Manx Government. As my hon. Friend has been told, matters relating to the Isle of Man are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

### France

30. **Mr. Carttiss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed at the Anglo-French summit of 27 February.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Discussion covered a wide range of bilateral and international issues. These included East-West relations, defence and arms control matters, and regional issues such as the middle east. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister expressed gratitude for French support over Iranian threats to Mr. Rushdie.

### NATO (Burden Sharing)

31. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been taking place with the United States of America on burden sharing within the Atlantic Alliance; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The United States is fully involved in discussion of burden sharing within the Alliance, including for instance in the work which led to the report on enhancing collective security agreed by NATO Defence Ministers last December, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

### Jacques Delors

32. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Mr. Jacques Delors; and what matters were discussed.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met Mr. Delors at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 February. The matters discussed were covered in the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 22 February.

### Hong Kong

33. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in regard to the second draft of the Basic Law for Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

47. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in regard to the second draft of the Basic Law for Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

61. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in regard to the second draft of the Basic Law for Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** The second draft of the Basic Law was published in Peking on 24 February. It will be the subject of further public consultation in Hong Kong. We have received no representations on this draft.

48. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Governor of Hong Kong; and what subjects were discussed.

**Mr. Eggar:** My right hon. and learned Friend's last meeting with the Governor of Hong Kong was on 22 February 1989 during one of his regular visits to the United Kingdom for routine consultations. The discussions covered the full range of Hong Kong issues.

### Botswana

34. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last held discussions with representatives of the Botswana Government; and what matters were discussed.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend last met President Masire and the Botswana Foreign Minister in London in July 1986. Discussions covered a wide range of bilateral and regional issues. I have regular contacts with Botswana leaders, and met both the President and Foreign Minister most recently during my visit to Botswana in November 1988.

### EC Foreign Ministers

35. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to attend a meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers; and what he expects will be discussed.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The next meeting of the EC Foreign Ministers will be at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 and 21 March. The matters expected for discussion were outlined in the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 1 March.

### Angola

36. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government have taken any steps to bring about reconciliation between the Marxist MPLA Government and UNITA in Angola.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We continue to be in touch with African leaders in the region who are best placed to mediate.

60. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the offer of a ceasefire and direct talks made by UNITA; what he is doing to promote a ceasefire or direct talks; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We would welcome any move to establish internal peace in Angola which had the support of both sides. We continue to be in touch with African leaders in the region who are best placed to mediate.

### EC (Fraud)

37. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific steps Her Majesty's Government are urging within the Council of Ministers to enable it to act effectively against financial fraud in the European Parliament.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We have presented a number of suggestions on combating fraud and mismanagement to the Council. These include proposals that the Commission:

revise its 1987 proposal on the control and monitoring of export refunds in the light of the recommendations in paragraph 4.56 of the Court of Auditors report, 1987;
bring forward proposals for improving the regulations governing intervention storage.

In making these and other suggestions, we shall be looking to the Commission to detail the necessary proposals and carry out the essential monitoring to ensure an effective fight against fraud. But we shall emphasise, too, that all member states must demonstrate their determination to act by supporting practical proposals of a similar kind.

### President Gorbachev

38. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he intends to discuss with President Gorbachev during his forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** During Mr. Gorbachev's visit to the United Kingdom, my right hon. and learned Friend expects to discuss a very wide range of bilateral and East-West issues, including human rights.

### Iran

40. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he is making for visa applications for Iranian nationals wishing to come to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** Visa applications may be made at any of our visa issuing posts overseas.

83. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations have taken place with the United Nations Security Council on relations with Iran.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** This issue has not been raised within the Security Council. However, we have raised it separately with individual members.

### Eastern Europe (Human Rights)

41. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the abuse of human rights in eastern Europe.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Human rights abuses regrettably occur in many parts of eastern Europe. Romania is the worst offender, but the situation in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and the GDR also gives cause for serious concern.

59. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the abuse of human rights in eastern Europe.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** We receive frequent letters from hon. Members and from members of the public about human rights abuses in eastern Europe. We regularly take up such cases with the Governments concerned, both bilaterally and together with our partners.

### Central America

45. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the San José V conference.

50. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the last european Community—central American meeting which he attended in Honduras; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what was the outcome of the last european Community-central American meeting which he attended in Honduras; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** The EC reaffirmed its support for the peace process in central America. In particular, the EC welcomed the latest proposals of President Duarte aimed at bringing peace to El Salvador. The texts of the political and economic communiqués issued by the conference will be placed in the House.

55. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he discussed during his recent visit to central America.

**Mr. Eggar:** During my visit to central America from 23 February to 5 March I discussed prospects for peace in the region following the El Tesoro summit with several central American Ministers, and other politicians, as well as with President Arias. Where appropriate in these and other meetings I also discussed bilateral political, economic and commercial relations, our human rights concerns in the region, our technical co-operation programmes and how to combat the threat posed by drugs, among other subjects.

78. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the prospect for peace in central America in the light of the San José V conference.

**Mr. Eggar:** At the San Jose V Conference the EC reaffirmed its support for the Esquipulas peace process and welcomed the 14 February agreement reached by the central American Presidents. The conference also expressed support for President Duarte's latest peace efforts for El Salvador. The prospects for peace will greatly improve if commitments to democracy are carried out in spirit as well as in letter.

### West Germany

46. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed at the Anglo-German summit of 20-21 February in Frankfurt.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Chancellor Kohl discussed East/West relations, arms control, the middle east, South Africa and the environment. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State discussed with their German opposite numbers a range of issues which fall within their departmental responsibilities.

71. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-German relations.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The Federal Republic of Germany is one of our most important allies and partners. We have the closest relations, as is demonstrated by the recent summit meeting in Frankfurt, and by the wide range and frequency of ministerial and official contacts. A further summit is planned to be held in this country in March 1990.

I shall be attending the annual Koenigswinter conference in Germany next week, to which members of the Bundestag and the Federal Government are also invited in their personal capacities.

### Conventional Forces

49. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his NATO counterparts on the commencement of conventional forces in Europe talks in Vienna.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** These talks, together with the negotiations on confidence and security-building measures, were among the subjects my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State discussed with his NATO ministerial colleagues at the North Atlantic Council in Brussels on 8 and 9 December last year. We outlined our objectives in the statement on conventional arms control, of 8 December, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

### Ethiopia

53. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Ethiopia.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Fighting continues in northern Ethiopia. We remain concerned about the human rights situation. Fortunately there has been no recurrence of serious famine. We have urged the need for negotiation, the release of political prisoners, and the adoption of sensible economic policies.

### El Salvador

56. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will be sending representatives to monitor the conditions under which the next presidential elections will be held in El Salvador.

**Mr. Eggar:** We have not been asked to do so.

74. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will be sending representatives to monitor the conditions under which the next presidential elections will be held in El Salvador.

**Mr. Eggar:** We have not been asked to do so.

### Drugs (Central America)

57. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to co-operate with central American countries in the fight against drugs.

**Mr. Eggar:** I have just returned from a visit to the area. I had discussions with the Governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras about strengthening anti-drugs co-operation, and on behalf of Her Majesty's Government handed over equipment worth a total of £30,000. We shall now explore ways to build further on these contacts.

### Turkey

62. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with Turkey.

**Mrs. Chalker:** Turkey is a close NATO ally, with whom we enjoy good relations. In 1988, the Prime Minister paid a successful visit to Turkey and President Evren an equally successful state visit to Britain. British companies are involved in Turkey's economic development and we co-operate closely with Turkey on many issues. We welcome the progress made to improve human rights since the return to civilian rule in 1983.

### Nigeria

64. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Nigeria.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We enjoy close and cordial relations with Nigeria.

### Kenya

65. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom-Kenya relations.

**Mrs. Chalker:** We enjoy excellent relations with Kenya. President Moi has just completed a successful visit to London, during which he delivered the opening address at the international conference on saving the ozone layer, and had a working lunch with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

### Vietnamese Refugees

66. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other Governments in order to resolve the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

68. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other Governments in order to resolve the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

**Mr. Eggar:** We are in regular contact with other resettlement countries, countries of first asylum, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and Vietnam on all aspects of this problem. We have recently undertaken to resettle an additional 1,000 Vietnamese refugees in Britain, and have secured increased commitments from other countries at the same time.

### Mr. Charles Bester

69. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will now make representations to the South African authorities concerning the case of Mr. Charles Bester.

**Mrs. Chalker:** No. Mr. Bester has appealed against his sentence.

### Syria

70. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government are considering restoring diplomatic relations with Syria.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** No. We could not consider restoring diplomatic relations without firm evidence that Syria had given up support for international terrorism.

### Cocaine

73. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on international co-operation in the fight against cocaine.

**Mr. Eggar:** Co-operation is close both bilaterally and in multilateral fora. The new United Nations convention,

adopted in December last year, will strengthen international efforts to combat trafficking in cocaine and other illicit drugs.

### Lebanon

75. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the Lebanon.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Our relations with Lebanon are complicated by the existence there of two rival administrations. We fully support the current efforts of the Arab League to help the Lebanese people resolve their differences.

### BBC Russian Service

76. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current weekly listening figure for the BBC's Russian service.

**Mr. Eggar:** The BBC Russian service has an estimated average weekly audience of about 18 million listeners in the Soviet Union aged 16 and over.

### Cyprus

77. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues were discussed during the recent visit of the President of Cyprus in London.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I discussed progress in the intercommunal talks with President Vassiliou during his working visit to Britain from 28 February to 5 March. All the main issues of the Cyprus problem were covered. We encouraged Mr. Vassiliou to continue to negotiate constructively towards a comprehensive settlement, building on the positive elements in the proposals tabled by Mr. Denktash and himself.

### Foreign Affairs Council

79. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 20-21 February.

**Mrs. Chalker:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 22 February.

### Nuclear Weapons

81. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next be meeting Chancellor Kohl; and if he will raise with him the issue of short-range nuclear weapons.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to meet Chancellor Kohl.

### Paraguay

82. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to encourage a return to democracy in Paraguay.

**Mr. Eggar:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 24 February.

### Chancellor Kohl

84. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet Chancellor Kohl; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to meet Chancellor Kohl.

### Zambia

85. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Zambia.

**Mrs. Chalker:** The United Kingdom enjoys friendly relations with Zambia.

### Czechoslovakia

86. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is planning to seek to improve the present state of diplomatic relations between Britain and Czechoslovakia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** We should like to work for improved relations with Czechoslovakia, but this is impossible at present because of that country's persistent disregard of its CSCE commitments in the field of human rights.

### Namibia

87. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Administrator General of Namibia; and what matters he will discuss.

**Mrs. Chalker:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

### Immigration

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how long a person applying for entry clearance on 31 March or the latest convenient date at each post in the middle-east, including Israel and Turkey, could expect to wait in each queue, for *(a)* first interview, *(b)* referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, *(c)* decision after first interview and *(d)* the explanatory statement prepared by the post in the case of appeal against refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom;

(2) what are the present waiting times to first interview for entry clearance for all categories of applicant in each country in the middle-east, including Israel and Turkey.

**Mr. Eggar:** The majority of visa applications received are straightforward and require no interview. In such cases visas are normally issued within 48 hours.

The information sought at *(b)* and *(c)* is not available. Processing times vary from case to case.

As to *(a)* and *(d)* the position for all categories of applicant as at 28 February is set out in the table. Column *(d)* represents the time lapse from the date of receiving notice of appeal from the applicant. The distinction between residents and non-residents at Dubai, Istanbul and Nicosia reflects a high volume of applications from non-resident foreign nationals.

| | *(a)* | *(d)* |
|---|---|---|
| Abu Dhabi | 7 days | 1 month |
| Aden | 2 weeks | 2 weeks |
| Amman | 3 days | within 3 months |
| Baghdad | 2 days | 1 week |
| Bahrain | 3 days | 4-6 weeks |
| Beirut | [2]same day | [1]— |
| Cairo | same day | 3 weeks |
| Damascus | [3]same day | [1]— |
| Doha | 5 days | 2 weeks |
| Dubai | | |
| Residents | 4 weeks | 1 month |
| Non-residents | 5 months | 1 month |
| Istanbul | | |
| Residents | same day | 3 months |
| Non-residents | 3½ months | 3 months |
| Jedda | 2 weeks | within 1 month |
| Jerusalem | 4 days | 2 weeks |
| Kuwait | 1 day | 1 week |
| Muscat | same day | 1 month |
| Nicosia | | |
| Residents | same day | 1 week |
| Non-residents | 1 week | 1 week |
| Riyadh | 4 weeks | 8 weeks |
| Sana'a | 1 week | 1 week |
| Tel Aviv | same day | 1 week |

[1]A limited visa service is in operation; cases involving lengthy interview and/or possible refusal are directed to nearby posts.
[2]Straightforward cases only.
[3]Urgent medical and compassionate cases only.

### Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has completed four inquiries since June 1987. Copies of the Committee's reports and our subsequent observations, made by means of Command Paper, are available in the House of Commons Library.

### Hong Kong Police (Pensioners)

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received from the Royal Hong Kong Police Association on behalf of its members now retired in the United Kingdom on the effect of the devaluation of the Hong Kong $ on the £ sterling value of their pensions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** We have received no such representations from the Royal Hong Kong Police Association. We understand that the association has, however, made representations to the Hong Kong Government about this matter.

### Peru

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Peruvian Government concerning the disappearance of Hugo Blanco and Luis Tresta de la Torre.

**Mr. Eggar:** We have on several occasions conveyed to the Peruvian authorities our concern about reported abuses of human rights. Her Majesty's embassy in Lima have informed us that Mr. Blanco awaits trial on charges under Peru's terrorism laws. We await information on Mr. Tresta de la Torre.

### Diplomatic Wing Budgets

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish what information he has regarding the total diplomatic wing budgets of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states expressed as *(a)* a percentage of gross domestic product, *(b)* a percentage of total Government expenditure and *(c)* pounds sterling.

**Mr. Eggar:** Information on the total diplomatic wing budgets of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

In the financial year 1987-88 expenditure on the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (£660 million) amounted to 0·16 per cent. of United Kingdom GDP and 0·38 per cent. of general Government expenditure.

## SCOTLAND

### Scottish Marriage Guidance Council

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding was given for the Scottish Marriage Guidance Council in each of the last five years; what funding is set for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Funding under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (for training purposes) and under section 10(1) (for headquarters expenses) was offered to the Scottish Marriage Guidance Council as follows:

| | *Section 9* | *Section 10(1)* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Current* | *Capital* | *Total* |
| 1984-85 | 10,327 | 34,360 | 2,524 | 47,211 |
| 1985-86 | 11,700 | 38,890 | 2,361 | 52,951 |
| 1986-87 | 12,200 | 44,112 | 1,986 | 58,298 |
| 1987-88 | 14,600 | 45,437 | 2,000 | 62,037 |
| 1988-89 | 13,600 | 49,408 | 2,810 | 65,818 |
| 1989-90 | 14,200 | — | — | — |

Funding for the council under section 10(1) for next year has not yet been offered but will be in the region of £75,000.

### Storm Damage

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what penalties will be imposed on each local authority for expenditure to repair recent storm damage above the set guideline expenditure level.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend has already made it clear that he would consider sympathetically the position of authorities that incur additional expenditure on repairs following recent storm damage.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what requests he has received from each local authority for special financial assistance to repair recent storm damage.

**Mr. Lang:** The Scottish Development Department is still receiving responses from housing authorities to the circular issued to them on 21 February following the recent storms. No requeste for special financial assistance have been received from other local authorities.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure levels were set for each relevant local authority in Scotland to repair recent storm damage.

**Mr. Lang:** Levels were not set by the Government for expenditure by local authorities to repair recent storm damage. The provision for such expenditure is a matter for each local authority to determine.

### Rating Reform

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of personal community charge for 1989-90, in respect of each local authority in Scotland, would have been levied by the authority had the comparable expenditure of the authority been equivalent to that assumed by the Government in determining the authority's revenue support grant.

**Mr. Lang:** Spending at client group assessment—the basis on which grant was initially apportioned—would have implied personal community charges of £154 for each regional council and £42 for each district council. However, those figures take no account of other factors such as the use of balances, which affect the actual community charges set.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of personal community charge for 1989-90, in respect of each local authority in Scotland, would have been levied by the local authority in the absence of safety netting arrangements.

**Mr. Lang:** Local authorities took their budget and community charge decisions in full knowledge of the grant allocated to them. It is not for me to speculate on what decisions they might have taken in the light of different information.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what, in respect of each local authority in Scotland, is the level of personal community charge for 1989-90.

**Mr. Lang:** The information is set out in the table.

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Borders | 174·00 |
| Central | 198·00 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 178·50 |
| Fife | 220·00 |
| Grampian | 189·00 |
| Highland | 180·00 |
| Lothian | 287·00 |
| Strathclyde | 200·00 |
| Tayside | 220·00 |
| Orkney | 122·00 |
| Shetland | 107·38 |
| Western Isles | 137·00 |
| Berwickshire | 31·00 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 42·00 |
| Roxburgh | 42·00 |
| Tweeddale | 43·00 |
| Clackmannan | 87·00 |
| Falkirk | 46·00 |
| Stirling | 97·00 |
| Annandale and Eskdale | 47·00 |
| Nithsdale | 39·00 |
| Stewartry | 37·00 |
| Wigtown | 40·00 |
| Dunfermline | 55·00 |
| Kirkcaldy | 60·00 |
| North East Fife | 82·00 |
| Aberdeen City | 85·00 |
| Banff and Buchan | 56·70 |
| Gordon | 44·00 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 32·00 |
| Moray | 42·00 |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 35·00 |
| Caithness | 25·00 |
| Inverness | 26·00 |
| Lochaber | 37·00 |
| Nairn | 28·00 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 39·00 |
| Skye and Lochalsh | 25·00 |
| Sutherland | 6·00 |
| East Lothian | 69·00 |
| Edinburgh City | 87·00 |
| Midlothian | 59·00 |
| West Lothian | 54·00 |
| Argyll and Bute | 58·00 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 79·00 |
| Clydebank | 78·00 |
| Clydesdale | 82·00 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 56·00 |
| Cumnock and Doon Valley | 57·00 |
| Cunninghame | 59·00 |
| Dumbarton | 79·00 |
| East Kilbride | 99·00 |
| Eastwood | 63·00 |
| Glasgow City | 87·00 |
| Hamilton | 72·00 |
| Inverclyde | 72·00 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 50·00 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 89·00 |
| Monklands | 74·00 |
| Motherwell | 86·00 |
| Renfrew | 76·00 |
| Strathkelvin | 80·00 |
| Angus | 52·00 |
| Dundee City | 83·00 |
| Perth and Kinross | 58·00 |

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of personal community charge for 1989-90, in respect of each local authority in Scotland, he announced, prior to the determination of the authority's budget, that it would be reasonable for them to levy.

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. and learned Friend issued figures for the combined region, district and water community charges that were attainable if local authorities did not increase their expenditure by more than the rate of inflation plus allowances for community charge and school board administration. The figures are set out in the table.

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Orkney | 84 |
| Shetland | 202 |
| Western Isles | 126 |
| Berwickshire | 177 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 180 |
| Roxburgh | 190 |
| Tweeddale | 174 |
| Clackmannan | 225 |
| Falkirk | 211 |
| Stirling | 249 |
| Annandale and Eskdale | 197 |
| Nithsdale | 192 |
| Stewartry | 196 |
| Wigtown | 178 |
| Dunfermline | 249 |
| Kirkcaldy | 256 |
| North East Fife | 251 |
| Aberdeen City | 201 |
| Banff and Buchan | 185 |
| Gordon | 183 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 168 |
| Moray | 176 |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 186 |
| Caithness | 196 |
| Inverness | 189 |
| Lochaber | 202 |
| Nairn | 181 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 190 |
| Skye and Lochalsh | 187 |
| Sutherland | 168 |
| East Lothian | 307 |
| Edinburgh City | 313 |
| Midlothian | 306 |
| West Lothian | 296 |
| Argyll and Bute | 293 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 280 |
| Clydebank | 293 |
| Clydesdale | 293 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 293 |
| Cumnock and Doon Valley | 293 |
| Cunninghame | 293 |
| Dumbarton | 293 |
| East Kilbride | 293 |
| Eastwood | 264 |
| Glasgow City | 293 |
| Hamilton | 293 |
| Inverclyde | 283 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 293 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 290 |
| Monklands | 293 |
| Motherwell | 288 |
| Renfrew | 293 |
| Strathkelvin | 293 |
| Angus | 238 |
| Dundee City | 274 |
| Perth and Kinross | 237 |

### Damage to Animals

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current regulations about compensation for damage to animals on farms in Scotland from the effects of heavy traffic and noise pollution; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Compensation may be available in some circumstances under the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973 for the effect of noise from new roads where the value of land is depreciated. There are no specific provisions for compensation for damage to animals from noise.

### Farms (Rate Rebates)

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by district the number of farms in Scotland, which border Ministry of Defence or visiting forces' airports, in receipt of rate rebates.

**Mr. Lang:** The information requested is not held centrally.

## CIVIL SERVICE

### Hon. Members (Courses)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make places available on Civil Service college courses to hon. Members.

**Mr. Luce:** Applications from hon. Members to attend college courses suitable for them will be welcome. I shall arrange for copies of the 1989-90 prospectus to be placed in the Library.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Taxes and Benefits

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proportion of total tax, direct and indirect, where figures are available *(a)* was paid in 1986-87 and *(b)* would be paid in 1989-90 assuming tax allowances are increased by (i) the increase in earnings, (ii) twice the increase needed for indexation and treating child benefit as negative income tax for the following groups (A) a single person on (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 75 per cent., (iii) 100 per cent., (iv) 200 per cent., (v) 300 per cent., (vi) 400 per cent. and (vii) 500 per cent. of average earnings, (B) a one-earner couple with no children, (C) a one-earner couple with two children and (D) a two-earner couple with two children for the same multiples of average earnings;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table along the same lines as in the answer provided to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) in the *Official Report*, 10 January, columns *633-56*, with figures for 1989-90, given the changes to national insurance contributions and benefits already announced and assuming that all the basic allowances are increased *(a)* the increase in earnings and *(b)* twice the amount needed for indexation.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* The table gives payments of income tax and national insurance contributions as a proportion of earnings for the income levels and tax allowances specified. They assume no change in tax rates in 1989-90. Payments of indirect taxation would depend on the expenditure patterns of the taxpayer and on indirect tax rates for 1989-90. As the latter have not been specified, no estimates for indirect tax payments are provided. No estimates are given for tax paid by a two-earner couple with two children as this would depend on the distribution of income between the couple.

per cent.

| Multiple of average male earnings | 50 | 75 | 100 | 200 | 300 | 400 | 500 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1986-87* | | | | | | | |
| *Single person* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | 16·8 | 20·9 | 22·9 | 27·3 | 34·0 | 39·1 | 43·3 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 6·0 | 4·0 | 3·0 | 2·4 |
| Total Tax | 25·8 | 29·9 | 31·9 | 33·3 | 38·0 | 42·1 | 45·7 |
| *One-earner couple with no children* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | 9·9 | 16·3 | 19·5 | 24·9 | 32·0 | 37·4 | 41·8 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 6·0 | 4·0 | 3·0 | 2·4 |
| Total Tax | 18·9 | 25·3 | 28·5 | 30·9 | 36·0 | 40·4 | 44·2 |
| *One-earner couple with two children* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | −3·3 | 7·5 | 12·9 | 21·6 | 29·8 | 35·7 | 40·5 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 6·0 | 4·0 | 3·0 | 2·4 |
| Total Tax | 5·7 | 16·5 | 21·9 | 27·6 | 33·8 | 38·7 | 42·9 |
| (i) 1989-90 if tax allowances increased by the rise in average earnings | | | | | | | |
| *Single person* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | 15·1 | 18·4 | 20·1 | 25·1 | 30·0 | 32·5 | 34·0 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 5·4 | 3·6 | 2·7 | 2·1 |
| Total Tax | 24·1 | 27·4 | 29·1 | 30·4 | 33·6 | 35·2 | 36·2 |
| *One-earner couple with no children* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | 9·5 | 14·7 | 17·2 | 22·8 | 28·5 | 31·4 | 33·1 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 5·4 | 3·6 | 2·7 | 2·1 |
| Total Tax | 18·5 | 23·7 | 26·2 | 28·2 | 32·1 | 34·1 | 35·3 |
| *One-earner couple with two children* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | −1·1 | 7·6 | 11·9 | 20·1 | 26·7 | 30·1 | 32·0 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 5·4 | 3·6 | 2·7 | 2·1 |
| Total Tax | 7·9 | 16·6 | 20·9 | 25·5 | 30·3 | 32·8 | 34·2 |
| (ii) 1989-90 if tax allowances increased by twice the increase required for statutory indexation | | | | | | | |
| *Single person* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | 14·6 | 18·0 | 19·8 | 24·2 | 29·5 | 32·1 | 33·7 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 5·4 | 3·6 | 2·7 | 2·1 |
| Total Tax | 23·6 | 27·0 | 28·8 | 29·6 | 33·0 | 34·8 | 35·8 |
| *One-earner couple with no children* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | 8·6 | 14·1 | 16·8 | 21·8 | 27·9 | 30·9 | 32·7 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 5·4 | 3·6 | 2·7 | 2·1 |
| Total Tax | 17·6 | 23·1 | 25·8 | 27·2 | 31·5 | 33·6 | 34·9 |
| *One-earner couple with two children* | | | | | | | |
| Income Tax | −2·0 | 7·0 | 11·5 | 19·1 | 26·1 | 29·6 | 31·6 |
| NIC | 9·0 | 9·0 | 9·0 | 5·4 | 3·6 | 2·7 | 2·1 |
| Total Tax | 7·0 | 16·0 | 20·5 | 24·5 | 29·7 | 32·3 | 33·8 |

*Notes:*

1. The figures assume average earnings in 1989-90 are 7·5 per cent. higher than in 1988-89 (in line with the GAD assumption given in the Autumn Statement).
2. Figures for a married couple with two children deduct child benefit from income tax.
3. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the tax payers have no other tax reliefs apart from the standard allowances. Earners are assumed to pay class 1 national insurance contributions at the contracted-in rate.

## British Industry (Unit Costs)

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how unit costs in British industry altered in 1988; what were the comparable changes in Japan, Canada, the United States of America and other EEC countries; and how have exchange rate movements affected the comparative unit costs of British industry relative to those countries.

**Mr. Major:** Indices calculated by the International Monetary Fund showing unit labour costs in manufacturing in 1987 and in the first three quarters of 1988 are given in the Department of Trade and Industry publication, "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", for all the countries in question except Portugal, Greece and Ireland. This publication gives unit labour cost indices in terms of country's own currencies and also in terms of common currency showing costs relative to those in other countries, allowing for the effects of exchange rate movements.

## VAT

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the last 10 years within the Doncaster district *(a)* the number of new businesses who have registered for value added tax and *(b)* the number of businesses that have ceased registering for value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lilley:** I regret that records are not maintained on a town or district basis. The local VAT office at Doncaster covers not only Doncaster but also the area which includes Selby, Barnsley, Scunthorpe and Wakefield. The numbers of VAT registrations and de-registrations processed by that office for each of the calendar years 1979-88 was:

| Year | New registrations | De-registrations |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 1,863 | 1,515 |
| 1980 | 1,576 | 1,396 |
| 1981 | 1,789 | 1,245 |
| 1982 | 1,367 | 1,162 |
| 1983 | 1,969 | 1,497 |
| 1984 | 1,955 | 1,722 |
| 1985 | 1,816 | 1,936 |
| 1986 | 2,231 | 2,308 |
| 1987 | 2,239 | 1,972 |
| 1988 | 2,819 | 2,089 |

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the past 10 years *(a)* the number of new businesses which have registered for value added tax and *(b)* the number of businesses that have ceased to register for value added tax in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 7 March 1989]:* I regret that statistics are not maintained on a town or district basis. The local VAT office at Greenock covers not only Greenock and Port Glasgow but a large geographical area including Oban, Paisley, Ayr, Kilmarnock, and Newton Stewart. The number of VAT registrations and de-registrations processed by that office for each of the calendar years 1979 to 1988 was:

| Year | New registrations | De-registrations |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 2,711 | 2,151 |
| 1980 | 2,172 | 1,857 |
| 1981 | 2,345 | 1,742 |
| 1982 | 1,803 | 1,712 |
| 1983 | 1,933 | 1,745 |
| 1984 | 1,640 | 1,472 |
| 1985 | 1,929 | 1,792 |
| 1986 | 1,913 | 1,788 |
| 1987 | 1,840 | 1,669 |
| 1988 | 2,466 | 2,059 |

## Vehicle Taxation

**Mr. Bright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received since his last Budget seeking the removal of discriminatory taxation on motor vehicles in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Lilley:** My right hon. Friend has received a number of written representations seeking the abolition of car tax.

## Coal

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated increase in cost per 50 kg. bag of domestic coal to consumers when coal delivery merchants are charged value added tax at the importer's storage depot.

**Mr. Lilley:** Under the proposals for implementing the European Court of Justice judgment on VAT zero rates which were published on 6 February, the supply of coal to domestic consumers will remain zero-rated, but supplies at earlier stages in the distribution chain will be liable to the standard rate of VAT from 1 July 1990. Coal delivery merchants who are registered for VAT will be able to deduct any VAT charged to them by their suppliers under the normal input tax credit mechanism. The effect on the price to the domestic consumer should be negligible.

## Cigarettes

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would arise in a full financial year from raising the tax on a packet of 20 cigarettes by *(a)* 5p, *(b)* 10p, *(c)* 15p, *(d)* 20p and *(e)* 30p; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lilley:** Estimates are as follows:

| Additional Tax | Additional Revenue £ million |
|---|---|
| 5p | 170 |
| 10p | 330 |
| 15p | 495 |
| 20p | 655 |
| 30p | 965 |

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would have arisen in the period 1988-89 from a tax on cigarettes 10p higher than was necessary to adjust for the effects of inflation over the preceding year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lilley:** It is estimated that the additional revenue would have been £310 million.

## Consumers (Consultation)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Brooke:** The public is kept in touch with policy developments in the Chancellor's departments in the usual way through command papers, consultative documents, parliamentary announcements, press notices and informal discussion with representative bodies.

## Newspaper Advertising

**Mr. Gale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the change in the ratio of Government expenditure between local and national newspaper advertising during the last 12 months for which figures are available.

**Mr. Lilley:** The ratio of expenditure between local and national newspaper advertising placed through the COI on behalf of other Government Departments is as follows:

| | National expenditure | | Local expenditure | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | Per cent. | £ | Per cent. |
| 1986-87 | 25,633,000 | 80 | 6,236,000 | 20 |
| 1987-88 | 25,483,000 | 83 | 5,346,000 | 17 |

## Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbon from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Brooke** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend

the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), on Monday 6 March at column *387*.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Wages Inspectorate

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The information is not available in the precise form requested because wages inspectorate statistics about compliance with wages orders are compiled on the basis of establishments rather than employers. With that proviso, the figures in respect of the wages inspectorate divisions covering Great Britain are given in the following table.

Northern Ireland has a separate wages council system which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but I understand that in 1988 112 establishments were found to be underpaying. There were no prosecutions.

| *Division* | *Establishments found to be underpaying in 1988* | *Prosecutions for underpayment in 1988* |
|---|---|---|
| London | 317 | — |
| South East | 537 | 1 |
| Eastern | 462 | 2 |
| South West | 1,156 | 2 |
| Midlands | 747 | 1 |
| North West | 869 | 2 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 631 | 2 |
| Northern | 369 | — |
| Scotland | 509 | — |
| Totals | 5,597 | 10 |

### Decency Threshold

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of the full-time workforce earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Nicholls:** There is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings.

### Women Workers (Earnings)

**Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Nicholls:** There is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings.

### Earnings (East Midlands)

**Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the east midlands.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Wages inspectorate statistics are not compiled for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions. In the midlands division in 1988, 103 workplaces were visited for advisory purposes and 2,609 were visited for the purpose of checking pay. A total of 747 were found to have underpaid one or more worker. However, this cannot be taken as representing the general level of non-compliance with wages council orders because the wages inspectorate target checks by visit on those workplaces thought more likely to underpay workers.

### Earnings (North-West)

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying, and how many of them were prosecuted, in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The information is not available in the precise form requested because wages inspectorate statistics about compliance with wages orders are compiled on the basis of establishments rather than employers. In 1988, 869 establishments in the north-west were found to be underpaying. There were two prosecutions for underpaying.

### Earnings (Scotland)

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying, and how many of them were prosecuted, in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Scotland.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The information is not available in the precise form requested because wages inspectorate statistics about compliance with wages orders are compiled on the basis of establishments rather than employers. In 1988, 509 establishments in Scotland were found to be underpaying. There were no prosecutions.

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. John L. Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lee:** In January 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,988,100 compared with 3,051,300 in January 1987, a fall of 1,063,200 on a consistent basis. Unemployment is now at its lowest level for eight years.

### Earnings (Wales)

**Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited, and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying, for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Wales.

**Mr. Nicholls:** In 1988, 15 workplaces were visited for advisory purposes and 1,014 were visited for the purposes of checking pay. A total of 446 were found to have underpaid one or more workers. However, this cannot be taken as representing the general level of non-compliance with wages council orders because the wages inspectorate target checks by visit on those workplaces thought more likely to underpay workers.

### Training Places (Cost)

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost to the Exchequer of an employment training place.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The average cost to the Exchequer per trainee on employment training is expected to be approximately £2,300.

### Mr. Derek Cain

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has now received the written judgment of the High Court concerning the death of Derek Cain in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Cope:** Yes. The judgment related specifically to that case and no wide-ranging legal principles can be drawn from it. We are nevertheless studying the case closely to see what further practical improvements might be made in YTS health and safety arrangements.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Cope** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Meriomnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on Monday 6 March at column *387*.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Community Care Grants

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what has been the take-up of community care grants since their inception;

(2) what has been the cost to public funds of community care grants over the period for which figures are available.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to the national summary information placed monthly in the Library.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the annual allocation by his Department for community care grants since their inception.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The annual allocation in respect of community care grants for both 1988-89 and 1989-90 is £60 million.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further steps he has taken to publicise the existence and availability of community care grants; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 January at columns *118-19*.

### Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

**Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families in Lambeth are receiving payments from his Department to meet the cost of living in bed-and-breakfast type accommodation.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Transitional Protection

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the Northern region, by area, are in receipt of transitional protection as a result of the April 1988 changes in housing benefit regulations.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret that the information requested is not available.

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the effect of transitional payments on the living standards of people who were in receipt of housing benefit prior to changes in the regulations in April 1988.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The transitional payments scheme represents a fast and effective response to the problems caused for those in vulnerable groups who would otherwise have suffered too sharp a drop in their housing benefit following the changes last April.

**Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate *(a)* the total number of people and *(b)* the number of people in each local authority area who are entitled to claim for housing benefit transitional protection;

(2) how many claims for housing benefit transitional protection had been made by 28 February *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each local authority area; and in each case how many were (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful;

(3) how many claims for housing benefit transitional protection are currently being considered *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each local authority area.

**Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have claimed transitional protection payments; what proportion of those have had their applications approved; and by how much the number receiving these allowances differs from the estimated take-up.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* Up to 300,000 people were originally estimated to be eligible for housing benefit transitional payments. Of the 439,129 applications for Housing Benefit transitional payments received at 3 March, a total of 183,783 have been successful. Of the 39,418 applications outstanding 30,487 are awaiting return of inquiry forms from local authorities.

Applications will continue to be accepted until 30 June 1989. Information requested is currently available only on a national basis.

### Social Security Spending

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the figures in table 15.8 of Cm. 615 in constant 1988-89 prices, *(b)* the numbers receiving the benefits in each category and *(c)* an index showing the level of real expenditure per recipient in each category.

**Mr. Moore:** The figures in table 15.8 of Cm. 615 in constant 1988-89 prices are shown in the table. Many people receive more than one benefit at the same time and detailed records of the numbers of all multiple beneficiaries and the combinations of benefits held within each client group are not kept. Therefore information on the numbers receiving benefits in each category and on the level of real expenditure per recipient in each category is not available. However table 15.6 of Cm. 615 provides details of the estimated numbers receiving each benefit at any one time.

*Total benefit expenditure by broad groups of beneficiaries in real terms (1988-89 prices)*

| | *1983-84 outturn* | *1984-85 outturn* | *1985-86 outturn* | *1986-87 outturn* | *1987-88 outturn* | *1988-89*[2] *outturn* | *1989-90 plans* | *1990-91 plans* | *1991-92 plans* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elderly people | 21,760 | 22,000 | 22,710 | 23,530 | 23,580 | 22,960 | [1]23,580 | [1]24,600 | [1]25,100 |
| Sick and disabled people | 5,530 | 5,990 | 6,350 | 6,960 | 7,250 | 7,600 | 8,260 | 9,000 | 9,600 |
| Family | 7,440 | 7,710 | 7,910 | 8,040 | 8,110 | 7,990 | 8,130 | 8,600 | 9,000 |
| Unemployed people | 6,960 | 7,320 | 7,640 | 7,730 | 6,640 | 5,430 | 4,990 | 5,100 | 5,300 |
| Widows and orphans | 1,340 | 1,320 | 1,280 | 1,250 | 1,200 | 1,190 | 1,160 | 1,200 | 1,100 |
| Total benefit expenditure | 43,020 | 44,340 | 45,890 | 47,520 | 46,770 | 45,170 | [1]46,120 | [1]48,400 | [1]50,100 |

[1] Includes extra help for poorer pensioners on income support from October 1989, announced on 24 November 1988 at column 249, of about £100 million in 1989-90 and £200 million in both 1990-91 and 1991-92.
[2] Estimated.

### Disabled People (Helios Programme)

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is able to announce the names of the local projects in the United Kingdom assisting disabled people which have been selected to participate in the European Community Helios programme.

**Mr. Scott:** I am pleased to announce that 15 United Kingdom projects have been selected, covering a wide range of types of disability and geographical location. Both the statutory and voluntary sectors are represented, and I am confident that all the projects will make an excellent contribution to the exchanges of experience and learning across Europe made possible by the EC Helios programme. The projects selected for each of the Commissions four networks are as follows:

*Social Integration and Independent Living*
- East Sussex Pilot Project, Brighton.
- Coleshill Social Centre, Llanelli, Dyfed.
- Waltham Forest Disability Resource Centre, Walthamstow, London.
- Grampian Health Board independent living project for mentally handicapped clients.

*Vocational Rehabilitation Centres*
- Billingham Employment Rehabilitation Centre, Cleveland.
- Enham Industries, Andover, Hampshire.
- Pengwern Hall (MENCAP), Rhuddlan, Clwyd.
- Queen Alexandra College, Birmingham Royal Institute for the Blind.
- Court Grange, Royal National Institute for the Deaf, Abbotskerswell, near Newton Abbot, Devon.
- Atlantic House, Scottish Association for Mental Health (day services), Edinburgh.

*Vocational Rehabilitation and Economic Integration*
- Mobile Assessment Project, Department of Economic Development, Employment Rehabilitation Unit, Newtown Abbey, County Antrim.
- Disabled Access to Technology Association (DATA), Bradford.
- Outset, Wandsworth, London.

*School Integration*
- River Bank School Project, Ashington, Morpeth, Northumberland.
- Swansea College Project, Swansea, West Glamorgan.

### Rating Reform

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to make financial provision for people under 25 years receiving income support for payment of the community charge.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** People receiving income support will be entitled to a rebate of 80 per cent. of their community charge liability. And, as my right hon. Friend announced in his statement to the House on 27 October 1988 at column 455, there will be a once-and-for-all adjustment to income support levels from this April to help meet the minimum 20 per cent. contribution to the community charge which recipients will have to make. The amounts to be included in income support levels are £1·15 a week for single people aged 18 to 24 and £2·30 a week for couples.

### Leaflets

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for the delays in processing applications for leaflets from the leaflets unit at Stanmore; and if any measures are being taken to improve the service.

**Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he intends to take to reduce the six months' waiting time for his Department to supply information leaflets which have been requested by voluntary organisations in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answers 22 and 23 February 1989]:* The principal factors causing delay in the distribution of some orders from Canons Park leaflet unit are the considerably increased demand for bulk orders, and the physical constraints of the unit which preclude an immediate expansion of capacity or the recruitment of any more staff to cope with this demand. Nevertheless a special

priority 24-hour turn round dispatch has been agreed for all requests from citizens advice bureaux which are the major distributors of bulk quantities of leaflets outside the Department itself.

Individual copies of leaflets can be obtained from local offices of the Department or by ordering from the free telephone inquiry service, 0800 666 555.

The Department is urgently considering how best to restore the supply of leaflets to an acceptable level.

## "Reform of Social Security"

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a revised version of tables P1 to P6 of the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" taking into account changes in prices, earnings and other relevant factors since 1985.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The information requested is in the tables.

It should be noted that the contracted-out rebate assumed is 5·8 per cent. of earnings between the lower and upper limits for national insurance contributions, declining to 3·75 per cent. by 2018. The future figures are purely illustrative and should not be taken as precise predictions of what the contracted-out rebate will be. The lower and upper earnings limits are assumed to increase in future in line with prices. In all cases the contracted-out rebate is boosted by the 2 per cent. incentive addition which is to be given to personal pensions and newly contracted-out occupational schemes up to 1992-93.

Men are assumed to take their pension at 65, women at 60. The projections for widows assume that their husband dies after reaching 65.

*P1 Pension projections for men retiring in 2013 onwards*
*Examples with more years of earnings*
*Weekly pension basic pension plus additional pension plus personal pension or COMP pension*

| *Age in 1988 and earnings level* | | *Personal pensions Amount invested* | | | | | | *Money purchase schemes Amount invested* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *SERPS—people without a contracted-out pension* | *Rebate only Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate+2 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | *Rebate+2 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate+4 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | |
| | | | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* |
| 16 | Low earner | 81 | 87 | 93 | 101 | 112 | 122 | 133 | 118 | 129 | 141 | 144 | 159 | 175 |
| | Middle earner | 105 | 114 | 123 | 135 | 155 | 171 | 188 | 165 | 182 | 202 | 208 | 231 | 257 |
| | High earner | 113 | 127 | 139 | 154 | 175 | 194 | 217 | 186 | 208 | 233 | 236 | 265 | 299 |
| 20 | Low earner | 79 | 84 | 89 | 94 | 105 | 113 | 122 | 110 | 119 | 129 | 133 | 144 | 157 |
| | Middle earner | 104 | 116 | 125 | 137 | 155 | 170 | 187 | 165 | 181 | 200 | 205 | 227 | 252 |
| | High earner | 112 | 130 | 142 | 157 | 175 | 194 | 216 | 187 | 208 | 232 | 234 | 261 | 293 |
| 30 | Low earner | 74 | 77 | 80 | 84 | 91 | 96 | 101 | 95 | 100 | 106 | 110 | 116 | 124 |
| | Middle earner | 106 | 109 | 114 | 120 | 136 | 144 | 153 | 143 | 152 | 162 | 171 | 183 | 196 |
| | High earner | 115 | 120 | 126 | 132 | 149 | 158 | 168 | 157 | 167 | 178 | 187 | 200 | 215 |
| 40 | Low earner | 71 | 69 | 70 | 72 | 77 | 78 | 80 | 79 | 81 | 83 | 87 | 88 | 92 |
| | Middle earner | 101 | 95 | 97 | 100 | 111 | 115 | 119 | 116 | 120 | 124 | 132 | 138 | 143 |
| | High earner | 108 | 101 | 104 | 106 | 119 | 123 | 127 | 124 | 128 | 133 | 143 | 148 | 154 |

*P2 Pension projections for men retiring in 2013 onwards*
*Examples with fewer years of earnings*
*Weekly pension basic pension plus additional pension plus personal pension or COMP pension*

| *Age in 1988 and earnings level* | | *Personal pensions Amount invested* | | | | | | *Money purchase schemes Amount invested* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *SERPS—people without a contracted-out pension* | *Rebate only Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate+2 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | *Rebate+2 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate+4 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | |
| | | | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* |
| 16 | Low earner | 76 | 81 | 86 | 92 | 103 | 111 | 120 | 108 | 117 | 127 | 130 | 142 | 157 |
| | Middle earner | 104 | 112 | 121 | 132 | 152 | 167 | 184 | 161 | 178 | 197 | 203 | 226 | 251 |
| | High earner | 111 | 122 | 133 | 146 | 168 | 186 | 207 | 179 | 199 | 222 | 227 | 254 | 285 |
| 20 | Low earner | 74 | 79 | 84 | 89 | 98 | 106 | 114 | 103 | 111 | 120 | 123 | 134 | 146 |
| | Middle earner | 103 | 114 | 123 | 134 | 152 | 166 | 183 | 161 | 177 | 196 | 201 | 222 | 247 |
| | High earner | 110 | 128 | 140 | 155 | 173 | 192 | 214 | 184 | 205 | 230 | 231 | 259 | 291 |
| 30 | Low earner | 71 | 74 | 77 | 80 | 87 | 91 | 95 | 90 | 95 | 100 | 103 | 109 | 116 |
| | Middle earner | 104 | 107 | 112 | 118 | 134 | 142 | 151 | 141 | 150 | 160 | 170 | 181 | 195 |
| | High earner | 115 | 120 | 127 | 132 | 140 | 158 | 168 | 157 | 167 | 178 | 187 | 200 | 215 |
| 40 | Low earner | 68 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 72 | 73 | 75 | 74 | 75 | 77 | 80 | 82 | 84 |
| | Middle earner | 101 | 95 | 97 | 100 | 111 | 115 | 119 | 116 | 120 | 124 | 132 | 138 | 143 |
| | High earner | 108 | 101 | 104 | 100 | 119 | 123 | 127 | 124 | 128 | 133 | 143 | 148 | 154 |

*P3 Pension projections for women retiring in 2013 onwards*
*Examples with more years of earnings*
*Weekly pension basic pension plus additional pension plus personal pension or COMP pension*

| Age in 1988 and earnings level | | SERPS—people without a contracted-out pension | Personal pensions Amount invested: Rebate only, Rate of return over prices | | | Personal pensions Amount invested: Rebate+2 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | | Money purchase schemes Amount invested: Rebate+2 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | | Money purchase schemes Amount invested: Rebate+4 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. |
| 16 | Low earner | 62 | 60 | 62 | 64 | 69 | 71 | 74 | 71 | 74 | 77 | 79 | 83 | 88 |
| | Middle earner | 77 | 74 | 78 | 82 | 91 | 96 | 103 | 95 | 101 | 108 | 112 | 120 | 129 |
| | High earner | 93 | 91 | 97 | 104 | 116 | 125 | 135 | 122 | 132 | 144 | 148 | 161 | 177 |
| 20 | Low earner | 60 | 58 | 60 | 61 | 65 | 67 | 69 | 67 | 69 | 71 | 74 | 76 | 79 |
| | Middle earner | 75 | 72 | 74 | 77 | 85 | 89 | 93 | 89 | 93 | 98 | 103 | 108 | 115 |
| | High earner | 92 | 89 | 93 | 98 | 110 | 116 | 124 | 115 | 122 | 131 | 137 | 146 | 157 |
| 30 | Low earner | 64 | 57 | 57 | 58 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 74 | 76 | 77 |
| | Middle earner | 73 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 75 | 77 | 79 | 78 | 80 | 82 | 89 | 92 | 94 |
| | High earner | 84 | 76 | 78 | 80 | 90 | 93 | 96 | 94 | 97 | 100 | 109 | 113 | 117 |
| 40 | Low earner | 52 | 47 | 48 | 48 | 50 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 52 | 52 | 54 | 55 | 56 |
| | Middle earner | 59 | 54 | 55 | 55 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 65 | 66 | 67 |
| | High earner | 69 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 69 | 71 | 72 | 71 | 73 | 75 | 78 | 80 | 82 |

*P4 Pension projections for men retiring in 2013 onwards*
*Examples with fewer years of earnings*
*Weekly pension basic pension plus additional pension plus personal pension or COMP pension*

| Age in 1988 and earnings level | | SERPS—people without a contracted-out pension | Personal pensions Amount invested: Rebate only, Rate of return over prices | | | Personal pensions Amount invested: Rebate+2 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | | Money purchase schemes Amount invested: Rebate+2 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | | Money purchase schemes Amount invested: Rebate+4 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. |
| 16 | Low earner | 61 | 60 | 62 | 63 | 67 | 69 | 72 | 69 | 71 | 75 | 76 | 80 | 84 |
| | Middle earner | 76 | 74 | 77 | 81 | 87 | 91 | 96 | 90 | 95 | 101 | 103 | 110 | 117 |
| | High earner | 90 | 90 | 95 | 101 | 109 | 116 | 125 | 114 | 122 | 131 | 133 | 144 | 156 |
| 20 | Low earner | 60 | 58 | 59 | 61 | 64 | 65 | 67 | 65 | 67 | 69 | 71 | 73 | 75 |
| | Middle earner | 74 | 72 | 74 | 76 | 82 | 85 | 88 | 84 | 87 | 91 | 94 | 98 | 103 |
| | High earner | 90 | 88 | 91 | 95 | 103 | 108 | 113 | 107 | 112 | 118 | 122 | 129 | 136 |
| 30 | Low earner | 53 | 50 | 50 | 51 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 55 | 55 | 58 | 58 | 59 |
| | Middle earner | 64 | 58 | 59 | 59 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 72 | 73 | 75 |
| | High earner | 78 | 70 | 71 | 71 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 82 | 83 | 85 | 92 | 94 | 96 |
| 40 | Low earner | 49 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 47 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 49 | 51 | 51 | 51 |
| | Middle earner | 57 | 50 | 51 | 51 | 55 | 55 | 56 | 56 | 57 | 57 | 61 | 61 | 62 |
| | High earner | 69 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 76 | 77 | 79 |

*P5 Pension projections for men retiring in 2008 onwards*
*Examples with more years of earnings*
*Weekly pension basic pension plus additional pension plus personal pension or COMP pension*

| Age in 1988 and earnings level | | SERPS—people without a contracted-out pension | Personal pensions Amount invested: Rebate only, Rate of return over prices | | | Personal pensions Amount invested: Rebate+2 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | | Money purchase schemes Amount invested: Rebate+2 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | | Money purchase schemes Amount invested: Rebate+4 per cent., Rate of return over prices | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. | 3 per cent. | 3½ per cent. | 4 per cent. |
| 16 | Low earner | 81 | 81 | 85 | 90 | 100 | 106 | 113 | 104 | 111 | 119 | 124 | 133 | 144 |
| | Middle earner | 108 | 111 | 119 | 129 | 147 | 159 | 173 | 155 | 169 | 185 | 194 | 211 | 232 |
| | High earner | 124 | 131 | 143 | 157 | 178 | 196 | 216 | 190 | 209 | 233 | 238 | 264 | 294 |
| 20 | Low earner | 78 | 79 | 82 | 86 | 94 | 99 | 105 | 98 | 104 | 110 | 115 | 122 | 130 |
| | Middle earner | 106 | 107 | 113 | 120 | 137 | 147 | 157 | 145 | 155 | 167 | 176 | 189 | 205 |
| | High earner | 125 | 128 | 137 | 147 | 168 | 181 | 196 | 178 | 192 | 209 | 218 | 237 | 259 |
| 30 | Low earner | 80 | 72 | 74 | 75 | 85 | 88 | 90 | 89 | 91 | 94 | 102 | 105 | 109 |
| | Middle earner | 103 | 95 | 98 | 101 | 117 | 121 | 126 | 122 | 127 | 133 | 145 | 152 | 159 |
| | High earner | 119 | 110 | 114 | 118 | 136 | 141 | 148 | 142 | 149 | 156 | 169 | 177 | 187 |
| 40 | Low earner | 65 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 65 | 66 | 66 | 67 | 67 | 68 | 72 | 73 | 75 |
| | Middle earner | 88 | 79 | 81 | 82 | 89 | 91 | 93 | 92 | 94 | 97 | 103 | 105 | 108 |
| | High earner | 102 | 91 | 93 | 95 | 104 | 107 | 110 | 108 | 111 | 114 | 122 | 126 | 130 |

*P6 Pension projections for widows retiring in 2008 onwards*
*Examples with less years of earnings*
*Weekly pension basic pension plus additional pension plus personal pension or COMP pension*

| *Age in 1988 and earnings level* | | *Personal pensions Amount invested* | | | | | | | *Money purchase schemes Amount invested* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *SERPS—people without a contracted-out pension* | *Rebate only Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate + 2 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate + 2 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | | *Rebate + 4 per cent. Rate of return over prices* | | |
| | | | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* | *3 per cent.* | *3½ per cent.* | *4 per cent.* |
| 16 | Low earner | 72 | 78 | 82 | 87 | 95 | 101 | 107 | 99 | 105 | 113 | 116 | 124 | 134 |
| | Middle earner | 107 | 110 | 118 | 126 | 141 | 153 | 165 | 149 | 161 | 176 | 181 | 198 | 216 |
| | High earner | 124 | 133 | 143 | 156 | 173 | 189 | 208 | 183 | 201 | 222 | 225 | 249 | 276 |
| 20 | Low earner | 75 | 76 | 79 | 83 | 90 | 94 | 99 | 93 | 98 | 104 | 107 | 114 | 121 |
| | Middle earner | 105 | 106 | 111 | 117 | 132 | 140 | 149 | 138 | 147 | 157 | 165 | 177 | 190 |
| | High earner | 124 | 129 | 136 | 145 | 162 | 173 | 186 | 171 | 183 | 197 | 205 | 221 | 240 |
| 30 | Low earner | 68 | 65 | 66 | 68 | 72 | 74 | 75 | 74 | 76 | 78 | 82 | 84 | 87 |
| | Middle earner | 94 | 88 | 90 | 93 | 105 | 109 | 113 | 109 | 114 | 118 | 127 | 133 | 139 |
| | High earner | 113 | 104 | 107 | 110 | 125 | 130 | 134 | 131 | 135 | 141 | 153 | 159 | 166 |
| 40 | Low earner | 60 | 55 | 56 | 56 | 60 | 60 | 61 | 61 | 61 | 62 | 65 | 66 | 67 |
| | Middle earner | 86 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 85 | 87 | 89 | 88 | 90 | 92 | 99 | 101 | 103 |
| | High earner | 103 | 86 | 88 | 89 | 101 | 103 | 105 | 105 | 107 | 110 | 120 | 123 | 127 |

## DEFENCE

### Relocation

**Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will meet executives of Nottingham development enterprise to discuss the relocation of parts of his Department to Nottingham as part of the policy on the relocation of such posts away from the south-east.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Under the policy that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, announced on 31 March 1988, my Department is now reviewing the location of its work with a view to finding sites offering easier labour markets, value for money and increased operational efficiency. Where appropriate, areas that are the focus of the Government's regional and urban policies, such as Nottingham, will be considered. My officials will be consulting local representatives in relevant sites as appropriate.

### Information Technology

**Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Within the departmental planning processes we are continually reviewing how information technology can assist in improving efficiency and effectiveness, including in the field of communications. We have an extensive modernisation programme for voice and data communications. Videotext, CCTV, facsimile transmission and electronic mail are all being exploited, with a substantial increase foreseen for the latter if trials presently under way prove successful. Growing use is being made of technology-based training; and computer-based publishing systems play a significant part in text production of all kinds. For the future we will continue to take up relevant available technology as it matures and offers economical and effective ways of meeting our needs.

### YTS (Germany)

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors he took into account in deciding not to establish a YTS centre in Germany; if he is intending to open YTS centres in any other country where British forces and their families are stationed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The wide geographical spread of British forces and their dependants in Germany meant that it was inappropriate to establish one YTS training centre. Eleven YTS areas have been established to coincide with major garrison areas and "on" and "off" job YTS training is carried out within existing service establishments, service education centres and in one Service Children's Education Authority school. It is not intended to establish dedicated YTS centres in any other country.

### Defence Budgets

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish what information he has regarding the defence budgets of all Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development member states; and if he will show for each their defence budgets *(a)* as a percentage of gross domestic product, *(b)* as a percentage of total Government expenditure and *(c)* in pound sterling.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Department does not hold information on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states which are not members of NATO. For NATO nations, the information requested at *(a)* and *(c)* is given in the following table. The information requested at *(b)* is not reported by member nations to NATO and is therefore not readily available.

| *Country* | *Defence expenditure as percentage of gross domestic product* | *Defence expenditure in £ million sterling* |
|---|---|---|
| United States of America | 6·1 | 162,381 |
| France | 3·8 | 20,181 |
| Federal Republic of Germany | 3·0 | 19,877 |
| United Kingdom | 4·3 | 19,621 |
| Italy | 2·4 | 10,761 |
| Canada | 2·1 | 5,567 |
| Netherlands | 3·0 | 3,790 |
| Spain | 2·2 | 4,113 |
| Belgium | 2·9 | 2,369 |
| Greece | 6·6 | 1,947 |
| Turkey | 4·2 | 1,426 |
| Norway | 3·3 | 1,640 |
| Denmark | 2·2 | 1,313 |
| Portugal | 3·1 | 709 |
| Luxembourg | 1·3 | 46 |

*Note:* These figures, which are provisional, have been compiled for the calendar year 1988 from NATO sources except those for the United Kingdom, which have been compiled from national sources. Defence expenditure is given in £ million sterling at 1988 average market exchange rates, which do not necessarily reflect the relative purchasing power of individual currencies and so are not a complete guide to comparative resource allocation.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### IRA (Funding)

88. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on international co-operation on reducing overseas funding of the IRA.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** The Government are well aware of the need for close international co-operation against all forms of terrorism and are consistently active in promoting such co-operation. In particular, there are provisions in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill currently before Parliament for bilateral agreements with other countries to make reciprocal arrangements which would allow for the enforcement of orders made abroad to restrain or forfeit terrorist funds. We will be encouraging countries with similar legislation to enter into such agreements.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already outlined the Government's proposals to EC colleagues in the Trevi forum and has agreed that these should form the basis of a study into ways of dealing with terrorist finances. The possibility of having reciprocal enforcement arrangements will be pursued actively once Parliament has agreed to the new provisions.

### Lead-free Petrol

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many outlets for the sale of lead-free petrol there are in Northern Ireland at present; and what steps he is taking to increase the rates at which petrol retail outlets are providing motorists with the opportunity to purchase lead-free petrol in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Needham:** At present there are 91 filling stations throughout Northern Ireland selling lead-free petrol. As part of the Government's initiative to encourage the use of unleaded fuel, I shall be sponsoring a Northern Ireland lead-free petrol week during 20 to 25 March. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will be promoting a range of events during the week involving the oil companies, car manufacturers, the motoring public and the media. Information packs including maps showing the location of lead-free petrol outlets will be distributed free to motorists.

### Compensation

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish by district council or housing area in Northern Ireland information on *(a)* the number of claims made for compensation for alleged personal injury in each of the last five years against the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Department of Environment (Northern Ireland) Roads Service, *(b)* the amount of compensation paid by the Housing Executive and Roads Service Northern Ireland in each of the last five years and *(c)* the number of claims lodged for compensation against the Housing Executive and Road Service which have still to be settled.

**Mr. Needham:** The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that the information sought about the number of claims made against the Housing Executive for compensation for alleged personal injury and the number outstanding, is not available in the form requested for the last five years. For 1983-84 and 1984-85 the information available is:

| | *Claims made* | | | *Claims outstanding* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Total* | *Personal injury* | *Total compensation paid in each year £000's* | *Total* | *Personal injury* |
| 1983-84 | 2,674 | 1,399 | 704 | 260 | 147 |
| 1984-85 | 3,052 | 1,806 | 961 | 382 | 252 |

For 1985-86 to 1987-88 the information available in respect of the total numbers of claims and compensation is:

| Region/district | 1985-86 Claims made Total | 1985-86 Claims made Personal injury | 1986-87 Claims made Total | 1986-87 Claims made Personal injury | 1987-88 Claims made Total | 1987-88 Claims made Personal injury | Claims outstanding at 31 December 1988 Total | Claims outstanding at 31 December 1988 Personal injury |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Headquarters | — | — | 1 | — | 3 | — | — | — |
| Belfast 1 | 176 | 127 | 165 | 148 | 141 | 114 | 250 | 207 |
| 2 | 81 | 49 | 121 | 82 | 102 | 66 | 178 | 126 |
| 3 | 397 | 308 | 436 | 363 | 383 | 267 | 734 | 560 |
| 4 | 212 | 170 | 233 | 191 | 232 | 165 | 456 | 351 |
| 5 | 175 | 109 | 197 | 152 | 195 | 143 | 346 | 270 |
| 6 | 172 | 114 | 180 | 133 | 185 | 139 | 341 | 260 |
| 7 | 139 | 87 | 120 | 85 | 113 | 71 | 225 | 163 |
| *South East* | | | | | | | | |
| Bangor | 23 | 15 | 22 | 15 | 26 | 18 | 37 | 29 |
| Newtownards I | 23 | 15 | 27 | 14 | 26 | 18 | 45 | 27 |
| Newtownards II | 10 | 9 | 15 | 6 | 21 | 10 | 28 | 14 |
| Castlereagh I | 47 | 23 | 51 | 27 | 97 | 31 | 126 | 52 |
| Castlereagh II | 14 | 10 | 17 | 9 | 20 | 13 | 31 | 21 |
| Lisburn I | 59 | 29 | 83 | 47 | 73 | 37 | 89 | 44 |
| Lisburn II | 19 | 16 | 25 | 12 | 31 | 16 | 43 | 25 |
| Lisburn III | 144 | 111 | 128 | 110 | 125 | 93 | 219 | 174 |
| Downpatrick | 80 | 27 | 90 | 30 | 68 | 34 | 130 | 59 |
| *South* | | | | | | | | |
| Banbridge | 33 | 23 | 34 | 21 | 35 | 15 | 53 | 29 |
| Newry I | 90 | 36 | 109 | 52 | 104 | 60 | 150 | 64 |
| Newry II | 26 | 12 | 34 | 23 | 22 | 8 | 44 | 26 |
| Kilkeel | 7 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 9 | 2 |
| Armagh | 26 | 16 | 34 | 15 | 41 | 23 | 63 | 40 |
| Craigavon | 89 | 65 | 128 | 89 | 72 | 53 | 132 | 85 |
| Lurgan | 66 | 46 | 65 | 41 | 57 | 38 | 90 | 59 |
| Portadown | 35 | 13 | 36 | 18 | 34 | 19 | 63 | 34 |
| *North East* | | | | | | | | |
| Ballymena | 56 | 12 | 51 | 19 | 54 | 20 | 90 | 38 |
| Antrim | 52 | 24 | 44 | 24 | 66 | 31 | 84 | 39 |
| Newtownabbey I | 79 | 57 | 153 | 115 | 127 | 111 | 213 | 166 |
| Newtownabbey II | 59 | 19 | 70 | 34 | 55 | 24 | 99 | 52 |
| Carrickfergus | 22 | 10 | 24 | 12 | 27 | 13 | 40 | 21 |
| Larne | 24 | 6 | 30 | 18 | 20 | 6 | 38 | 18 |
| Ballycastle | 8 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 5 |
| Ballymoney | 19 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 7 | — | 13 | 4 |
| *North West* | | | | | | | | |
| Londonderry I | 340 | 267 | 344 | 275 | 242 | 187 | 533 | 424 |
| Londonderry II | 123 | 71 | 119 | 68 | 81 | 39 | 220 | 119 |
| Londonderry III | 122 | 101 | 174 | 132 | 163 | 131 | 315 | 238 |
| Limavady | 23 | 9 | 24 | 14 | 28 | 8 | 53 | 19 |
| Coleraine | 51 | 14 | 43 | 20 | 69 | 22 | 111 | 41 |
| Magherafelt | 22 | 11 | 19 | 8 | 34 | 8 | 55 | 17 |
| Strabane | 36 | 23 | 23 | 15 | 33 | 18 | 62 | 39 |
| *West* | | | | | | | | |
| Omagh | 47 | 18 | 39 | 17 | 47 | 19 | 90 | 32 |
| Cookstown | 48 | 12 | 32 | 19 | 45 | 16 | 75 | 31 |
| Dungannon | 65 | 41 | 82 | 50 | 70 | 37 | 137 | 72 |
| Enniskillen | 26 | 11 | 29 | 9 | 29 | 9 | 54 | 16 |
| TOTALS | 3,365 | 2,142 | 3,675 | 2,537 | 3,420 | 2,156 | 6,186 | 4,136 |
| Total compensation paid in each year | £1,335,822 | | £1,485,496 | | £1,403,904 | | | |

*Note:* The claims figures relate to the year in which the incident took place and are the numbers received by 31 December 1988.

*Compensation claims made against the roads service of the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland are handled on a roads division basis. The information in respect of the total number of claims and compensation is:*

| | 1983-84 | | 1984-85 | | 1985-86 | | 1986-87 | | 1987-88 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Claims | Compensation paid | Claims | Compensation paid | Claims | Compensation paid | Claims | Compensation paid | Claims | Compensation paid | Claims still to be settled at 31 March 1989 |
| | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | £'000s | |
| Ballymena | 240 | 71 | 266 | 135 | 316 | 127 | 339 | 180 | 348 | 155 | 235 |
| Belfast | 1,890 | 1,199 | 1979 | 2,004 | 2,594 | 2,231 | 2,920 | 2,847 | 2,855 | 2,806 | 4,616 |
| Coleraine | 458 | 198 | 509 | 245 | 780 | 397 | 969 | 534 | 824 | 734 | 450 |
| Craigavon | 418 | 397 | 492 | 387 | 599 | 657 | 651 | 506 | 695 | 694 | 523 |
| Downpatrick | 518 | 324 | 570 | 465 | 667 | 440 | 726 | 533 | 831 | 655 | 547 |
| Omagh | 327 | 123 | 409 | 301 | 433 | 279 | 488 | 421 | 1,500 | 373 | 490 |

### Whiteabbey Girls Training School

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the former Whiteabbey girls training school property at Old Manse road, Newtownabbey, which is now the subject of a planning application No. 0175 by the Northern Ireland fire authority, was transferred or sold to the authority by the Department of Environment (NI); whether the legal matters involved in the transaction have been completed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* This property is owned by the Secretary of State for the Environment. It has not yet been sold to the Fire authority for Northern Ireland. Final completion of the sale awaits the outcome of the authority's planning application for a fire brigade training school. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will shortly re-consult the Newtownabbey borough council as to its opinion on the planning application, following which the Department will then issue its planning decision.

## HEALTH

### AIDS

**Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on accuracy on the assay system currently most commonly used to identify people as HIV antibody positive; and what steps he has taken to ensure that there are no more prospects of people being identified as HIV antibody positive who were subsequently found not to be so;

(2) what checks exist to determine whether people who test first positive and subsequently negative for the presence of HIV antibodies have been subject to inaccurate test procedures or have been able to disable and eliminate the HIV from their systems.

**Mr. Freeman:** The test system most commonly used at present for the detection of HIV antibody has an estimated specificity well in excess of 99 per cent. However, any specimen reacting positively in initial testing should always be retested and referred for further testing with an alternative test system, before any result is issued. With these procedures, true false positives should not occur.

There have been a few recorded instances of people with confimed positive HIV antibody tests who later became seronegative. However, these people may be positive by more direct tests of viral infection suggesting that the explanation is not elimination of HIV, merely failure to produce antibodies.

### Cancers (Liverpool)

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have contracted *(a)* stomach cancer and *(b)* intestinal cancer in the Liverpool area for each of the last 15 years; what are the national figures; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman;** The information is shown in the table. The latest available data year for cancer registration is 1984.

*Number of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of stomach and intestine, usual residents of Mersey regional health authority, England and Wales 1974-84.*

| | ICD 151 | | ICD 152 | | ICD 153 | | ICD 154 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | E and W | M | E and W | M | E and W | M | E and W |
| 1984 | 575 | 11,253 | 17 | 327 | 732 | 14,840 | 489 | 9,577 |
| 1983 | 615 | 11,553 | 20 | 316 | 642 | 14,612 | 417 | 9,500 |
| 1982 | 617 | 11,537 | 13 | 282 | 629 | 14,608 | 482 | 9,353 |
| 1981 | 1537 | 11,687 | 20 | 323 | 601 | 14,671 | 414 | 9,419 |
| 1980 | 621 | 11,731 | 12 | 285 | 709 | 13,843 | 435 | 9,280 |
| 1979 | 620 | 11,904 | 11 | 340 | 671 | 13,891 | 457 | 9,249 |
| 1978 | 657 | 12,242 | 15 | 329 | 698 | 14,144 | 483 | 9,104 |
| 1977 | 729 | 12,430 | 12 | 341 | 703 | 14,115 | 478 | 9,056 |
| 1976 | 688 | 12,235 | 14 | 345 | 662 | 13,997 | 474 | 8,870 |
| 1975 | 725 | 12,610 | 17 | 339 | 689 | 13,759 | 505 | 8,932 |
| 1974 | 702 | 12,417 | 9 | 304 | 747 | 13,580 | 459 | 8,711 |

M = Mersey Regional Health Authority.
E and W = England and Wales.
International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes:—
ICD 151 Maligant Neoplasm (MN) of Stomach.
ICD 152 MN of Small intestine including Duodenum.

ICD 153 (8th Revision) 1974-78 MN of Large intestine except rectum. (9th Revision) 1979-84 MN of Colon.
ICD 154 MN of rectum rectosigmiod junction and anus.
[1]Approx 1,400 registrations for all forms of cancer were not available at the time of publication. Of these 1,000 were for Mersey RHA.

### Cervical Cancer Screening

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recommendations he makes to district health authorities about the interval between call-ups for cervical smears.

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 21 February at column *608*.

### Cook-Chill Catering

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of concern about the suitability of cook-chill catering for hospital patients, he will require Wakefield health authority to ensure that patients are offered the choice of a conventional food alternative when cook-chill meals are introduced.

**Mr. Freeman:** No. I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to him on 27 February at column *68-9*.

### Prescription Certificates

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of *(a)* prescription certificates issued by general practitioners and *(b)* prescription certificates prescribed to pharmacists, in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Mellor:** Information about the number of prescriptions written by general practitioners is not available. The number of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors in England in each of the last 10 years was as follows:

| | *Millions* |
|---|---|
| 1978 | 307·1 |
| 1979 | 304·6 |
| 1980 | 303·3 |
| 1981 | 300·0 |
| 1982 | 311·3 |
| 1983 | 315·3 |
| 1984 | 320·5 |
| 1985 | 318·7 |
| 1986 | 322·5 |
| 1987 | 335·3 |

### Ambulance Service (London)

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library copies of each of the annual management reviews of the London ambulance service conducted by his Department since he assumed direct responsibility for determining its annual expenditure.

**Mr. Freeman** *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health does not determine the budget of the London ambulance service, which is a matter that he has delegated to the South West Thames regional health authority. A copy of the ministerial review of the South West Thames RHA is placed in the Library. It is not, however, appropriate to place in the Library the annual management review of the LAS which is conducted by officials.

### Kidney Transplants

**Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many kidney transplants were carried out in the four Thames health regions in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the corresponding figure in 1980.

**Mr. Freeman** *[holding answer 21 February 1989]:* The figures for cadaveric transplants are as follows:

| | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 236 |
| 1988 | 437 |

They include transplants carried out by the London postgraduate special health authorities.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 9 March 1989*

## THE ARTS

### Induction Loops

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the number of clients of the Arts Council who have fitted induction loops.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* This information is not held centrally. I will ask the chairman of the Arts Council to write to the hon. Member direct on this subject.

### Museums (Registration)

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the Museums and Galleries Commission will be responsible for registering national museums.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* I understand that there is no obligation on the national museums and galleries to apply for registration under the Museums and Galleries Commission's registration scheme, which is a voluntary scheme.

I hope, however, that the national institutions will lend their support to a scheme which seeks to set standards for the museums' community.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 6 March.

## SCOTLAND

### Protein Fractionation Centre

**Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to extend Crown immunity to the protein fractionation centre so as to exempt it from the legal requirement for manufacturing or product licences.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The protein fractionation centre is part of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service and as such is entitled to whatever immunities that agency, as a Crown body, has from the application of statute. I have no plans for extension of Crown immunity in this field.

### Building Regulations

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current regulations governing building standards in Scotland, and the parent legislation from which they derive.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Building standards regulations in Scotland are made under the Building (Scotland) Act 1959. The current regulations are:

The Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1981
The Building Standards (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1982
The Building Standards (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1984
The Building Standards (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1986
The Building Standards (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1987

### Torness Power Station

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information was submitted to the assessor of public undertakings by the South of Scotland electricity board in respect of generating capacity at Torness power station on 1 October 1988.

**Mr. Lang:** The information submitted by the South of Scotland electricity board to the assessor of public undertakings (Scotland) was that, on 1 October 1988, the installed generating capacity at Torness was nil. The relevant statutory instrument requires the board to certify the generating capacity in each rating area on the basis that all generators which were installed were capable of being fully used at the relevant time. I understand that the No. 1 unit at Torness had not completed its test run on the date in question.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contribution, in megawatts, has been made to the national grid by Torness power station in each month since generation started at that site.

**Mr. Lang:** I am advised by the South of Scotland electricity board that the first unit at Torness synchronised on to the national grid on 25 May 1988, following which a gradual build up in power proceeded in accordance with a programme agreed with the nuclear installations inspectorate. By the end of July 1988, an interim rating of 682 MW gross was achieved. Since then the unit has operated for much of the time at this power although occasional interruptions for scheduled testing have continued.

Torness unit No. 2 synchronised on 3 February 1989 and is presently operating at 540 MW gross. It is expected that this unit will achieve its interim rating of 682 MW gross before the end of this month.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will direct the South of Scotland electricity board to review the figure relating to generating capacity at Torness which was submitted to the assessor of public undertakings on 1 October 1988, with a view to ensuring that the board makes an appropriate financial contribution to the budgets of Lothian region and East Lothian district during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** The apportionment of the South of Scotland electricity board's rateable value among rating areas is

carried out in accordance with the formula set out in the Scottish Electricity Boards (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1985. Part of the apportionment to East Lothian district council for 1989-90 is based on the board's generating capacity within the district council's area on 1 October 1988 as certified by the board to the assessor of public undertakings (Scotland). The Secretary of State has no powers to direct the South of Scotland electricity board to review its certified figures.

### Crops, Plants and Plant Health

**Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet received the report of the review of the functions of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in the area of crops, plants and plant health, which commenced in April 1987; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The report of this internal review has now been received and is being considered. Decisions on the recommendations in the report will be reached as quickly as possible, following appropriate consultation with interested parties.

### Newbattle Abbey College

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet replied to the letter of 21 December 1988 from the acting chairman of the governors of Newbattle Abbey college; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I met the chairman and other representatives of the governors on 24 February and have today written to him. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library. This confirms my intention, announced in December 1987, to cease grant payments to the college at the end of this academic year.

The future of the college is a matter for the governors and trustees. The Government are committed to increasing the proportion of mature students in higher education in Scotland and our current projections assume that numbers of such entrants will be maintained at more than 6,000 a year. The Scottish wider access programme (SWAP) announced last year is working to that end, and resources released from Newbattle will support collaboration under SWAP between further and higher education institutions and education authorities in regional consortia based on each of the four main cities. Such consortia are already operating in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and plans are far advanced in Dundee and Aberdeen.

### Castlehill Site, Aye (Sale)

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made with the Ayrshire and Arran health board regarding the use of funds arising from the sale of the Castlehill site in Ayr; what he expects the proceeds from the sale to be spent on; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 19 January 1989]:* If the sale of Castlehill estate is concluded in the financial year 1989-90 as expected, the proceeds will be retained by Ayrshire and Arran health board and used for capital projects designed to improve the retained properties in its area, to reduce running costs and improve health care.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### "Action for Cities"

**Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made with "Action for Cities" over its first year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** I am today publishing a report "Progress on Cities" which outlines the Government's strategy for inner-city regeneration, illustrates achievements to date region by region and sets out the Government's priorities for future action.

The report shows that the economic regeneration of our inner cities, based on businesses earning commercial returns, is clearly under way. Unemployment is falling rapidly. New shops, offices, factories and homes are under construction. There is growing confidence and co-operation between the private sector, public authorities, voluntary organisations and local communities. The Government will encourage this growing partnership, continue to emphasise the crucial role that business can play and work to ensure that inner-city residents are able to benefit fully from the regeneration of their neighbourhoods.

I am sending copies of the report to hon. Members with constituencies in inner city target areas. Copies will also be placed in the Library and are available in the Vote Office.

### Task Forces

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends to make any changes to the location of the inner-city task forces; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** The Government's inner-city task forces have proved highly successful in creating jobs, encouraging training opportunities and stimulating enterprise in the areas where they work. They have now been involved in nearly 1,100 projects with total commitments of nearly £33 million.

The task force budget for 1989-90 will be £17 million, representing an increase of over 20 per cent. compared with the present year. I have today given approval for some 50 further task force projects involving funding of over £3 million, together with a number of other inner city projects amounting to about £2 million.

I have decided to establish new task forces in Bradford, in Lewisham (Deptford), and in Liverpool (Granby/Toxteth). My officials will be discussing their precise boundaries with the local authorities and City Action teams, with a view to the task forces starting their work as soon as possible.

These new task forces, like the existing ones, are not intended to be permanent Government agencies in the areas concerned. Their aim is to promote changes and provide opportunities which will have a continuing beneficial effect, and to foster the development of local organisations which can carry forward and build on the task forces' work when the task force itself leaves.

The task force in Birmingham, Handsworth is now nearing the completion of its programme, following my predecessor's announcement in June 1988 that it would come to an end in March 1989 and that the task force effort in Birmingham would be refocussed in east

Birmingham. A very encouraging evaluation of the Handsworth task force's work, by independent consultants, was published last week.

In the light of this experience, and of the significant progress they have made, I have decided that it would be right now to set the end of this year as the date by which the task forces in Leicester (Highfields), Preston and Wolverhampton should complete their programme and withdraw from their areas. During that time they will continue their important task of building up the capacity of local bodies which can take over responsibility for their work in future. They will, therefore, be embarking on discussions locally about future arrangements, including where necessary some continued period of support for particular projects.

A number of important new projects by these task forces are among those I have announced today, and they will continue to welcome new proposals until the end of May.

## Pharmaceuticals

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will print in the *Official Report* the surplus of deficit on the United Kingdom's total trade in pharmaceutical products in 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988, the total value of exports and imports of pharmaceuticals in 1987 and 1988, the total value of parallel imports of pharmaceuticals from other European Economic Community members for 1986, 1987 and 1988, and the total value of parallel imports from Greece in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

**Mr. Alan Clark:** Information parallel imports from countries in the European Community is not available. The remaining information requested is given in the following tables:

*Table 1*
*United Kingdom trade in medicinal and pharmaceutical products 1984 to 1988*

*Value in £ million*

| *Division 54* | *Balance* |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 680·1 |
| 1985 | 836·6 |
| 1986 | 853·0 |
| 1987 | 834·4 |
| 1988 | 859·4 |

*Table 2*
*Total value of imports and exports of medicinal and pharmaceutical products 1987 to 1988*

*Value in £ million*

| | *Exports* | *Imports* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 1,620·7 | 786·3 |
| 1988 | 1,735·3 | 875·9 |

*Notes:*
(i) 1988 figures are provisional.
(ii) exports fob; imports cif.
*Source:* Overseas Trade Statistics.

## Select Committees (Recommendations)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Forth:** In the two reports by the Trade and Industry Committee completed since June 1987, to which the Government have responded, 62 recommendations were made, of which 37 have been accepted in whole or in part by the Government, or noted, where no further action by Government was sought.

## Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the potential risks of unauthorised entry into the computer systems which calculate the monthly balance of payments figures.

**Mr. Forth:** The security requirements of the computer system used in my Department for calculating the United Kingdom visible balance of trade were addressed before the system was designed and put into operation. Security safeguards designed to minimise the risks of unauthorised entry were incorporated into the system, taking account of appropriate specialist advice. Security of the system is regularly reviewed.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the possible effects on financial markets in the United Kingdom and abroad of the unauthorised penetration of sensitive information held by his Department.

**Mr. Forth:** The security of sensitive information is addressed at an early stage in the design of new systems by assessing the impact of unauthorised disclosure or loss of the information to be held. Measures are introduced to reduce the risks of unauthorised penetration to a justifiable minimum.

## Chambers of Commerce

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many chambers of commerce have received assistance from his Department; and if he will list them.

**Mr. Forth:** My Department provides assistance on a wide range of matters to many chambers throughout the country.

## Textiles

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce a scheme under the Industry Act 1972, as amended, to provide grant aid for the textile dyeing industry to invest in machinery which reduces water consumption; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** No. Member states are bound by restrictions on sectoral aid for the textile and clothing industry. However, firms in assisted areas may apply for regional selective assistance under the Industry Act towards investment projects which meet the established criteria. Firms in the industry may also be eligible for assistance under the enterprise initiative.

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the Government's proposal to review the Wool Textile Industry (Export Promotion) Levy; what views have been expressed by the Confederation of British Wool Textiles; what is his response; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** I have received a number of representations from interested parties, including hon. Members, trade

associations and trade unions. The Confederation of British Wool Textiles stated that it wished the statutory levy to be retained. All views expressed will be taken fully into account before a decision is taken.

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on quota arrangements for textiles in the European Economic Community by 1992; and what consideration has been given as to whether imports will be controlled on a Communitywide basis or quotas for imports allocated to each member state.

**Mr. Maude:** It is the Commission's view that individual member states quotas or shares of any ECwide quotas, backed up by derogations from the normal free-circulation rules authorised by the Commission under article 115 of the treaty of Rome, would be inconsistent with the completion of the single market in 1992. How far this might extend to the treatment of textiles and clothing is unclear although the curent EC bilateral textile agreements under the multi-fibre arrangement already allow for automatic transfers between member states' share of EC wide quotas. There has, however, been no detailed Community discussion of future arrangements for EC quotas on textiles and clothing. The current extension of the MFA lapses in 1991 and the future of the arrangement itself is under discussion within the GATT round of multilateral trade negotiations which themselves are due for completion in September 1990.

## Tin

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution the United Kingdom is making to the administrative account of the International Tin Council in the current year.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Government's contribution to the administrative account for the year ending 30 June 1989 was assessed by the International Tin Council as £15,007.

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what have been the costs to date of defending the various legal actions brought against the Government following the collapse of the international tin agreement in 1985.

**Mr. Atkins:** Payments in respect of legal costs by the Treasury Solicitor acting for Government Departments concerned in various actions in the courts in England arising out of the cessation of the buffer stock operation of the International Tin Council totalled £375,106 at 31 January 1989.

## Defence Exhibition

**Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the countries which will be represented at the defence components and equipment exhibition at the Birmingham national exhibition centre on 9 to 11 May.

**Mr. Atkins:** I understand that over 250 British companies are exhibiting at the event together with a number of European firms, the majority of whom are currently engaged in collaborative projects with British firms in the defence field. Visitors are expected from many countries.

## Shipbuilding

**Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent information he has on the gross tonnage of new shipbuilding orders won by each European Community country, Japan, South Korea and all other countries in 1987 and 1988 quarter by quarter.

**Mr. Atkins:** The information available is shown in the table:

*New merchant shipbuilding orders*

*Thousand gross registered tons*

| | *1987* | | | | *1988* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Qtr. 1* | *Qtr. 2* | *Qtr. 3* | *Qtr. 4* | *Qtr. 1* | *Qtr. 2* | *Qtr. 3* |
| Belgium | 0 | 1 | 0 | 26 | 20 | 0 | 7 |
| Denmark | 60 | 1 | 5 | 216 | 50 | 17 | 48 |
| France | 0 | 30 | 26 | 2 | 44 | 1 | 5 |
| Germany | 176 | 67 | 168 | 154 | 40 | 307 | 158 |
| Italy | 301 | 127 | 14 | 18 | 2 | 33 | 3 |
| Netherlands | 9 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 36 | 26 | 21 |
| Greece | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Portugal | 79 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 3 |
| Spain | 12 | 26 | 44 | 324 | 14 | 106 | 245 |
| United Kingdom | 6 | 75 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 83 |
| Total EEC | 644 | 334 | 279 | 760 | 221 | 499 | 573 |
| Japan | 913 | 1,307 | 1,314 | 1,216 | 1,168 | 1,079 | 1,522 |
| South Korea | 1,023 | 1,307 | 605 | 1,225 | 726 | 778 | 612 |
| Other | 838 | 762 | 422 | 749 | 640 | 485 | 692 |
| Total | 3,418 | 3,710 | 2,620 | 3,950 | 2,755 | 2,841 | 3,399 |

*Source:* Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

## Honey

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much of honey exports is produced from British hives and how much is imported honey packaged or repackaged in Britain.

**Mr. Ryder:** I have been asked to reply to this question.

There is no information available to distinguish between the honey exports that are produced from British hives and those that are from packaged or repackaged imports.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### National Insurance

**Sir Dudley Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will allow a repayment supplement to individual taxpayers where there has been a mistake in their class 4 national insurance contributions and the Inland Revenue is at fault;

(2) if he will seek to amend section 824 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 to allow a repayment supplement, as with the case of income tax, on class 4 national insurance contributions, where the individual has been overcharged because of an error on the Inland Revenue's part.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Security has no plans to amend Social Security legislation to reflect the provisions of section 824 Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 to class 4 national insurance contributions.

### Shipping (Investment)

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a brief summary of the main differences between the Norwegian K/S investment scheme and the business expansion scheme in so far as they affect investment in shipping.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** Norwegian K/S partnerships and the business expansion scheme are entirely different. K/S partnerships, which are usually involved in shipping, are in principle similar to United Kingdom limited partnerships. A K/S partnership is not itself chargeable to tax; instead, the individual partners are taxed on their share of the partnership's profits and are entitled to the tax allowances associated with the partnership's business. This carries certain tax advantages for investors. The Norwegian Government have recently made proposals to limit the use of such partnerships.

The business expansion scheme offers tax relief on investments made by outside investors in new full-risk equity of small United Kingdom unquoted companies, including companies which operate or let ships. The Government welcome the fact that more shipping companies are using the BES to raise finance this year.

### Computers (Unauthorised Entry)

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any contingency measures to deal with the possibility of unauthorised tampering with computerised systems in the money markets.

**Mr. Lilley:** It is the responsibility of individual participants in the money markets to ensure the integrity of their respective computerised systems.

### Shipping

**Sir David Price:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the contribution of British shipping to the United Kingdom balance of payments in 1988 and what it was in 1978, expressed both in current value and constant value terms.

**Mr. Major:** The latest annual information relates to 1987, when the direct overseas earnings of ships operated by United Kingdom companies, net of their overseas expenditure, was £500 million. The equivalent figure in 1978 was £662 million, or about £1 billion at 1987 prices.

### Tax System

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations he has given to the codification of the United Kingdom tax system, along the lines of that in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norman Lamont** *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* Any such change to the present system would need to be considered in the wider context of statute law as a whole. I refer my hon. Friend to the report of the Renton committee (Cmnd. 6053, presented to Parliament on 7 May 1975) for the arguments which led ito recommend against continuous codification of statutue law. It also looked specifically at fiscal legislation but was not persuaded that it deserved special treatment and I see no reason to depart from that view. When drafting legislation, parliamentary counsel do use the textual amendment approach where practicable. This is a convenient and well-understood drafting technique which helps to reduce difficulties for practitioners. In particular it allows related tax legislation in different Finance Acts to be brought together in the Taxes Acts which the Inland Revenue updates and publishes annually.

## ENERGY

### Windpower Farm (Isle of Wight)

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration has been given to the benefits of siting a windpower farm at Tennyson downs on the Isle of Wight.

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** No consideration has been given by my Department to siting a wind farm at Tennyson downs on the Isle of Wight.

### Domestic Energy Resources

**Sir Dudley Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what current estimate he has of the number of households in England and Wales which are unable to obtain a gas supply.

**Mr. Peter Morrison:** As my hon. Friend will appreciate this is now a matter for British Gas plc, since it has been privatised.

**Sir Dudley Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what current estimate he has of the number of householders in England and Wales who are unable to burn coal or wood fires.

**Mr. Parkinson:** A recent market survey by Audit Great Britain (AGB) estimated that the number of households in England and Wales who did not have the potential to burn coal or wood fires in the winter of 1987-89 was 12·843 million.

### Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Parkinson:** The Government have responded to recommendations made in three reports of the Energy Select Committee published since June 1987. The responses are contained in the following reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

The Effect of Oil and Gas Prices on Activity in the North Sea:
Energy Committee: First Special Report Session 1987/88 House of Commons 205

The Department of Energy's Spending Plans 1988-89:
Energy Committee: Second Special Report Session 1987/88 House of Commons 693

The Structure, Regulation and Economic Consequences of Electricity Supply in the Private Sector:
Energy Committee: Third Special Report Session 1987/88 House of Commons 701

## PRIME MINISTER

### Pensioners

Q57. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what action she is taking to co-ordinate Government policy to ensure that all pensioners have an adequate standard of living.

**The Prime Minister:** This Government's success in co-ordinating policies to ensure that pensioners have an adequate standard of living is clearly shown by the fact that we have maintained the value of retirement pension, ensured that pensioners' savings keep their value, and encouraged the growth of occupational pensions. These policies resulted in a 23 per cent. real terms increase in pensioners' total average net income in our first seven years in office. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced in November last year that an extra £200 million annually is to be made available to certain groups of pensioners through the income support scheme, who have not shared fully in the prosperity enjoyed by pensioners as a whole.

### Granborough

Q69. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Granborough near Rugby.

**The Prime Minister:** I have at present no plans to do so.

### Sea Defences

Q80. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the protection of the British coast line and the development of appropriate sea defences; and which of her Ministers has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of such a policy.

**The Prime Minister:** Through the provision of grant aid to water and other drainage authorities and to maritime district councils, Her Majesty's Government provide a substantial contribution to the cost of capital works undertaken by these bodies for the protection of the coastline from flooding and erosion by the sea.

Ministerial responsibility in England for flood and coastal defences rests with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and in other parts of the United Kingdom the respective Secretaries of State.

### Civil Service Code

Q93. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to amend the operation of the Civil Service code as it relates to staff at 10 Downing street.

**The Prime Minister:** The Civil Service code applies to all civil servants. I have no plans to make any changes which relate specially to staff at 10 Downing street.

### Middle East

Q177. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she intends to discuss issues relating to the peace process in the middle east with President Gorbachev during his forthcoming visit to Britain.

**The Prime Minister:** I hope to discuss with Mr. Gorbachev a wide range of issues of mutual interest including the middle east.

### Nuclear Reactors

**Mr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent meeting with President Mitterrand of France, she discussed the joint development of inherently safe nuclear reactors.

**The Prime Minister:** No.

### Non-proliferation Treaty

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent meeting with President Mitterrand of France, she raised the possibility of France signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

**The Prime Minister:** No.

### Test Ban Treaty

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent meeting with President Mitterrand of France, she raised the possiblity of Franco-British technical co-operation to resolve outstanding technical problems of verification for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

**The Prime Minister:** No.

### Sudan (Visit)

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement following the postponement of her visit to the Sudan.

**The Prime Minister:** I concluded that it would be considerate to postpone my visit to Sudan because of the present political difficulties there. The Government hope that all parties in Sudan will work for the restoration of peace and stability.

### Engagements

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**Mr. Barry Field :** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 March.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be presenting the north-east business man of the year awards in Gateshead.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Examination Results

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all local education authorities in England in rank order of expenditure per secondary pupil per year, together with their position in the table of examination results for school leavers achieving five or more O-levels at grades A to C or CSE grade 1, for the year 1984-85.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information in the table gives the average cost per secondary school pupil for the financial year 1984-85; and the three-year average, over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87, of the proportion of school leavers who attained five or more higher grades at O-level/CSE. The latter figures are drawn from a 10 per cent. sample of pupils at each school and are presented in the form of a three-year average, rather than for any single year, to help mitigate the effects of sampling error.

*Secondary schools in England*

| | *Expenditure per pupil (£) in the financial year 1984-85* | *Examination results: Average over the academic year 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 Percentage of school leavers attaining 5+ higher grades at O-level/CSE* | *Ranking* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Local education authorities:* | | | |
| ILEA | 1,940 | 15·4 | 90 |
| Haringey | 1,615 | 17·3 | 83 |
| Brent | 1,525 | 19·1 | 75 |
| Newham | 1,485 | 12·4 | 93 |
| Waltham Forest | 1,450 | 11·0 | 94 |
| Ealing | 1,315 | 19·6 | 69 |
| Manchester | 1,295 | 17·3 | 82 |
| Hillingdon | 1,275 | 21·2 | 62 |
| Barnet | 1,265 | 41·0 | 1 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 1,245 | 17·7 | 80 |
| Knowsley | 1,240 | 10·6 | 95 |
| Harrow | 1,240 | 37·8 | 2 |
| Havering | 1,230 | 23·9 | 44 |
| Barking | 1,225 | 9·9 | 96 |
| Croydon | 1,225 | 22·9 | 52 |
| Hounslow | 1,190 | 21·5 | 61 |
| Redbridge | 1,185 | 25·6 | 32 |
| North Tyneside | 1,180 | 21·9 | 56 |
| Coventry | 1,180 | 19·9 | 67 |
| Richmond-upon-Thames | 1,170 | 26·5 | 26 |
| Liverpool | 1,165 | 17·0 | 84 |
| Kingston-upon-Thames | 1,165 | 34·8 | 3 |
| Rochdale | 1,155 | 20·2 | 64 |
| Bromley | 1,155 | 30·5 | 10 |
| South Tyneside | 1,150 | 18·1 | 79 |
| Enfield | 1,150 | 23·7 | 45 |
| Sheffield | 1,150 | 18·9 | 74 |
| Sandwell | 1,135 | 13·4 | 92 |
| Wolverhampton | 1,130 | 15·4 | 89 |
| Stockport | 1,130 | 24·3 | 41 |
| Wigan | 1,110 | 27·2 | 19 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1,110 | 19·6 | 68 |
| Salford | 1,110 | 18·9 | 76 |
| Walsall | 1,105 | 19·1 | 73 |
| Leicestershire | 1,100 | 22·9 | 51 |
| Bury | 1,100 | 28·4 | 16 |
| Buckinghamshire | 1,095 | 31·6 | 8 |
| Avon | 1,085 | 24·7 | 38 |
| Bexley | 1,080 | 26·6 | 24 |
| Gateshead | 1,080 | 18·8 | 77 |
| Hertfordshire | 1,075 | 28·9 | 13 |
| Cleveland | 1,075 | 27·5 | 18 |
| Barnsley | 1,070 | 15·7 | 88 |
| Tameside | 1,070 | 23·5 | 48 |
| Oxfordshire | 1,070 | 26·5 | 25 |
| Doncaster | 1,065 | 19·2 | 72 |
| Birmingham | 1,060 | 16·9 | 85 |
| Bedfordshire | 1,060 | 25·9 | 29 |
| Sutton | 1,060 | 34·4 | 4 |
| Sunderland | 1,060 | 19·3 | 70 |
| Berkshire | 1,055 | 27·5 | 17 |
| Sefton | 1,045 | 27·0 | 21 |
| St. Helens | 1,040 | 23·6 | 46 |
| Merton | 1,040 | 24·9 | 36 |
| Shropshire | 1,040 | 27·0 | 22 |
| Humberside | 1,040 | 21·1 | 63 |
| Trafford | 1,040 | 31·7 | 7 |
| Wirral | 1,035 | 23·5 | 47 |
| Bolton | 1,035 | 24·9 | 37 |
| Northamptonshire | 1,035 | 20·0 | 66 |
| North Yorkshire | 1,035 | 31·4 | 9 |
| Surrey | 1,030 | 34·4 | 5 |
| Cumbria | 1,025 | 24·2 | 42 |
| Staffordshire | 1,025 | 23·4 | 50 |
| Derbyshire | 1,020 | 21·5 | 58 |
| Solihull | 1,020 | 29·4 | 11 |
| Essex | 1,015 | 25·1 | 35 |
| Lancashire | 1,015 | 24·7 | 39 |
| Gloucestershire | 1,015 | 28·6 | 14 |
| Cheshire | 1,010 | 26·6 | 23 |
| Norfolk | 1,010 | 21·9 | 57 |
| Warwickshire | 1,010 | 26·2 | 27 |
| East Sussex | 1,000 | 25·7 | 30 |
| Calderdale | 1,000 | 19·3 | 71 |
| Northumberland | 1,000 | 29·0 | 12 |
| Oldham | 995 | 16·1 | 87 |
| Rotherham | 995 | 17·4 | 81 |
| Dudley | 990 | 21·5 | 60 |
| Bradford | 990 | 16·7 | 86 |
| Lincolnshire | 985 | 25·3 | 34 |
| Devon | 980 | 23·4 | 49 |
| Hampshire | 980 | 26·0 | 28 |
| Suffolk | 975 | 22·0 | 55 |
| Wiltshire | 975 | 22·1 | 54 |
| Wakefield | 975 | 15·4 | 91 |
| Leeds | 970 | 21·5 | 59 |
| Durham | 965 | 20·0 | 65 |
| West Sussex | 965 | 32·1 | 6 |
| Cornwall | 965 | 25·5 | 33 |

| | Expenditure per pupil (£) in the financial year 1984-85 | Examination results: Average over the academic year 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 Percentage of school leavers attaining 5+ higher grades at O-level/CSE | Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dorset | 960 | 28·4 | 15 |
| Isle of Wight | 960 | 18·3 | 78 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 955 | 25·7 | 31 |
| Somerset | 950 | 22·2 | 53 |
| Kirklees | 950 | 24·1 | 43 |
| Kent | 935 | 27·1 | 20 |
| Cambridgeshire | 690 | 24·4 | 40 |

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, for each of the local education authorities in England the number of A-level grades A to E awarded to pupils in maintained institutions, including both secondary schools and tertiary colleges, in each year from 1982-83 to the latest for which figures are available.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information requested is not readily available. I will write to my hon. Friend in due course.

### University Teachers

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when and where it was stated and agreed in 1986 that the staged salary increase for university teachers was to cover three years; how long the standard response letter from his Department signed by Miss J. Bonde, in reply to representations concerning the Association of University Teachers dispute has been in use; and if it is his intention to revise it.

**Mr. Jackson:** The pay settlement for university non-academic and academic related staff agreed in March 1987 provided for increases of 16·6 per cent from 1 December 1986 and 7·4 per cent from 1 March 1988. At the time of the settlement, the Government gave a clear indication to the employers that no further funds would be made available to finance further increases from 1 April 1988. In the nature of things many correspondents make the same points and accordingly there are areas of similarity in the Department's replies. The comments made on all matters are revised when necessary.

### Travellers' Children

**Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of travellers' children being educated by each local education authority.

**Mr. Butcher:** I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

### Top-up Loans

**Mr. Straw:** To ak the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library copies of the submissions which he has received from organisations and bodies in response to his White Paper "Top-up Loans", in a manner similar to the arrangements he made in respect of submissions on the consultative documents for the Education Reform Bill; and if he wll list those organisations.

**Mr. Kenneth Baker:** I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on 15 February and 7 March to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) at columns *209* and *465-67*. Formal responses have also been received from Oxford university, Liverpool polytechnic and the Association of Colleges for Further and Higher Education.

### Deaf/Blind Children

**Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the statement on the educational needs of deaf/blind children.

**Mr. Butcher:** The statement has been published today and a copy has been placed in the Library. My right hon. Friend and I hope that it will help those concerned to make the most suitable provision for the education of deaf-blind children. We are grateful for the help that voluntary organisations, in particular SENSE, and local education authorities have given the Department in drawing up this statement.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Cable Television

33. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many households in Northern Ireland are at present able to receive cable television.

**Mr. Renton:** Ulster Cablevision has the Cable Authority franchise to provide cable television to 136,000 homes in Belfast. This franchise is not operational yet. In addition, the Cable Authority has authorised a number of satellite master antennae television systems in Northern Ireland. Information on the number of households connected to such systems is not readily available.

### Broadcasting Acts

34. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implementation of the 1981 and 1987 Broadcasting Acts as they affect Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Renton:** The Broadcasting Act 1981 sets out the statutory framework for the operation of independent television and radio in the United Kingdom. Under it Ulster Television was re-awarded the ITV franchise for Northern Ireland in 1981 and Downtown Radio had its contract for the provision of the Northern Ireland ILR service extended by a further eight years in 1986. In accordance with the Broadcasting Act 1987, which makes provision for extending existing ITV contracts with the IBA until 31 December 1992, the franchise of Ulster Television is extended to that date.

### Electric Trains (Radio Interference)

**Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has carried out any investigations into the effect of arcing created by electric trains travelling at

speeds of over 200 km per hour on the transmission of UHF and VHF broadcasts; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Renton:** My right hon. Friend has not commissioned any such investigations; neither are we aware of any. Neither the BBC nor the IBA are aware of any problems in transmission or reception of UHF or VHF broadcasts caused by arcing from high speed electric trains.

### Mr. Salman Rushdie

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long police protection has been provided for Mr. Salman Rushdie; and what has been the cost to public funds of that provision.

**Mr. Hurd:** On 14 February 1989, the Metropolitan police decided that it was necessary to provide Mr. Rushdie with police protection. It would not be sensible to disclose information about police protection which would indicate its scale in a particular case.

### Sealink Harbours Ltd. (Special Constables)

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there has been any change in the advice given to chief constables concerning the appointment of special constables as in the case of Sealink Harbours Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** There has been no change in the advice given to chief officers of police about the appointment of special constables for their police force area under section 16 of the Police Act 1964. Chief officers are not parties to the appointment, by Justices, of persons nominated by a statutory harbour authority (under the terms of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847) whose special constabulary powers apply only within the port and one mile around it.

### Football (Offences)

**Mr. John Marshall** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those arrested at football grounds during the past two seasons were *(a)* subsequently charged with offences and *(b)* convicted; and if he will provide a breakdown of the types of offences for which convictions were secured.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** This information is not recorded centrally.

### Relate (Funding)

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding was given to Relate: National Marriage Guidance for England and Wales in each of the last five years; what funding is set for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* Grants-in-aid to relate for the years 1984-85 to 1988-89 were:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| 1984-85 | 827,460 |
| 1985-86 | 864,570 |
| 1986-87 | 890,500 |
| 1987-88 | 912,870 |
| 1988-89 | [1]1,035,910 |

[1] Includes £100,000 supplementary grant-in-aid.

Subject to the approval of Parliament the provision for 1989-90 will be £959,310. That provision will be reviewed during the year.

### Safer Cities Initiative

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish initial reports on the safer cities initiative in Hartlepool.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* A progress report on the safer cities programme will be produced later this year.

### Public Drinking Ban

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the results of the pilot scheme ban on drinking in public places operating in Stockton-on-Tees.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The experimental byelaw in Stockton-on-Tees, which makes it an offence to drink alcohol in designated public places, was made by the council on 24 February and is expected to be confirmed, subject to the statutory requirements being fulfilled. The experiment will last two years during which its operation will be monitored by the local authority with the assistance of the Home Office. It is expected that the results of the pilot scheme, which involves six other local authorities, will be available in 1991.

### Crime (Cleveland)

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what measures his Department is taking to prevent crime in Cleveland;

(2) how many neighbourhood watch schemes have been established in Cleveland.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* At the end of November 1988 the Cleveland police force strength was 1,470 police officers and 429 civilians. This represents increases of 123 police officers and 111 civilians since 1979. Nine police officers and one civilian work full time on crime prevention. Four crime prevention panels are in operation in the area and there are 463 neighbourhood watch schemes, covering 15,826 homes. As part of the Government's "Action for Cities" initiative, a safer cities project is being established in Hartlepool.

### Ex-offenders (Hostels)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places in hostels he estimates will be lost to ex-offenders as a result of the introduction of the new social security regulations.

**Mr. John Patten:** None.

### Select Committee (Recommendations)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Hurd:** In the five departmental Select Committee reports completed since June 1987, to which the Government have responded, 56 recommendations were made, of which 44 have been accepted in whole or in part by the Government, or noted, where no further action by Government was sought.

### Child Abuse

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how his Department is evaluating the effects and use of its guidance on child abuse issued to the police in July 1988.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend has asked HM inspectorate of constabulary, as part of its annual force inspections, to discuss with chief officers and to report to him on the implementation of Home Office circular 52/1988.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department's guidance to police officers on child abuse issued in July 1988 is available to *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the public.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Yes. A copy of Home Office circular 52/1988 on the investigation of child sexual abuse, which was issued on 6 July 1988, was placed in the Library. Copies are available to members of the public on request.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times the inter-departmental working group on child sexual abuse has met.

**Mr. David Mellor:** I have been asked to reply.
Eight times.

### Private Security Firms

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that employees of private security firms are properly vetted.

**Mr. John Patten:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to questions by the hon. Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on 15 December 1988 at column *716*.

### Juveniles (Crime)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles under 17 years sentenced by juvenile and Crown courts in Greater Manchester received custody in 1988; and what proportion this is of the total number of juveniles sentenced to custody in England and Wales.

**Mr. John Patten:** In 1987, a total of 502 juveniles aged under 17 years were sentenced to immediate custody at all courts in Greater Manchester; that was 12 per cent. of the juveniles sentenced to immediate custody in 1987 throughout England and Wales. The 1988 figures are not yet available.

### Dog Fighting

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to establish the extent of dog fighting; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Dog fighting is an offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and penalties were recently increased by the Protection of Animals (Penalties) Act 1987 and the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988. The investigation of crime is a matter for the chief officer of the police force concerned.

### Official Secrets Bill

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it will be an offence under the Official Secrets Bill as currently drafted for an organisation to act as United Kingdom publisher of a copy of an international publication compiled outside the United Kingdom and including information based on official confidential United Kingdom communications to the European Commission.

**Mr. Hurd:** Any such disclosure could be an offence only if, among other elements of the offence, the prosecution could prove beyond reasonable doubt that the information related to security or intelligence, defence or international relations, as defined in the Bill; that it had previously been published without the authority of the international organisation to which it had been given; that, despite its previous publication, its further disclosure met the relevant test of harm set out in the Bill; and that the discloser had reasonable cause to believe that it would. It is difficult to imagine that a disclosure in the circumstances described could meet these tests.

### Strip Searches

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (i) males and (ii) females were strip-searched by *(a)* the police, *(b)* immigration officers, *(c)* prison officers and *(d)* other authorities in each year since 1980.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Information on the number of strip searches carried out by police officers is not collected centrally. Comprehensive information about the strip-searching of prison inmates is not available because establishments are not required to record every strip search. Immigration officers normally seek the co-operation of Her Majesty's Customs in any search of a passenger's baggage or person which may be considered necessary, and in practice immigration officers do not carry out strip searches. With regard to the number of strip searches carried out by Customs officers, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to a question from the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 10 February at columns *836-37*.

### Prison Service

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action is being taken in the light of local staffing difficulties at Her Majesty's prison, Leeds over (i) searching, (ii) provision of library, (iii) staffing of landings, and (iv) weekend closure of some facilities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action is being taken in the light of local staffing difficulties at Her Majesty's prison, Lindholme over (i) regular suspension of searching, internal cleaning and workshop patrols, and (ii) occasional suspension of receptions, censoring, canteen and library services; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what action is being taken in the light of local staffing difficulties at Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield over (i) occasional suspension of searching and (ii) regular closure of workshops; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** In all three prisons systematic searching is completed on a regular basis in both residential and non-residential areas. Searching is never suspended, but occasional staff shortages may cause changes to a particular programme of searching. Programmes of category A searching are always adhered to.

I understand that there has been some reduction in access to library services at Her Majesty's prison, Leeds in recent weeks, but that this difficulty has now been resolved. Since the introduction of fresh start working practices at Leeds, there are more staff now available to work on the landings. Only one recent cancellation of weekend association (on Sunday 28 August 1988) has been recorded.

In Her Majesty's prison Lindholme, wing officers control the cleaning of the wings. Other officers are allocated to the different parties that clean the various areas around the Lindholme site. The task is accomplished to a satisfactory level on a regular basis. On workshop patrols, the preferred manning level is four officers, with an additional officer available to give assistance to the instructors if required. Staff absences and other commitments mean that this manning level is not often fully achieved, and there is a local agreement to drop the additional officer tasks if the suggested patrol numbers are short. Work on receptions, censoring, canteen and library services fluctuates according to demand and staff are deployed accordingly.

In Her Majesty's prison Wakefield, workshops are not regularly closed, but there are occasional closures, for example due to staff absences or interruptions in the supply of materials.

### Ex-offenders (Employment Prospects)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to improve employment prospects for ex-offenders.

**Mr. John Patten** *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* The Home Office has issued advice to prison establishments and to the probation service about employment training and its relevance to offenders and ex-offenders. Prison officers in several establishments are receiving special training and support to enable them to provide employment guidance to inmates. It is intended that the vocational training currently provided within prison establishments should be expanded in line with the Government's policy initiative on the competence-based and work-related national vocational qualifications. Advice is currently being offered to prisoners by prison education departments and through pre-release schemes and post-release counselling on opportunities to continue skills training following release. Long-term prisoners who are coming near the end of their sentences may apply for temporary release, living in a pre-release employment scheme hostel and working for local employers.

The Home Office after-care grant scheme contributes towards the central and administrative costs of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the Apex Trust, organisations which are actively involved with the Training Agency to provide training and employment opportunities for ex-offenders. The Home Office also contributes to a number of other organisations which seek to place ex-offenders in employment as a regular part of their programme of rehabilitation and after-care.

The Home Office takes part in regular meetings with the Training Agency, Department of Employment, the probation service, voluntary organisations and others to co-ordinate initiatives for improving employment prospects for ex-offenders.

### Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to ensure that the entitlement to benefits of victims is not affected by compensation awards from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I have been asked to reply.

Payments from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board are treated in exactly the same way as any other payments made in compensation for a personal injury. If the award is placed on trust it will be fully disregarded if the recipient is a child or young person, or for at least two years if the recipient is an adult. However, any payments made by the trustees will be treated as income or capital in the normal way. There are no proposals for changing these provisions.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Construction Industry (Fatalities)

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the total number of fatalities in the construction industry reported by the Health and Safety Executive for each year between 1960 and 1987, inclusive that were caused by *(a)* falls of persons, *(b)* falls of materials, *(c)* work in excavations, *(d)* transport, *(e)* electricity, *(f)* cranes, *(g)* hoists and *(h)* other.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The table shows the available information. Fatalities to the self-employed and members of the public were not reportable until 1 January 1981. The few voluntary reports collected between 1978 and 1980 are included with employees. Fatal injuries to the self-employed working on their own have never been reportable.

*Reported[8] fatalities in the construction industry[9]*

| *Date of accident* | *1 Falls of persons[1]* | *2 Falls of materials[2]* | *3 Work in excavations[3]* | *4 Transport[4]* | *5 Electricity* | *6 Cranes[5]* | *7 Hoists[6]* | *8 Others* | *9 Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Employees* | | | | | | | | | |
| 1960 | 154 | 29 | 17 | 28 | 14 | [10]10 | 2 | 24 | 278 |
| 1961 | 129 | 40 | 13 | 28 | 12 | [10]21 | — | 29 | 272 |
| 1962 | 152 | 38 | 19 | 30 | 12 | [10]10 | 1 | 19 | 281 |

| Date of accident | 1 Falls of persons[1] | 2 Falls of materials[2] | 3 Work in excavations[3] | 4 Transport[4] | 5 Electricity | 6 Cranes[5] | 7 Hoists[6] | 8 Others | 9 Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1963 | 143 | 15 | 16 | 19 | 15 | [10]12 | 4 | 23 | 247 |
| 1964 | 140 | 35 | 25 | 16 | 21 | [10]12 | 1 | 21 | 271 |
| 1965 | 118 | 33 | 16 | 22 | 8 | [10]15 | 4 | 14 | 230 |
| 1966 | 130 | 42 | 19 | 40 | 18 | [7]16 | 3 | 24 | 292 |
| 1967 | 115 | 20 | 7 | 20 | 9 | [7]11 | 4 | 18 | 204 |
| 1968 | 124 | 28 | 19 | 18 | 11 | [7]24 | 2 | 14 | 240 |
| 1969 | 124 | 22 | 23 | 35 | 14 | [7]26 | 1 | 23 | 268 |
| 1970 | 84 | 22 | 10 | 35 | 13 | [7]20 | 4 | 16 | 204 |
| 1971 | 96 | 13 | 22 | 29 | 10 | [7]15 | 5 | 11 | 201 |
| 1972 | 80 | 17 | 21 | 25 | 12 | [7]16 | 4 | 15 | 190 |
| 1973 | 98 | 16 | 23 | 35 | 10 | [7]22 | 4 | 23 | 231 |
| 1974 | 76 | 13 | 9 | 21 | 12 | [7]24 | — | 11 | 166 |
| 1975 | 67 | 23 | 11 | 26 | 10 | [7]21 | 1 | 23 | 182 |
| 1976 | 72 | 18 | 7 | 18 | 8 | [7]12 | 1 | 18 | 186 |
| 1977 | 73 | 6 | 4 | 17 | 3 | [7]16 | — | 11 | 130 |
| 1978 | 88 | 16 | 10 | 11 | 9 | [10]5 | 4 | 10 | 153 |
| 1979 | 81 | 18 | 11 | 11 | 4 | [10]4 | 3 | 17 | 149 |
| 1980 | 93 | 17 | 9 | 19 | 14 | [10]— | — | 13 | 165 |
| 1981 | 52 | 13 | 5 | 23 | 5 | [10]— | — | 7 | 105 |
| 1982 | 53 | 16 | 4 | 24 | 3 | [10]— | — | — | 100 |
| 1983 | 64 | 14 | 9 | 11 | 6 | [10]— | — | 14 | 118 |
| 1984 | 47 | 16 | 8 | 24 | 3 | [10]— | — | 2 | 100 |
| 1985 | 51 | 18 | 9 | 21 | 3 | [10]— | — | 2 | 104 |
| 1986[10] | 12 | 2 | — | 5 | 1 | [10]— | — | 4 | 24 |
| 1986-87[11] | 45 | 9 | 6 | 12 | 4 | [10]— | — | 23 | 99 |
| 1987-88[11] | 47 | 9 | 3 | 22 | 4 | [10]— | — | 15 | 100 |
| *Self-employed* | | | | | | | | | |
| 1981 | 8 | 2 | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | 11 |
| 1982 | 11 | 2 | — | 2 | 2 | — | — | 1 | 18 |
| 1983 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | — | — | — | [13]22 |
| 1984 | 12 | 2 | — | 2 | 1 | — | — | — | 17 |
| 1985 | 15 | 4 | 2 | — | — | — | — | 1 | 22 |
| 1986[10] | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| 1986-87[11] | 18 | 2 | 1 | — | 2 | — | — | 3 | 26 |
| 1987-88[11][12] | 26 | 3 | — | 2 | 3 | — | — | 7 | 41 |
| *Non-employed* | | | | | | | | | |
| 1981 | — | 3 | — | 4 | — | — | — | 5 | 12 |
| 1982 | 6 | 3 | — | 3 | — | — | — | 1 | 13 |
| 1983 | 6 | 2 | — | 2 | — | — | — | 1 | 11 |
| 1984 | 3 | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | 2 | 7 |
| 1985 | 3 | 4 | — | 6 | — | — | — | — | 13 |
| 1986[10] | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| 1986-87[11] | 8 | 1 | — | 1 | — | — | — | 4 | 14 |
| 1987-88[11][12] | 7 | 2 | — | 1 | — | — | — | 6 | 16 |

[1] Includes falls into excavations but excludes falls from vehicles which are included under transport.
[2] Excludes falls of earth in trenches which are included under work in excavations.
[3] Includes falls of earth in trenches but excludes falls into excavations which are included under falls of persons.
[4] Includes falls from vehicles.
[5] Includes injuries involving lifting machinery other than hoists, except in 1978-79 when cranes only are included.
[6] Excludes falls of persons and materials; these are included in columns 1 and 2.
[7] Includes falls of persons and materials; these are not included in columns 1 and 2.
[8] Reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and all other relevant enforcing authorities under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR) for 1981 to March 1986, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR) for 1986-87 onwards. Fatalities between 1960 and 1980 are limited to those reported to Her Majesty's factory inspectorate.
[9] The construction industry is defined as in the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 1968 (Order XX) up to 1980 and as in SIC 1980 (Division 5) from 1981.
[10] First quarter (January to March).
[11] Year commencing 1 April.
[12] Provisional.
[13] Revised.

## Health and Safety Inspectors

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of health and safety inspectors who have been employed in each of the past 10 years; and for how many the specific purpose of employment has been to oversee the safety of workplaces.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Since 1979, the total number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive is as follows (1 April figures):

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 1,424 |
| 1980 | 1,435 |
| 1981 | 1,404 |
| 1982 | 1,323 |
| 1983 | 1,276 |

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 1,242 |
| 1985 | 1,266 |
| 1986 | 1,231 |
| [1]1987 | 1,204 |
| 1988 | 1,165 |
| [2]1989 | 1,185 |

[1] Her Majesty's industrial air pollution inspectors (37 posts) transferred to the Department of the Environment on 1 April 1987.
[2] 1 February.

All HSE inspectors are recruited specifically to contribute to the executive's role in overseeing the safety of workplaces, by inspection, advisory and enforcement activities, or by the provision of specialist technical advice to visiting inspectors. In the course of their employment inspectors may also spend time on other duties including line management responsibilities and contributing to the development of legislation, guidance and technical standards.

## Industrial Accidents

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of people killed as the result of accidents in the workplace in each of the last five years showing, in each year, what the figures were in the previous 10, 20 and 30 years.

**Mr. Nicholls:** The table shows the available information. Fatalities to the self-employed and members of the public were not reportable until 1 January 1981.

*Fatalities as a result of work activity to all enforcing authorities[1] Great Britain*

| *Date of accident* | *Employees* | *Self employed[2]* | *Non employed* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1987-88[3,8] | 340 | 83 | 102 | 525 |
| 1986-87[3] | 355 | 52 | 91 | 498 |
| 1986 Q1[4] | 98 | 10 | 24 | 132 |
| 1985 | 399 | 71 | [5]159 | 629 |
| 1984 | 438 | 60 | 105 | 603 |
| 1983 | 447 | 65 | 85 | 597 |
| Yearly average: | | | | |
| 1973-82[6] | 588 | [9]. . | [9]. . | [9]. . |
| 1963-72[6] | 939 | [9]. . | [9]. . | [9]. . |
| 1953-62[6] | [7]677 | [9]. . | [9]. . | [9]. . |

[1] Reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and all other relevant enforcing authorities under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR) for 1981 to March 1986, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR) for 1986-87 onwards. Prior to 1981, injuries were reported under various legal requirements. Fatalities between 1953 and 1962 are limited to those reported to HSE's factory inspectorate. Fatal injuries to the self-employed and the non-employed reported to the mines and quarries inspectorate for the years 1981 to 1984, and reported to local authorities for the years 1981 to 1985 are included with employees.
[2] Fatal injuries to the self-employed working on their own have never been reportable.
[3] year commencing 1 April.
[4] First quarter (January to March)
[5] Includes 56 members of the public killed in the Bradford City football club fire disaster.
[6] Average yearly figure for the 10-year period.
[7] Factory inspectorate only.
[8] Provisional.
[9]. . Not available.

## Further Education Programme

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to provide for consultation with local authorities and other interested parties in relation to the future further education programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Cope:** I have no plans for formal consultation in relation to the further education programme. My officials are in regular contact with local education authorities through their associations and with other interested parties.

## Voluntary Organisations (Bradford)

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make funds available to Bradford metropolitan district council to enable voluntary organisations, previously funded by the Manpower Services Commission, to continue.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Funds are already available under employment training to enable Bradford metropolitan district council to provide training for unemployed people. It is for the council to decide how it will organise this training and which voluntary organisations it will fund as a training provider.

## Employment Training

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons on the employment training programme have had two days' training plus three days' work a week for at least a four-week period each month since September 1988.

**Mr. Nicholls:** None. Employment training is a full-time training programme five days a week. In exceptional circumstances people can undertake a part-time introduction to the programme or part-time training, but people in those circumstances are individuals who are not able, for medical or other reasons, to work during the time they are not attending employment training.

## Retirement Pensions

**Mr. Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the components of the cost of living index on which increases in the retirement pension are based.

**Mr. Lee:** Retirement pensions are uprated in line with the "all items" retail prices index. The index covers practically all the goods and services on which people spend their money. The main groups used for classification are food, catering, alcoholic drink, tobacco, housing, fuel and light, household goods, household services, clothing and footwear, personal goods and services, motoring expenditure, fares and other travel costs, leisure goods and leisure services.

## Labour Statistics

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number in the civilian labour force in 1988, and in each quarter of 1988; and what is his estimate of the number of persons economically active in employment in 1988, and in each quarter of 1988.

**Mr. Lee:** An estimate of the civilian labour force in Great Britain in mid-1988 will be available shortly using the results of the labour force survey conducted in the spring of 1988; the projection published last year was 27,538,000. Quarterly estimates of the civilian labour force are not available.

Estimates of the number of persons economically active in employment in spring 1988 will also be available shortly from the labour force survey. Quarterly estimates are not available.

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been employed in each travel-to-work area of Hampshire in each year since 1979; and if he will express this as a percentage increase or decrease on the preceding year.

**Mr. Lee:** The table gives the available information, taken from the September 1981 and September 1984 censuses of employment, for each of the travel-to-work areas which fall wholly or partly within the county of Hampshire:

*Employees in employment*[1]

| | *Numbers (thousands)* | | *Percentage change 1981 to 1984* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *September 1981* | *September 1984* | |
| *Travel-to-work area*[2] | | | |
| Basingstoke and Alton | 64·1 | 69·6 | +8·7 |
| Gosport and Fareham | 45·5 | 48·6 | +6·8 |
| Southampton | 163·5 | 162·7 | −0·5 |
| Winchester and Eastleigh | 70·7 | 73·0 | +3·2 |
| *Travel-to-work area*[3] | | | |
| Andover | 25·6 | 26·7 | +4·6 |
| Bournemouth | 83·6 | 81·8 | −2·2 |
| Guildford and Aldershot | 152·5 | 160·3 | +5·1 |
| Newbury | 28·1 | 31·8 | +13·3 |
| Portsmouth | 143·0 | 133·9 | −6·3 |
| Salisbury | 37·0 | 38·1 | +2·9 |

[1] Excludes the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

[2] Travel-to-work areas wholly contained within the county of Hampshire.

[3] Travel-to-work areas partly contained within the county.

## Fletcher Hunt and Connaughts

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will prosecute the employment agencies known as Fletcher Hunt and Connaughts for the charging of clients for counselling and other services, contrary to the Employment Agencies Act 1973.

**Mr. Lee:** It is not an offence under the Employment Agencies Act 1973 to charge clients for counselling and other services. The offence is to make the provision of a job-finding service conditional on the use of chargeable services. No evidence of the offence has been found hitherto in Fletcher Hunt and Connaughts. The practices of all agencies are kept under review.

## Inner Cities

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans for new initiatives in inner cities.

**Mr. Fowler:** My Department makes a substantial contribution to inner city regeneration through its employment, training and enterprise programmes and the special initiatives that we already fund as part of the action for cities programme.

We now plan to fund a range of further initiatives which build on our existing services and extend them further to help even more people in the inner cities.

Progress on the existing school/industry compacts has been excellent. Thirty bids for development funding were accepted in August 1988 and the first four applications for operational funding—Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry and Hull—have now been approved. Other applications will be considered shortly. We will now be inviting bids for up to a further 10 compacts (nine in England and one in Scotland) from partnerships of employers and education authorities.

I am anxious that more unemployed inner city residents should have the opportunity of training designed to help meet emerging skill shortages. In 10 inner city areas we will therefore pilot an initiative in employment training to allow people who have been unemployed for between three and six months to join the programme in addition to the existing eligible groups.

I am also concerned to improve the job opportunities for people who have been out of work for six months or more. As an extension of the restart process we will therefore pilot a job interview guarantee in 20 inner city areas. It will offer employers a comprehensive range of ways, including short work trials, to choose the right people for their jobs. In return for the enhanced service they will be offered, employers will enter into formal agreements with the employment service in which they guarantee to interview long-term unemployed clients.

I am convinced that these new initiatives announced today will help to enhance the valuable work already being undertaken by my Department in the inner cities.

# AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

## Departmental Achievements

**Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what have been the principal achievements of his Department since 1987.

**Mr. MacGregor:** My Department has been in the forefront of efforts to achieve further progress in reforming the CAP, the arrangements embodied in the February 1988 European Council agreement being the most significant step taken so far. This introduced for the first time a legally binding ceiling on CAP market support expenditure; and limited its growth to about 2 per cent. in real terms between 1988 and 1992 compared to 10 per cent. a year over the previous four years. Stabilisers are now in place for most CAP commodities, and these are backed up by practical measures to strengthen financial control. Community spending on agricultural market support has been kept under control. Both the outturn for 1988 and the budget for 1989 are well within the financial guideline.

The 1988 price-fixing settlement built on this progress. The negotiations demonstrated clearly the impact of the new rules on budget discipline, and the final settlement respected the expenditure ceiling for 1989 and 1990. At the same time, the Government continued to press United Kingdom farm interests and achieved a devaluation of the green pound worth about £120 million on farm incomes in a full year.

Since 1987, the much criticised EC surpluses in most major commodities, as demonstrated by intervention stocks, have fallen significantly. Stocks of butter have fallen 88 per cent. since the end of 1987. Cereals stocks are down about 40 per cent. since August 1987. Skimmed milk powder stocks, which were nearly 800,000 tonnes in 1987, are now virtually non-existent.

We have reached agreement in the European Community on new support arrangements for beef which significantly reduce the role of intervention and its cost, leave the market more responsive to supply and demand and provide direct payments to beef producers.

To complement the policy of price restraint and increased market orientation, the Government have introduced a range of schemes designed to achieve a better balance between agricultural production and the environment, encourage farm diversification and alternative land use, and encourage farming practices that are beneficial to the landscape and to the conservation of wildlife.

The introduction in 1988 of a set-aside scheme provided incentives for the reduction of surplus cereal production, while keeping the land set aside in good heart.

Following the passage of the Farm Land and Rural Development Act 1988, the Government introduced the farm woodland scheme 1988 which is designed to encourage planting of trees on land previously in agricultural production and which has already got off to an encouraging start. Grants for enterprise feasibility studies and marketing costs of diversified enterprises were introduced in August 1988. These complement the capital grants for farm diversification introduced on 1 January 1988.

The farm and conservation grants scheme was introduced in February 1989. This targets assistance on investments to prevent water pollution by farm operations and to enhance the conservation of the countryside. The lowland grant rate of 50 per cent. for waste treatment and disposal facilities is the highest level ever offered in those areas and is also the best rate of grant available anywhere in the Community. Extra help is also provided for horticulture. Prompt action was taken to assist farmers and growers adversely affected by the great storm of 16 October 1987 through extra grants for the replanting of orchard trees and replacement of damaged hedges and walls.

We have established 10 environmentally sensitive areas in England. The scheme, which is voluntary, encourages environmentally beneficial agricultural practices. Over 300,000 hectares of land are within environmentally sensitive areas. This represents a considerable commitment to helping to protect some of the most beautiful parts of the country.

We have taken further measures for the safe application of pesticides by requiring certification of certain groups of operators. Statutory controls to limit pesticide residues in crops and food have been introduced. Measures have been taken to ensure that farmers limit pesticides to approved uses only and clear guidance has been issued on disposal of surplus pesticides.

The Government have engaged in extensive consultations with industry and consumers as a part of our major review of existing primary food legislation and hope to bring this forward as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

We have strengthened the science base for consumers' protection by building up a comprehensive food monitoring and investigative system under the auspices of the steering group on food surveillance. The objective is to provide a basis for regulation and advice to consumers.

In July 1987 the Government issued guidelines on nutrition labelling of foods which aim to standardise the presentation of nutritional information. This is helping consumers to achieve a balanced diet by enabling them to compare food more easily.

The United Kingdom has taken an active role in negotiating Community directives which form part of the single market food law harmonisation programme and which will remove barriers to trade and benefit both consumers and industry. Last year agreement was reached on nine Community directives including the five important framework directives on food additives, materials and articles in contact with food, foods for particular nutritional uses and the official inspection of foodstuffs.

The Government have enacted about 30 food law measures and proposals have been issued for consultation on a further 10 measures including draft regulations on soft drinks, fish products and fat spread products, and amendments to the Food Labelling Regulations to introduce alcoholic strength marking and restriction on the use of the term "low alcohol".

As soon as it became clear that there was a problem with salmonella enteritidis in eggs, the Government acted immediately to tackle the problems at every point in the production chain, from feed production through breeders, hatcheries and laying flocks to the food distribution industry and consumers.

A working party was set up under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Southwood to look at all aspects of the new cattle disease called bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The Government took prompt action in imposing a feed ban to cut off the most likely source of disease to cattle, and responded quickly to the working party's interim recommendations to slaughter affected animals and destroy the carcases and milk from them. The working party's full report, which was published on 27 February, welcomed the Government's prompt action.

The United Kingdom has been successful—along with Denmark—in achieving Community recognition of its higher (step 2) hygiene status under the EC heat-treated milk directive.

In the animal welfare area we have banned veal crates, made new legislation on battery hens and poultry transport, and produced new on-farm codes for seven species.

Following sustained United Kingdom pressure, the Council of Agriculture Ministers reached agreement in December 1988 on a new regulation defining spirits, which will greatly strengthen the competitive position of the United Kingdom drink industry.

Increased Government funding for the construction and improvement of flood and coastal defences, was announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 1988.

For water authorities, £15·9 million of extra grant will be made available over the next three financial years, increasing Government support in this sector by 1991-92 to nearly £25 million annually. In addition the grant-aided capital programme of local authority flood and sea defence work is being increased over the same period by £8·8 million, increasing the Government funded programme by 1991-92 to £11 million.

Updated guidance to drainage authorities on their environmental responsibilities was issued and regulations were made to implement the EC environmental assessment directive regarding flood defence improvement work.

During 1988, the Government secured improvements in the EC fish conservation, marketing and control regimes, including improved measures to protect juvenile mackerel and plaice and provision for carry-over premium for herring and mackerel. We also secured a satisfactory settlement of the 1989 catch quota including the right to take some of our western mackerel quota east of 4 west and a 1989 North sea haddock quota which took account of our special claims under The Hague preference. We have announced new national measures to improve the conservation of bass stocks.

## Deer

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each of the last five years *(a)* how many live deer and of what species were exported from the United Kingdom, *(b)* how many were exported for the purpose of deer farming or the improvement of stocks of foreign deer and *(c)* to what countries they were exported; what procedures were carried out to determine if they were free from disease; and whether any tests were carried out for tuberculosis.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** The information requested about the numbers and species of deer exported, their purpose and countries of destination is not available. Consignments of deer for export are normally accompanied by a health certificate produced in accordance with the importing countries requirements. To date certificates have been agreed for exports to Austria, China, Denmark, New Zealand, Guernsey, Republic of Ireland, Israel, Taiwan, South Africa, United States of America and Oman.

In all cases the certificate is signed at the boarding point by a local veterinary inspector who is required to confirm that, amongst other things the animals are healthy and free from clinical signs of infectious or contagious disease. A number of countries also require certification to the effect that the animals have been tested for tuberculosis with negative results.

## Environmentally Sensitive Areas

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations concerning the payment of environmentally sensitive areas payments to landlords; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Ryder:** I have received no representations concerning the payment of ESA payments to landlords. ESA payments are made direct to the applicant who will usually be an owner-occupier or tenant.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of farmers who have entered into environmentally sensitive area agreements who are *(a)* owner-occupiers, *(b)* tenants of private landlords and *(c)* tenants of public authorities; and if, in respect of the latter, he will state the number of tenants of each public body in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively.

**Mr. Ryder:** The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and would not be available in the form requested.

## Forestry Commission (Hunting Permission)

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *853*, if he will now place in the Library the appendices referred to in the form of permission to hunt used in the Forestry Commission's east England conservancy.

**Mr. Ryder:** Each standard form of hunt permission issued in the Forestry Commission's east England conservancy is accompanied by the appropriate schedules referred to in condition 1 of the permission. These schedules are completed in each case to show the areas of land which the hunt may enter and the conditions of such entry. I have arranged for copies of the schedule forms to be placed in the Library, although they do not add anything to the information already given in condition 1 of the permission.

## Ruminant Feedstuffs

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on how many occasions since 18 July 1988 his Department has taken and tested samples of ruminant feedstuffs containing ruminant-derived protein material;

(2) what action his Department is taking to monitor the effectiveness of his ban on the use of ruminant-derived protein material in ruminant feedstuffs.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Ministry officials are empowered to take and test samples of ruminant feedstuffs if they have reason to believe the ban on the use of ruminant-derived protein is being broken. To date, there has been no reason to believe the law has been broken and such action has not been necessary.

## Scrapie

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those animal species known by his Department to be infected with scrapie or scrapie-like infections.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Scrapie in sheep and goats and BSE in cattle belong to a group of progressive degenerative diseases caused by unconventional transmissible agents. Similar diseases are known to have occurred in other countries in mink, captive mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk.

## Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the sites in the Crewe and

Nantwich constituency being used to dispose of cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy; if he will identify the method of disposal; if he will take steps to ensure the supervision by his officers; and if he will list the numbers of occasions on which the Wardle landfill site has been used for such a purpose.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** Slaughtered cattle suspected of having BSE are buried at the Wardle landfill site, Nantwich under the supervision of Ministry staff. Since 24 June 1988, a total of 46 carcasses have been buried there.

### Agriculture Council

**Mr. Marland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council on 6-7 March in Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The main business before the Council, at which I represented the Government, consisted of the Commission's proposals for agricultural prices and other aspects of the farm support system for 1989-90. There was extensive discussion, but no agreement was reached. In the main, I supported the Commission's proposals, while pressing points of particular importance for our farmers, including an appropriate devaluation of the green pound.

The meeting also discussed a proposal to make payments to farmers specifically to encourage them to diversify into certain non-surplus products. Along with several other Ministers I objected to some aspects of the proposal because of the risk that established producers of non-surplus products could be unfairly affected by subsidised competition. I was particularly concerned about the impact on our soft fruit growers and horticultural businesses producing plants and flowers. I was able to secure sufficient support to prevent these sectors from being included in the list of sectors eligible for subsidised competition, and the president decided therefore to remit the proposal for further study. It could otherwise have been accepted with the exclusion of those products at the Council. We shall return to the issues at a subsequent Council.

The Commission again urged, with our support, that a decision be taken on future arrangements for imports of butter and sheepmeat from New Zealand but several member states were still unwilling to reach a decision for the time being. The matter will be discussed again at the Council beginning on 20 March.

Finally, the Council had a first reading of proposals from the Commission which it entitled an action programme for forestry. These will likewise be discussed further at a later date.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Nurses' Pay

1. **Rev. William McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nurses in Northern Ireland are unsatisfied with their pay award and how many appeals are outstanding.

**Mr. Viggers:** Of the 15,400 nurses in Northern Ireland, some 6,000 have requested informal reviews with their nurse managers. 4,280 reviews have been completed of which 682 posts have been upgraded. 2,574 cases are proceeding with formal appeals of which 26 posts have so far been upgraded.

### Security

10. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

14. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

15. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

23. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation.

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Tom King:** The House will be aware of the explosion at Buncrana road, Londonderry last night in which two soldiers were tragically killed and six of their colleagues were injured. The House will also be aware of the indiscriminate shooting attack at Coagh village on Tuesday afternoon in which three civilians died. The total deaths since I last answered questions in the House on 9 February are 13. This includes three soldiers and 10 civilians. The Provisional IRA claimed responsibility for eight of these murders, the IPLO for one, while the remaining four are thought to have been carried out by Loyalist terrorist groups.

These figures confirm the serious warnings that the RUC has given about the high security threat, against which the security forces are maintaining their high level of response.

Since the beginning of the year 53 persons have been charged with serious offences including four with murder and seven with attempted murder. A total of 99 weapons, over 9,400 rounds of ammunition and 154 lbs of explosives have been recovered in Northern Ireland. I understand that the Garda Siochana has recovered 21 weapons, 9,500 rounds of ammunition, and 175 lbs of explosives.

### Anglo-Irish Agreement

16. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on any recent meetings which he has had with Ministers of the Republic of Ireland under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

**Mr. Tom King:** I met Ministers of the Republic of Ireland at the last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 8 February. A copy of the communiqué, which lists the subjects discussed, has been placed in the Library.

24. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to be completed.

28. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to be able to report on the completion of the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

**Mr. Tom King:** I would expect it to be before the summer.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

**Mr. Tom King:** I have received a number of representations in response to my invitation to members of the public, political parties, and other interested bodies to submit their views on the working of the Intergovernmental Conference under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. These are being carefully considered.

### Lagan College

17. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects work to start on the provision of permanent buildings for Lagan college.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Early 1990.

### Political Parties (Talks)

18. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in holding talks with the political parties in Northern Ireland since 14 February.

22. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what responses he has received to his call for talks with the political parties in Northern Ireland.

26. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response his appeal to the political parties in Northern Ireland to engage in talks with him has received.

**Mr. Tom King:** In my speech in east Belfast on 14 February, I said that we would be seeking to explore with all in Northern Ireland who have a contribution to make, what possibilities may now exist for political progress. This process has now started.

### Charitable Donations

19. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the level of donations to charities and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland; and whether any patterns can be discerned over the last three years.

**Mr. Needham:** The information held by the Government about donations from the public to charities and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland is limited to returns from Provincewide house-to-house collections. These do not enable general conclusions to be drawn about patterns of giving.

The Government have taken steps over the past three years to encourage giving in the workplace, through the payroll giving scheme. The scheme in Northern Ireland has been growing steadily, and expects to handle some £100,000 in the 1988-89 financial year. Over 200 employers are now enrolled with the scheme.

### Auxiliary Oiler Vessel

20. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the financial arrangements with potential acquirers of Harland and Wolff for meeting existing liabilities or for meeting losses on existing contracts will exclude any liabilities or losses in respect of the AOR1, contract.

**Mr. Viggers:** The financial arrangements with potential acquirers of Harland and Wolff will involve a complex range of factors. I can confirm, however, that they will include provision for meeting losses on existing contracts.

### Irish Sea (Pollution)

21. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will consider the implications for the environment and health of Northern Ireland of current levels of pollution in the Irish sea.

**Mr. Tom King:** Discussions between the United Kingdom and Irish Governments about pollution in the Irish sea have hitherto been conducted by the Ministers and officials directly concerned rather than through the Intergovernmental Conference. I am sure that this remains the right approach.

### South Down (Investment)

25. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each year from 1984 to 1988 the number of occasions when the Industrial Development Board and Local Enterprise Development Unit brought potential investing companies to South Down for the purposes of new development and job creation; and to what bodies or persons they were introduced.

**Mr. Viggers:** Since 1984, the industrial development board has accompanied potential inward investors on 15 visits to the hon. Gentleman's constituency as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 1 |
| 1985 | 3 |
| 1986 | 1 |
| 1987 | 4 |
| 1988 | 4 |

In 1989 there have so far been two such visits. The visitors met local business men, and inspected industrial estates, port, training and employment service facilities in the area. The role of the local enterprise development unit is to support locally based projects.

### Housing Executive (Public Liability Claims)

27. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total of public liability claims paid by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive *(a)* in 1979-80, and *(b)* in 1987-88.

**Mr. Needham:** This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that the information is not available in the form requested.

He has informed me that during 1979-80 the Housing Executive insured against public liability risk and the amount paid out by the insurance company is not known.

During 1987-88 the executive paid out £1·4 million in respect of public liability claims.

### Local Government Reforms

29. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals to introduce local government reforms in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Needham:** The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland published a consultative paper on local government last November, setting out proposals with regard to the conduct of district council business, the administrative structure of environmental health and building control services, and the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for certain services. Comments were requested by 1 March 1989 and are now being considered.

### Extradition

30. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been extradited from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland during the last three months; and of these how many were charged with terrorist-type offences.

**Mr. Tom King:** No persons have been extradited from the Republic of Ireland during the last three months. One application has been made and 18 applications are pending. There is no differentiation in the applications between terrorist and non-terrorist cases.

### Cross-border Security

31. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on improvements in cross-border co-operation on the frontier between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement on 15 November 1985.

**Mr. Tom King:** A number of steps have been taken in the field of co-operation, intelligence, communication and other related aspects which are all directed towards improving cross-border co-operation.

### Single European Act

32. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in preparing Northern Ireland for the implementation of the Single European Act.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** We have set in train action on a broad front to prepare Northern Ireland for the implementation of the Single European Act. This action includes gearing up the private sector for the challenges and opportunities of the single European market, ensuring that the public sector is alert to changing requirements on such matters as standards and public purchasing arrangements, and preparing the necessary development plan and programmes to take advantage of the Province's objective 1 priority status under the reformed structural funds.

### Royal Ulster Constabulary (Traffic Accidents)

**Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many motor accidents involving members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve there have been in Northern Ireland during 1986, 1987 and 1988; and in how many cases the police officers were to blame in each case.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** Records are not maintained on the number of police officers involved in road traffic accidents whilst driving private vehicles. However, the number of accidents involving police vehicles is summarised as follows:

| | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total number of accidents involving police vehicles | 864 | 736 | 696 |
| Accidents in which police drivers were adjudged to be blame worthy | 275 | 293 | 209 |

A substantial number of these accidents were of a minor nature, many of them occurring within police property. Further information may be found in the Chief Constable's annual reports.

**Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fatalities, other than police officers, there have been as a result of motor accidents involving members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve in which police officers were held responsible for the accident.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** The information requested is not available from current records.

### Police Officers (Driving Training)

**Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what driving skills training is available to police officers in Northern Ireland; what encouragement is offered to them to take up this training; and how many police officers have taken the advanced driving test in 1986, 1987 and 1988, respectively.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** All qualified drivers who join the Royal Ulster Constabulary are given a four-week initial standard driving course as part of their initial training. On passing this course to the required standard they are appointed as police drivers. No officer may drive a police vehicle unless appointed as a police driver. Throughout an officer's career he or she may at any time apply to become an advanced driver or motor cyclist. Each application is considered on its merit and a high percentage are so trained. Numbers trained were as follows:

*Advanced driving courses*

| | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of officers trained | 102 | 90 | 70 |
| Number passed | 97 | 86 | 67 |

### Police Officers (Traffic Offences)

**Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prosecutions for road traffic offences were taken against police officers in 1986, 1987 and 1988; and how many were for *(a)* driving whilst under the influence of alcohol, *(b)* speeding and *(c)* dangerous or reckless driving.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** Information is not available as to the number of police officers prosecuted for all road traffic offences. However, the number prosecuted for drunken driving and reckless driving was as follows:

*Royal Ulster Constabulary officers prosecuted under Article 141(1) and 145(1) of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (Drunken Driving)*

| Year | Number of officers | Number convicted | Number acquitted | No result of hearing yet received |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1986 | 24 | 23 | 1 | — |
| 1987 | 27 | 25 | 2 | — |
| 1988 | 37 | 28 | — | 9 |

*RUC officers prosecuted under article 139(1) and (2) of the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1981 (Reckless Driving)*

| Year | Number officers | Number convicted | Number acquitted | No result of hearing yet received |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1986 | 12 | 11 | 1 | — |
| 1987 | 11 | 10 | 1 | — |
| 1988 | 9 | 6 | — | 3 |

*Note:* Ten officers appear in both tables, having been prosecuted in the same proceedings for both an offence of reckless driving and an offence of drunken driving.

## Housing

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people live in *(a)* public sector housing, *(b)* the private sector rented, and *(c)* owner-occupied housing in the Province expressed in figures and as percentages of the total; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** This information is not available in the form requested. However, details of tenure of occupied housing stock at October 1988 are as follows:

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Owner Occupied | 322,000 | 61·7 |
| Public Sector (Northern Ireland Housing Executive) | 171,000 | 32·7 |
| Private Rented Sector)including Housing Associations) | 29,000 | 5·6 |
| Total | 522,000 | 100 |

## Devolution

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent information he has on the extent of popular support in favour of devolved government for Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Tom King:** I am anxious to establish more precisely the degree of support in the Province for political progress. For that reason and with the assistance of my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) I am exploring with the parties and interested groups the possibilities for political movement. A copy of my speech given to the Belfast East Rotarions on 14 February has been place in the Library.

## Prisoners

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners there are in Northern Ireland who have served more than 10 years in prison, and were under 21 years when convicted.

**Mr. Ian Stewart:** Seventy-four.

# FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

## Vietnam

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any proposals for the removal of restrictions upon trade and overseas aid to Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** There are no restrictions on trade with Vietnam. We ceased aid to Vietnam in 1979 following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. We welcome the Vietnamese announcement of intention to withdraw from Cambodia and are following developments closely, but we have no immediate plans to change our policy.

## Hong Kong (Refugee Camps)

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what levels of grant were made by Her Majesty's Government for UNHCR's English language training programmes in refugee camps in Hong Kong in each of the years 1986 to 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** We contributed £100,000 in March 1988 and £1 million in October 1988 to UNHCR's programme in Hong Kong. This programme includes their English language training schemes for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

# TRANSPORT

## Airports

**Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which local authorities are currently conducting negotiations for the sale of their airports to the private sector in whole or in part.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** None. Such information would be a commercial matter for the authorities and those with whom they were negotiating.

## Rolling Stock Technicians

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from British Rail regarding the costing of the rolling stock technicians, grade two, on stations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Portillo:** None. These are management matters for the British Railways Board.

## Belgian Trawler (Sinking)

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the location, time, weather conditions and other circumstances regarding the sinking of a Belgian trawler in the Irish sea on 6-7 March; whether the sinking was in United Kingdom territorial waters; what information he has on whether any submarines were in the vicinity; what arrangements have been made for an inquiry into the cause of the sinking; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Portillo:** The Belgian-registered trawler Tijl Uilenspiegel sank approximately 25 miles south-east of the

Isle of Man on Sunday 5 March 1989. No distress signal was received from the vessel by Her Majesty's Coastguard. The precise time of the casualty if not known—it is thought to have sunk after noon.

Her Majesty's Coastguard were alerted to the incident when another Belgian trawler, Drakkar, recovered a body at 8.18 pm that evening. A subsequent major full scale search was mounted all that night and on Monday 6 March 1989, but no further bodies or any liferaft have been recovered. The sea condition was moderate, with a south east wind of 17 to 21 knots, with visibility at seven miles.

The casualty occurred outside United Kingdom territorial waters and no investigation will be undertaken by the Department. Department officials have contacted the Belgian maritime authorities to ascertain whether Belgium will be undertaking an investigation into the cause of this tragedy.

I am advised that no United Kingdom or allied submarine was operating in the area at the time of the incident.

## Roads (Hampshire)

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on roads in Hampshire for which it is the highway authority each year since 1979, expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms based on 1979 and *(c)* as a percentage increase or decrease on each preceding year.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The information in the form requested is not available. It could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

## Manchester Airport

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Manchester city council has received as a contribution to rates from Manchester international airport for the years 1979 to 1989.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We do not have this information. I suggest that my hon. Friend contacts the local authority.

## Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley Bridge Bypass

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stretford of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *294*, he will give the dates on which different sections of the report of Allet and Lomax, consulting engineers, as to the performance of the consulting engineers employed on the Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley Bridge bypass, were received at his Department; when he expects to receive further sections of the report; what is the content of those sections; and when he estimates he will be in a position to consider whether to place the full report in the Library.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The scheme took longer and cost more than expected. The report, which will deal with the geotechnical difficulties encountered on the scheme, is being prepared in phases. A summary of the first two phases was received by the Department on 3 March 1989. This is under consideration. Various interim technical statements received prior to 3 March form appendices to the summary report. The amount of work in the later phases depends on earlier findings, and it is difficult to give firm completion dates. When it is complete, we will consider whether it is appropriate to place it in the Library.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has caused delays in announcing further road improvement works beyond the Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley Bridge bypass; whether re-appraisals have taken place in the light of the cost overspend on this section; and whether particular routes have now been ruled out because of doubts about the geology of the area.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The response to the public consultation on the adjoining A6 Disley-High Lane bypass proposal was exceptional. It included suggestions for 18 alternative routes which have had to be evaluated.

Our estimates for all routes have allowed for dealing with geological conditions. At this stage, no route has been ruled out on geological grounds.

## Manchester Airport (Accident)

**Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action has been taken to improve passenger safety arising out of the lessons learned during the course of the Manchester aircraft accident investigation.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The CAA has in fact already actioned many of the AAIB's recommendations. In the weeks and months following the accident changes were made to the maintenance procedures for the Pratt and Whitney JT8D engines fitted to this aircraft, and to methods of assessing the effect of repair schemes based on operators' fleet experience with this engine.

Other significant recommendations which have been acted upon include amendments to cabin materials certification to limit smoke and toxic gas emission in the event of fires.

In consultation with the industry, the authority has formulated requirements for the provision of smoke hoods and masks for passenger protection during fires, issuing a specification for passenger protection breathing equipment-smoke hoods, which defines both equipment performance and installation requirements. I understand that, at this stage, the CAA will not be making the provision of passenger smoke hoods mandatory.

The CAA has, in response to a safety recommendation, initiated a comprehensive research programme to investigate the introduction on civil aircraft of cabin water spray systems.

## Channel Tunnel

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has taken any decisions on British Rail's proposal for a new rail link between London and the Channel tunnel.

**Mr. Portillo:** I welcome the fact that blight has now been removed from large stretches of Kent; that British Rail's intentions on compensation and the alleviation of blight have been made clear; and that in formulating its route proposal British Rail has clearly been guided by the environmental criteria set out by Kent county council. The Government will need to consider between now and

November whether they will support the introduction of a private Bill by British Rail for the necessary powers to construct and operate the proposed route.

In reaching our decision, we shall be considering two main factors. First, we shall need to be satisfied that the route has been subjected to a full environmental assessment and that any Bill can be accompanied by a satisfactory environmental statement. Secondly, we shall want to satisfy ourselves that British Rail investment would be likely within a reasonable time to earn a proper commercial return. This means that British Rail will need to consider further the uncertainties about the traffic forecasts, the costs of the project and the revenues. In doing so, it will be considering proposals from the private sector for building and financing the line.

### Settle-Carlisle Railway Line

**Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line.

**Mr. Portillo:** My right hon. Friend will make a statement when he has fully considered all the evidence. We are, however, conscious that the continuing uncertainty may cause difficulty to businesses in the area of the line. We therefore wish to make it clear that, whatever decision my right hon. Friend reaches on the closure case, he will not permit British Rail to withdraw its services at least until mid-October, when the timetable for all British Rail services changes.

### Birmingham Heartlands (Spine Road)

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will announce his decision on the application by Birmingham heartlands for approval for the heartlands spine road.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** We are considering the detailed case for a Birmingham heartlands spine road as part of our current review of the road programme. We will make an announcement when we can.

### Selby Bypass

**Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the route line and draft side road orders for the Selby bypass; and if he will make a statement on the overall progress of the project.

**Mr. Bottomley:** The additional preliminary investigations on this scheme are nearing completion.

We shall shortly commence preparation of the draft line and side roads orders. Present progress indicates that these orders should be published by the end of this year.

## WALES

### Local Authority Expenditure

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each county council (i) the net expenditure in each year since 1977-78, (ii) the domestic and business precept in each year since 1977-78, (iii) the percentage rise in the precept in each year since 1977-78, (iv) the percentage rise in the precept in the periods 1977-78 to 1980-81, 1981-82 to 1985-86, 1986-87 to 1989-90 and 1977-78 to 1989-90, (v) the change in the number of staff employed at the end of the periods 1977-78 to 1980-81, 1981-82 to 1985-86, 1986-87 to 1989-90 and 1977-78 to 1989-90 expressed in number and percentage terms, (vi) the political composition of the councils in 1977 to 1981, 1981 to 1985, 1985 to 1989; and if he will list the councils in rank order by largest increase in precept over the period 1985-86 to 1989-90 starting with the council with the highest increase in that period.

**Mr. Grist:** The information requested is shown in the following tables:

*(i) Total net expenditure since 1981-82 is shown below. Information relating to total expenditure is not available on a consistent basis prior to 1981-82*

*Total expenditure[1]—by authority in £000*

| *Counties* | *1981-82 outturn* | *1982-83 outturn* | *1983-84 outturn* | *1984-85 outturn* | *1985-86 outturn* | *1986-87 outturn* | *1987-88 revised estimates* | *1988-89 budgets* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 130,321 | 139,097 | 146,678 | 150,403 | 156,895 | 169,753 | 179,940 | 193,982 |
| Dyfed | 107,212 | 113,391 | 120,506 | 126,488 | 130,335 | 147,245 | 160,456 | 176,591 |
| Gwent | 148,524 | 153,730 | 160,316 | 166,119 | 173,327 | 184,342 | 202,169 | 219,701 |
| Gwynedd | 77,217 | 81,993 | 86,314 | 91,214 | 94,465 | 101,560 | 110,645 | 120,437 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 183,315 | 194,759 | 207,517 | 217,985 | 218,722 | 239,148 | 256,992 | 280,363 |
| Powis | 41,777 | 46,954 | 49,515 | 51,026 | 52,911 | 56,186 | 59,465 | 64,861 |
| South Glamorgan | 121,462 | 129,407 | 138,750 | 141,274 | 147,716 | 162,111 | 174,693 | 191,518 |
| West Glamorgan | 126,551 | 137,196 | 141,924 | 144,826 | 150,228 | 164,292 | 176,418 | 193,130 |

[1] Total expenditure is based on the same definition as that for Rate Support Grant purposes, that is net of local income (fees, sales and charges etc.) and net of specific grants.

*(ii) The county council precepts since 1977-78 are shown below. There are no separate business or domestic precepts as each county precepts for the amount that it requires. (Domestic Rate Relief Grant is paid to districts rather than counties.)*

| *Counties* | *1977-78 (p)* | *1978-79 (p)* | *1979-80 (p)* | *1980-81 (p)* | *1981-82 (p)* | *1982-83 (p)* | *1983-84 (p)* | *1984-85 (p)* | *1985-86 (p)* | *1986-87 (p)* | *1987-88 (p)* | *1988-89 (p)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 71·5 | 79·0 | 99·5 | 124·0 | 148·0 | 148·0 | 148·0 | 162·0 | 172·0 | 189·0 | 198·0 | 210·0 |
| Dyfed | 64·1 | 67·9 | 87·0 | 111·3 | 122·2 | 122·3 | 130·7 | 142·7 | 170·6 | 195·3 | 208·9 | 219·9 |
| Gwent | 73·9 | 79·0 | 98·0 | 117·0 | 129·0 | 135·0 | 141·0 | 141·0 | 146·0 | 173·0 | 192·0 | 208·0 |
| Gwynedd | 63·5 | 70·0 | 96·5 | 111·0 | 128·0 | 123·0 | 136·0 | 145·0 | 150·0 | 168·0 | 183·0 | 203·0 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 72·4 | 73·4 | 95·7 | 119·4 | 144·9 | 144·8 | 154·1 | 180·4 | 187·4 | 205·9 | 215·8 | 228·4 |
| Powys | 54·0 | 57·0 | 81·0 | 108·0 | 124·0 | 128·0 | 128·0 | 134·0 | 154·0 | 177·0 | 188·0 | 201·0 |
| South Glamorgan | 66·5 | 72·5 | 90·0 | 101·9 | 116·4 | 133·4 | 124·8 | 132·4 | 147·4 | 183·2 | 190·7 | 204·9 |
| West Glamorgan | 73·9 | 79·5 | 109·6 | 133·0 | 156·0 | 161·0 | 165·0 | 175·0 | 184·0 | 197·0 | 225·0 | 263·0 |

*(iii) The percentage rise in the precept in each year since 1977-78 is shown below.*

| Counties | Percentage change | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1977-78 to 1978-79 | 1978-79 to 1979-80 | 1979-80 to 1980-81 | 1980-81 to 1981-82 | 1981-82 to 1982-83 | 1982-83 to 1983-84 | 1983-84 to 1984-85 | 1984-85 to 1985-86 | 1985-86 to 1986-87 | 1986-87 to 1987-88 | 1987-88 to 1988-89 |
| Clwyd | 10·5 | 25·9 | 24·6 | 19·4 | 0·0 | 0·0 | 9·5 | 6·2 | 9·9 | 4·8 | 6·1 |
| Dyfed | 5·9 | 28·1 | 27·9 | 9·8 | 0·1 | 6·9 | 9·2 | 19·6 | 14·5 | 6·9 | 5·3 |
| Gwent | 6·9 | 24·1 | 19·4 | 10·3 | 4·7 | 4·4 | 0·0 | 3·5 | 18·5 | 11·0 | 8·3 |
| Gwynedd | 10·2 | 37·9 | 15·0 | 15·3 | −3·9 | 10·6 | 6·6 | 3·4 | 12·0 | 8·9 | 10·9 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 1·4 | 30·4 | 24·7 | 21·4 | −0·1 | 6·4 | 17·1 | 3·9 | 9·9 | 4·8 | 5·8 |
| Powys | 5·6 | 42·1 | 33·3 | 14·8 | 3·2 | 0·0 | 4·7 | 14·9 | 14·9 | 6·2 | 6·9 |
| South Glamorgan | 9·0 | 24·1 | 13·2 | 14·2 | 14·6 | −6·4 | 6·1 | 11·3 | 24·3 | 4·1 | 7·4 |
| West Glamorgan | 7·6 | 37·9 | 21·4 | 17·3 | 3·2 | 2·5 | 6·1 | 5·1 | 7·1 | 14·2 | 16·9 |

*(iv) The percentage rise in county council precepts for the periods requested is shown below. Information for 1989-90 is not yet available.*

| Counties | Percentage change | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1977-78 to 1980-81 | 1981-82 to 1985-86 | 1986-87 to 1988-89 | 1977-78 to 1988-89 |
| Clwyd | 73·4 | 16·2 | 11·1 | 193·7 |
| Dyfed | 73·7 | 39·6 | 12·6 | 243·0 |
| Gwent | 58·3 | 13·2 | 20·2 | 181·5 |
| Gwynedd | 74·8 | 17·2 | 20·8 | 219·7 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 64·9 | 29·3 | 10·9 | 215·4 |
| Powys | 100·0 | 24·2 | 13·6 | 272·2 |
| South Glamorgan | 53·2 | 26·6 | 11·8 | 208·1 |
| West Glamorgan | 80·0 | 17·9 | 33·5 | 255·9 |

*(v) The change in numbers of staff employed in "general services" by county councils is shown below for the years where data is available. Individual authority data is not held centrally prior to December 1978 or later than September 1988. In order to minimise the effect of seasonal variation, March quarter returns for the appropriate years have been used.*

| Counties | | | | Change | | | | Percentage change | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | March 1979 | March 1981 | March 1986 | March 1988 | 1979 to 1981 | 1981 to 1986 | 1986 to 1988 | 1979 to 1988 | 1979 to 1981 | 1981 to 1986 | 1986 to 1988 | 1979 to 1988 |
| *Full time staff* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clwyd | 9,007 | 8,724 | 8,460 | 8,371 | −283 | −264 | −89 | −636 | −3·14 | −3·03 | −1·05 | −7·06 |
| Dyfed | 8,388 | 8,091 | 7,693 | 7,856 | −297 | −398 | 163 | −532 | −3·54 | −4·92 | 2·12 | −6·34 |
| Gwent | 10,929 | 10,516 | 9,856 | 9,734 | −413 | −660 | −122 | −1,195 | −3·78 | −6·28 | −1·24 | −10·93 |
| Gwynedd | 6,151 | 6,120 | 5,613 | 5,550 | −31 | −507 | −63 | −601 | −0·50 | −8·28 | −1·12 | −9·77 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 14,770 | 13,977 | 13,276 | 13,463 | −793 | −701 | 187 | −1,307 | −5·37 | −5·02 | 1·41 | −8·85 |
| Powys | 3,285 | 3,208 | 3,078 | 3,005 | −77 | −130 | −73 | −280 | −2·34 | −4·05 | −2·37 | −8·52 |
| South Glamorgan | 8,670 | 8,661 | 8,249 | 8,171 | −9 | −412 | −78 | −499 | −0·10 | −4·76 | −0·95 | −5·76 |
| West Glamorgan | 9,954 | 9,228 | 8,584 | 8,616 | −726 | −644 | 32 | −1,338 | −7·29 | −6·98 | 0·37 | −13·44 |
| *Part time staff* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clwyd | 6,045 | 5,959 | 6,933 | 7,541 | −86 | 974 | 608 | 1,496 | −1·42 | 16·35 | 8·77 | 24·75 |
| Dyfed | 5,296 | 4,996 | 5,538 | 6,296 | −300 | 542 | 758 | 1,000 | −5·66 | 10·85 | 13·69 | 18·88 |
| Gwent | 7,860 | 7,839 | 8,286 | 9,390 | −21 | 447 | 1,104 | 1,530 | −0·27 | 5·70 | 13·32 | 19·47 |
| Gwynedd | 3,649 | 3,607 | 3,925 | 4,201 | −42 | 318 | 276 | 552 | −1·15 | 8·82 | 7·03 | 15·13 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 8,689 | 9,411 | 10,704 | 10,893 | 722 | 1,293 | 189 | 2,204 | 8·31 | 13·74 | 1·77 | 25·37 |
| Powys | 1,804 | 1,762 | 2,024 | 2,340 | −42 | 262 | 316 | 536 | −2·33 | 14·87 | 15·61 | 29·71 |
| South Glamorgan | 6,038 | 5,936 | 6,361 | 7,223 | −102 | 425 | 862 | 1,185 | −1·69 | 7·16 | 13·55 | 19·63 |
| West Glamorgan | 5,594 | 5,349 | 5,785 | 5,871 | −245 | 436 | 86 | 277 | −4·38 | 8·15 | 1·49 | 4·95 |

*(vi) The political composition of the councils for the first and last year of the periods requested has been extracted from the "Municipal Year Book" for that year and is shown below.*

| Counties | | Independent | Conservative | Labour | Plaid Cymru | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 1977 | 27 | 11 | 23 | 0 | 5 |
| | 1981 | 22 | 21 | 20 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1985 | 21 | 13 | 28 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1989 | 19 | 15 | 25 | 0 | 7 |
| Dyfed | 1977 | 42 | 0 | 29 | 1 | 6 |
| | 1981 | 43 | 0 | 25 | 6 | 5 |
| | 1985 | 40 | 0 | 28 | 5 | 5 |
| | 1989 | 34 | 0 | 29 | 5 | 9 |
| Gwent | 1977 | 1 | 12 | 59 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1981 | 4 | 26 | 38 | 2 | 3 |
| | 1985 | 0 | 12 | 65 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1989 | 0 | 9 | 67 | 1 | 1 |
| Gwynedd | 1977 | 56 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 |

| Counties | | Independent | Conservative | Labour | Plaid Cymru | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1981 | 44 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 2 |
| | 1985 | 45 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| | 1989 | 40 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 7 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 1977 | 4 | 3 | 61 | 9 | 3 |
| | 1981 | 6 | 8 | 48 | 16 | 3 |
| | 1985 | 4 | 3 | 64 | 7 | 4 |
| | 1989 | 3 | 1 | 68 | 7 | 6 |
| Powys | 1977 | 53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1981 | 53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1985 | 45 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| | 1989 | 41 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| South Glamorgan | 1977 | 3 | 34 | 42 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1981 | 0 | 64 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1985 | 0 | 35 | 41 | 1 | 3 |
| | 1989 | 0 | 18 | 34 | 1 | 9 |
| West Glamorgan | 1977 | 6 | 9 | 51 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1981 | 3 | 10 | 43 | 2 | 0 |
| | 1985 | 2 | 10 | 56 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1989 | 2 | 7 | 53 | 0 | 5 |

*(vii) The increase in precept over the period 1985-86 to 1988-89 in rank order of increase is shown below. Information for 1989-90 is not yet available.*

| Counties | Percentage change 1985-86 to 1988-89 |
|---|---|
| West Glamorgan | 42·9 |
| Gwent | 42·5 |
| South Glamorgan | 39·0 |
| Gwynedd | 35·3 |
| Powys | 30·5 |
| Dyfed | 28·9 |
| Clwyd | 22·1 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 21·8 |

## Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The Welsh Affairs Committee has since June 1987 submitted one report, to which I have responded. The report made two recommendations, and I have accepted both.

## Consumers (Consultation)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements there are for consulting consumers in the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** Consumer organisations are consulted as and when appropriate.

## Ffrwyd Farm, Meerywinch (Pollution)

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the pollution incident at Ffrwyd farm, Meerywinch which occurred on 27 February.

**Mr. Grist:** This is a matter for the Welsh water authority, which is currently investigating the incident.

## Valleys Initiative

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many additional staff have been employed in the local enterprise agency network since 14 June 1988 in the valleys initiative area.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** There are 10 approved local enterprise agencies operating partly or wholly within the programme for the valleys area. Since 14 June 1988, a total of seven additional staff have been recruited by these agencies.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional finance has been given to the local enterprise agency network since 14 June 1988 in the valleys initiative area.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The 10 local enterprise agencies which operate within the programme for the valleys boundary will receive within the financial year 1988-89 funding of £220,000 (through the Welsh Development Agency, Mid Wales Development and the urban programme) with an additional £45,000 of urban programme funding provided for specific projects with which the agencies are involved. My Department is also providing additional funding of £9,100 to assist agencies in establishing new services for small businesses. These figures relate to the whole financial year; it is not possible to provide part figures from 14 June 1988. No enterprise agencies existed during the previous Labour Government in which the hon. Gentleman was a Minister.

## Valleys Small Loan Scheme

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the valleys small loan scheme;

(2) what has been the number of *(a)* applications and *(b)* acceptances under the valleys small loan scheme; and what was (i) their value, (ii) the name and location of the companies and (iii) the number of new jobs created in each case.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

## Valleys Enterprise Loan Scheme

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the valleys enterprise loan scheme;

(2) what has been the number of *(a)* applications and *(b)* acceptances under the valleys enterprise loan scheme; and what was (i) their value, (ii) the name and location of the companies and (iii) the number of new jobs created in each case.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

## Community Enterprise

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the community enterprise scheme.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

## Welsh Technology Development Fund

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the Welsh technology development fund;

(2) what has been the number of *(a)* applications and *(b)* acceptances under the Welsh technology development fund; and what was (i) their value, (ii) the name and location of the companies and (iii) the number of new jobs created in each case.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

## Woodlands

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what revenue has accrued to the Forestry Commission from the sale of woodlands in Wales for each of the last seven years.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** The information is shown in the following table:

*Receipts from sale of forest land*

| *Year to 31 March* | *£000* |
|---|---|
| 1982 | 105 |
| 1983 | 376 |
| 1984 | 1,767 |
| 1985 | 2,406 |
| 1986 | 2,193 |
| 1987 | 1,576 |
| 1988 | 871 |

These receipts are surrendered by the Forestry Commission to the Consolidated Fund.

## "Authority to Hunt"

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the Forestry Commission's Wales Conservancy's "Authority to Hunt" document.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** A copy of the form of authority used in the Forestry Commission's Wales Conservancy is being placed in the Library of the House.

## Housing Benefit

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the number of applications for housing benefit for each year since 1979; and what was the number accepted for each district council;

(2) what was the value of housing benefit distributed in Wales for each year since 1979 at constant prices;

(3) what was the value of housing benefit distributed in Wales by district council for each year since 1979 at constant prices.

**Mr. Grist:** Housing benefit was introduced for some supplementary benefit claimants from November 1982 with full implemenation for all claimants following from April 1983. The information given in the following tables shows the payments and the numbers of recipients from 1983-84 onwards at 1987-88 prices. Figures for the numbers of rate rebates, rent rebates and rent allowances have been provided separately, as there is a significant overlap; most households getting assistance with rent will also be in receipt of a rate rebate. Data prior to 1983-84 are not held on a consistent basis. Information on the number of applications is not held centrally.

| | *Number of recipients 1983-84* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Rent rebates* | *Rent allowances* | *Rate rebates* |
| Alyn and Deeside | 4,237 | 621 | 8,200 |
| Colwyn | 2,421 | 1,435 | 9,673 |
| Delyn | 5,212 | 703 | 10,305 |
| Glyndwr | 2,414 | 327 | 4,078 |
| Rhuddlan | 2,165 | 1,783 | 8,926 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 9,996 | 932 | 17,140 |
| Carmarthen | 2,347 | 581 | 4,291 |
| Ceredigion | 1,930 | 1,122 | 4,755 |
| Dinefwr | 1,793 | 331 | 3,495 |
| Llanelli | 5,642 | 660 | 10,025 |
| Preseli Pembs | 4,336 | 668 | 6,704 |
| South Pembroke | 2,301 | 673 | 3,912 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 8,153 | 562 | 11,460 |
| Islwyn | 4,876 | 793 | 8,310 |
| Monmouth | 3,695 | 644 | 6,563 |
| Newport | 10,880 | 2,410 | 9,400 |
| Torfaen | 5,538 | 705 | 14,211 |
| Aberconwy | 2,250 | 1,206 | 6,586 |
| Arfon | 3,913 | 1,200 | 6,690 |
| Dwyfor | 1,158 | 546 | 3,351 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,716 | 492 | 4,127 |
| Ynys Mon | 4,373 | 810 | 8,377 |
| Cynon Valley | 4,202 | 1,010 | 9,526 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,379 | 854 | 8,437 |
| Ogwr | 8,223 | 1,323 | 15,617 |
| Rhondda | 4,217 | 1,161 | 11,616 |
| Rhymney Valley | 8,887 | 1,249 | 15,288 |
| Taff Ely | 6,103 | 936 | 10,008 |
| Brecknock | 2,051 | 461 | 3,582 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,955 | 690 | 3,410 |
| Radnor | 923 | 529 | 1,761 |
| Cardiff | 15,066 | 10,537 | 32,486 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 5,074 | 1,950 | 11,377 |
| Port Talbot | 4,988 | 413 | 7,975 |
| Lliw Valley | 3,831 | 391 | 7,228 |
| Neath | 4,622 | 647 | 9,049 |
| Swansea | 13,787 | 3,009 | 27,853 |
| Total Wales | 180,654 | 44,364 | 345,792 |

*Number of recipients 1984-85*

| | Rent rebates | Rent allowances | Rate rebates |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 4,077 | 668 | 8,114 |
| Colwyn | 2,560 | 1,447 | 9,050 |
| Delyn | 4,984 | 863 | 10,016 |
| Glyndwr | 2,160 | 460 | 4,050 |
| Rhuddlan | 2,106 | 2,026 | 9,000 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 9,728 | 971 | 15,040 |
| Carmarthen | 2,397 | 730 | 3,991 |
| Ceredigion | 2,490 | 1,519 | 6,872 |
| Dinefwr | 1,957 | 384 | 3,900 |
| Llanelli | 5,433 | 637 | 10,668 |
| Preseli Pembs | 4,358 | 758 | 7,624 |
| South Pembroke | 2,265 | 815 | 4,117 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 7,979 | 627 | 11,687 |
| Islwyn | 4,868 | 830 | 8,317 |
| Monmouth | 3,843 | 722 | 7,175 |
| Newport | 10,903 | 2,547 | 10,000 |
| Torfaen | 6,199 | 553 | 14,081 |
| Aberconwy | 2,385 | 1,369 | 7,140 |
| Arfon | 3,891 | 1,702 | 5,301 |
| Dwyfor | 1,160 | 601 | 2,817 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,628 | 505 | 3,924 |
| Ynys Môn | 4,430 | 1,161 | 8,088 |
| Cynon Valley | 4,625 | 1,409 | 10,505 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,444 | 972 | 9,037 |
| Ogwr | 8,255 | 1,362 | 16,038 |
| Rhondda | 4,236 | 947 | 10,078 |
| Rhymney Valley | 8,577 | 1,442 | 16,960 |
| Taff Ely | 6,172 | 940 | 10,087 |
| Brecknock | 2,013 | 479 | 3,428 |
| Montgomeryshire | 2,114 | 764 | 4,201 |
| Radnor | 882 | 565 | 1,804 |
| Cardiff | 17,133 | 11,581 | 36,248 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 5,112 | 1,990 | 10,712 |
| Port Talbot | 4,776 | 336 | 7,816 |
| Lliw Valley | 4,002 | 400 | 7,894 |
| Neath | 4,550 | 715 | 9,152 |
| Swansea | 13,768 | 3,349 | 28,404 |
| TOTAL WALES | 183,460 | 49,146 | 353,336 |

*Number of Recipients 1985-86*

| | Rent Rebates | Rent Allowances | Rate Rebates |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 4,059 | 693 | 7,591 |
| Colwyn | 2,662 | 1,772 | 13,672 |
| Delyn | 5,021 | 892 | 8,702 |
| Glyndwr | 2,183 | 464 | 3,512 |
| Rhuddlan | 2,100 | 2,133 | 9,092 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 9,884 | 941 | 14,224 |
| Carmarthen | 2,379 | 812 | 4,051 |
| Ceredigion | 2,777 | 4,211 | 7,816 |
| Dinefwr | 3,014 | 518 | 5,344 |
| Llanelli | 5,440 | 851 | 9,646 |
| Preseli Pembs | 4,418 | 940 | 7,934 |
| South Pembroke | 2,276 | 787 | 4,169 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 8,065 | 601 | 10,411 |
| Islwyn | 4,872 | 1,008 | 8,457 |
| Monmouth | 3,573 | 993 | 5,326 |
| Newport | 10,950 | 2,665 | 23,265 |
| Torfaen | 10,203 | 613 | 9,869 |
| Aberconwy | 2,349 | 1,346 | 6,949 |
| Arfon | 3,930 | 1,395 | 6,619 |
| Dwyfor | 1,104 | 638 | 3,179 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,612 | 549 | 4,865 |
| Ynys Mon | 4,499 | 1,110 | 7,539 |
| Cynon Valley | 4,268 | 1,158 | 9,146 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,498 | 1,214 | 9,522 |
| Ogwr | 8,321 | 1,376 | 16,518 |
| Rhondda | 4,199 | 1,216 | 11,131 |
| Rhymney Valley | 8,664 | 1,380 | 15,848 |
| Taff Ely | 6,204 | 1,245 | 10,029 |
| Brecknock | 2,015 | 532 | 3,403 |
| Montgomeryshire | 2,734 | 862 | 4,142 |
| Radnor | 829 | 572 | 1,665 |
| Cardiff | 17,156 | 10,828 | 34,357 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 5,025 | 2,266 | 10,381 |
| Port Talbot | 4,143 | 448 | 7,384 |
| Lliw Valley | 4,527 | 716 | 7,737 |
| Neath | 4,760 | 338 | 8,814 |
| Swansea | 13,585 | 3,272 | 27,831 |
| Total Wales | 189,298 | 53,355 | 360,140 |

*Number of recipients 1986-87*

| | Rent rebates | Rent allowances | Rate rebates |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 4,310 | 669 | 7,653 |
| Colwyn | 2,330 | 2,277 | 8,019 |
| Delyn | 3,857 | 557 | 7,236 |
| Glyndwr | 2,110 | 580 | 3,100 |
| Rhuddlan | 2,026 | 2,159 | 8,648 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 9,915 | 1,023 | 14,143 |
| Carmarthen | 2,391 | 980 | 4,293 |
| Ceredigion | 2,320 | 2,639 | 6,310 |
| Dinefwr | 3,232 | 917 | 6,072 |
| Llanelli | 5,432 | 914 | 9,375 |
| Preseli Pembs | 4,218 | 848 | 6,866 |
| South Pembroke | 2,323 | 870 | 4,355 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 8,018 | 707 | 10,541 |
| Islwyn | 4,704 | 875 | 8,227 |
| Monmouth | 3,415 | 739 | 5,330 |
| Newport | 11,000 | 2,900 | 22,250 |
| Torfaen | 10,055 | 647 | 13,456 |
| Aberconwy | 2,260 | 1,451 | 7,248 |
| Arfon | 4,265 | 1,868 | 8,195 |
| Dwyfor | 1,128 | 863 | 3,014 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,580 | 571 | 4,909 |
| Ynys Mon | 4,605 | 1,414 | 7,665 |
| Cynon Valley | 4,211 | 1,192 | 8,687 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,940 | 1,168 | 8,810 |
| Ogwr | 8,279 | 1,392 | 15,738 |
| Rhondda | 4,298 | 1,077 | 10,309 |
| Rhymney Valley | 8,621 | 1,435 | 15,457 |
| Taff Ely | 6,175 | 1,854 | 10,747 |
| Brecknock | 2,009 | 534 | 3,444 |
| Montgomeryshire | 2,033 | 820 | 4,170 |
| Radnor | 769 | 597 | 1,767 |
| Cardiff | 17,322 | 12,815 | 36,876 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 4,933 | 2,486 | 10,513 |
| Port Talbot | 4,557 | 383 | 7,023 |
| Lliw Valley | 3,799 | 556 | 7,206 |
| Neath | 4,417 | 980 | 8,524 |
| Swansea | 13,708 | 4,362 | 26,830 |
| Total Wales | 186,565 | 58,119 | 353,006 |

*Number of recipients 1987-88*

| | Rent rebates | Rent allowances | Rate rebates |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 3,897 | 702 | 7,102 |
| Colwyn | 2,450 | 2,460 | 8,472 |
| Delyn | 3,703 | 532 | 6,943 |
| Glyndwr | 2,265 | 608 | 3,675 |
| Rhuddlan | 2,053 | 2,075 | 8,214 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 9,593 | 1,067 | 13,554 |
| Carmarthen | 2,369 | 872 | 4,197 |
| Ceredigion | 2,257 | 2,318 | 6,264 |
| Dinefwr | 3,947 | 930 | 7,496 |
| Llanelli | 5,323 | 785 | 9,526 |
| Preseli Pembs | 4,387 | 1,027 | 7,635 |
| South Pembroke | 2,261 | 953 | 4,184 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 7,841 | 760 | 10,362 |
| Islwyn | 4,477 | 786 | 7,595 |
| Monmouth | 3,404 | 819 | 5,304 |
| Newport | 10,400 | 3,500 | 20,400 |
| Torfaen | 9,750 | 623 | 23,185 |
| Aberconwy | 2,220 | 1,500 | 6,092 |
| Arfon | 4,300 | 1,900 | 8,325 |

| | Rent rebates | Rent allowances | Rate rebates |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dwyfor | 1,115 | 730 | 2,896 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,505 | 545 | 3,997 |
| Ynys Mon | 4,462 | 1,132 | 7,715 |
| Cynon Valley | 4,226 | 1,211 | 8,847 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,843 | 1,195 | 9,890 |
| Ogwr | 8,017 | 1,367 | 14,918 |
| Rhondda | 4,220 | 1,083 | 10,360 |
| Rhymney Valley | 8,237 | 1,412 | 15,438 |
| Taff Ely | 6,034 | 1,797 | 10,582 |
| Brecknock | 2,017 | 545 | 3,562 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,964 | 775 | 4,031 |
| Radnor | 720 | 615 | 1,700 |
| Cardiff | 16,217 | 11,438 | 37,608 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 4,776 | 2,555 | 10,342 |
| Port Talbot | 4,357 | 423 | 6,993 |
| Lliw Valley | 3,804 | 457 | 6,537 |
| Neath | 4,518 | 1,004 | 7,950 |
| Swansea | 13,681 | 4,419 | 30,511 |
| Total Wales | 182,610 | 56,920 | 362,402 |

*1983-84*
*Amounts granted* *£ thousands*

| | Rent rebates at 1987-88 prices | Rent allowance at 1987-88 prices | Rate rebates at 1987-88 prices | Total at 1987 88 prices |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 2,159 | 345 | 1,315 | 3,819 |
| Colwyn | 1,646 | 1,090 | 1,153 | 3,889 |
| Delyn | 3,213 | 293 | 1,442 | 4,947 |
| Glyndwr | 1,396 | 245 | 516 | 2,156 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,209 | 1,297 | 1,419 | 3,926 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 4,499 | 516 | 2,219 | 7,234 |
| Carmarthen | 1,672 | 252 | 419 | 2,343 |
| Ceredigion | 1,665 | 835 | 519 | 3,019 |
| Dinefwr | 1,062 | 176 | 337 | 1,576 |
| Llanelli | 3,873 | 394 | 1,159 | 5,426 |
| Preseli Pembs | 2,891 | 466 | 805 | 4,162 |
| South Pembroke | 1,752 | 595 | 490 | 2,837 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 6,433 | 277 | 1,371 | 8,081 |
| Islwyn | 3,037 | 426 | 846 | 4,309 |
| Monmouth | 2,430 | 499 | 831 | 3,760 |
| Newport | 8,491 | 1,650 | 3,443 | 13,584 |
| Torfaen | 4,568 | 326 | 1,921 | 6,816 |
| Aberconwy | 1,725 | 689 | 922 | 3,336 |
| Arfon | 2,743 | 740 | 764 | 4,246 |
| Dwyfor | 719 | 282 | 323 | 1,324 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,199 | 272 | 525 | 1,996 |
| Ynys Mon | 3,087 | 611 | 1,070 | 4,768 |
| Cynon Valley | 2,874 | 431 | 942 | 4,247 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 3,770 | 561 | 1,202 | 5,534 |
| Ogwr | 6,386 | 853 | 2,151 | 9,390 |
| Rhondda | 3,169 | 345 | 1,032 | 4,546 |
| Rhymney Valley | 6,783 | 638 | 1,960 | 9,382 |
| Taff Ely | 4,228 | 410 | 1,259 | 5,897 |
| Brecknock | 1,277 | 322 | 326 | 1,925 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,438 | 385 | 491 | 2,315 |
| Radnor | 652 | 335 | 194 | 1,181 |
| Cardiff | 13,736 | 6,747 | 5,989 | 26,473 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 4,060 | 1,387 | 1,619 | 7,065 |
| Port Talbot | 2,725 | 276 | 1,213 | 4,214 |
| Lliw Valley | 2,625 | 222 | 981 | 3,827 |
| Neath | 2,913 | 351 | 1,218 | 4,481 |
| Swansea | 9,086 | 1,888 | 4,720 | 15,694 |
| Total Wales | 127,192 | 27,424 | 49,104 | 203,720 |

*1984-85*
*Amounts granted (£ thousands)*

| | Rent rebates at 1987-88 prices | Rent allowance at 1987-88 prices | Rate rebates at 1987-88 prices | Total at 1987-88 prices |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 2,065 | 429 | 1,392 | 3,886 |
| Colwyn | 1,550 | 1,402 | 1,233 | 4,185 |
| Delyn | 3,056 | 335 | 1,532 | 4,922 |
| Glyndwr | 1,334 | 334 | 532 | 2,199 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,198 | 1,524 | 1,640 | 4,362 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 4,480 | 604 | 2,340 | 7,424 |
| Carmarthen | 1,695 | 427 | 469 | 2,590 |
| Ceredigion | 1,667 | 1,143 | 579 | 3,387 |
| Dinefwr | 1,159 | 260 | 406 | 1,825 |
| Llanelli | 3,815 | 447 | 1,314 | 5,576 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 2,924 | 635 | 686 | 4,245 |
| South Pembroke | 1,715 | 785 | 549 | 3,050 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 7,023 | 409 | 1,410 | 8,843 |
| Islwyn | 3,238 | 704 | 949 | 4,891 |

| | Rent rebates at 1987-88 prices | Rent allowance at 1987-88 prices | Rate rebates at 1987-88 prices | Total at 1987-88 prices |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monmouth | 2,284 | 609 | 798 | 3,691 |
| Newport | 8,539 | 1,978 | 3,438 | 13,954 |
| Torfaen | 5,116 | 414 | 2,066 | 7,596 |
| Aberconwy | 1,699 | 866 | 1,039 | 3,604 |
| Arfon | 2,777 | 986 | 824 | 4,588 |
| Dwyfor | 671 | 338 | 330 | 1,339 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,142 | 334 | 518 | 1,994 |
| Ynys Mon | 3,163 | 798 | 1,163 | 5,124 |
| Cynon Valley | 3,364 | 670 | 1,284 | 5,318 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 4,144 | 793 | 1,421 | 6,358 |
| Ogwr | 7,521 | 503 | 2,463 | 10,487 |
| Rhondda | 3,364 | 480 | 1,225 | 5,069 |
| Rhymney Valley | 7,240 | 893 | 2,494 | 10,627 |
| Taff Ely | 4,635 | 588 | 1,781 | 7,003 |
| Brecknock | 1,368 | 335 | 404 | 2,106 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,382 | 420 | 604 | 2,406 |
| Radnor | 639 | 383 | 203 | 1,225 |
| Cardiff | 14,218 | 8,461 | 6,059 | 28,737 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 3,998 | 1,551 | 1,668 | 7,218 |
| Port Talbot | 2,731 | 271 | 1,199 | 4,201 |
| Lliw Valley | 2,821 | 277 | 1,069 | 4,167 |
| Neath | 2,900 | 494 | 1,283 | 4,677 |
| Swansea | 9,471 | 2,258 | 4,887 | 16,615 |
| Total Wales | 132,101 | 34,141 | 53,249 | 219,492 |

*1985-86*
*Amounts granted*

*£ thousands*

| | Rent rebates at 1987-88 prices | Rent allowance at 1987-88 prices | Rate rebates at 1987-88 prices | Total at 1987-88 prices |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 2,205 | 482 | 1,415 | 4,102 |
| Colwyn | 1,676 | 1,667 | 1,321 | 4,664 |
| Delyn | 3,028 | 385 | 1,553 | 4,966 |
| Glyndwr | 1,403 | 399 | 554 | 2,356 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,261 | 1,892 | 1,601 | 4,754 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 4,838 | 759 | 2,351 | 7,948 |
| Carmarthen | 1,765 | 626 | 554 | 2,944 |
| Ceredigion | 1,720 | 1,388 | 738 | 3,846 |
| Dinefwr | 1,179 | 244 | 423 | 1,846 |
| Llanelli | 3,748 | 577 | 1,457 | 5,781 |
| Preseli Pembs | 3,001 | 759 | 982 | 4,743 |
| South Pembroke | 1,858 | 917 | 695 | 3,470 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 7,179 | 738 | 1,270 | 9,186 |
| Islwyn | 3,413 | 909 | 833 | 5,155 |
| Monmouth | 2,750 | 1,078 | 891 | 4,719 |
| Newport | 9,554 | 3,150 | 3,424 | 16,128 |
| Torfaen | 7,921 | 810 | 2,057 | 10,788 |
| Aberconwy | 1,817 | 1,003 | 1,061 | 3,880 |
| Arfon | 2,956 | 1,217 | 845 | 5,018 |
| Dwyfor | 671 | 430 | 338 | 1,439 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,199 | 391 | 521 | 2,110 |
| Ynys Mon | 3,291 | 1,050 | 1,206 | 5,547 |
| Cynon Valley | 3,254 | 671 | 1,109 | 5,304 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 4,330 | 946 | 1,373 | 6,649 |
| Ogwr | 7,555 | 1,147 | 2,465 | 11,167 |
| Rhondda | 3,533 | 565 | 1,226 | 5,324 |
| Rhymney Valley | 7,293 | 938 | 2,263 | 10,494 |
| Taff Ely | 4,936 | 741 | 1,729 | 7,405 |
| Brecknock | 1,324 | 394 | 431 | 2,149 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,953 | 606 | 604 | 3,162 |
| Radnor | 604 | 454 | 231 | 1,288 |
| Cardiff | 15,466 | 10,655 | 6,523 | 32,644 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 3,944 | 1,862 | 1,848 | 7,654 |
| Port Talbot | 2,826 | 367 | 1,138 | 4,331 |
| Lliw Valley | 2,966 | 570 | 1,000 | 4,535 |
| Neath | 3,046 | 297 | 1,193 | 4,536 |
| Swansea | 10,008 | 2,764 | 4,898 | 17,670 |
| Total Wales | 141,470 | 43,847 | 54,120 | 239,437 |

*1986-87*
*Amounts granted*

*£ thousands*

| | *Rent rebates at 1987-88 prices* | *Rent allowance at 1987-88 prices* | *Rate rebates at 1987-88 prices* | *Total at 1987-88 prices* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 2,259 | 553 | 1,501 | 4,313 |
| Colwyn | 1,735 | 1,890 | 1,433 | 5,057 |
| Delyn | 2,947 | 401 | 1,663 | 5,011 |
| Glyndŵr | 1,418 | 543 | 591 | 2,552 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,285 | 2,173 | 1,727 | 5,185 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 4,840 | 71 | 2,587 | 7,497 |
| Carmarthen | 1,720 | 810 | 646 | 3,176 |
| Ceredigion | 1,730 | 1,559 | 841 | 4,130 |
| Dinefwr | 1,204 | 256 | 501 | 1,961 |
| Llanelli | 3,757 | 531 | 1,649 | 5,937 |
| Preseli Pembs | 2,921 | 812 | 1,158 | 4,891 |
| South Pembroke | 1,851 | 1,000 | 787 | 3,638 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 7,225 | 477 | 1,518 | 9,220 |
| Islwyn | 3,509 | 647 | 976 | 5,132 |
| Monmouth | 2,784 | 646 | 1,040 | 4,470 |
| Newport | 8,917 | 2,825 | 3,889 | 15,630 |
| Torfaen | 7,784 | 556 | 2,352 | 10,692 |
| Aberconwy | 1,852 | 1,138 | 1,176 | 4,166 |
| Arfon | 2,766 | 1,414 | 932 | 5,111 |
| Dwyfor | 640 | 480 | 380 | 1,500 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,144 | 418 | 556 | 2,118 |
| Ynys Mon | 3,344 | 1,246 | 1,369 | 5,959 |
| Cynon Valley | 3,431 | 781 | 1,193 | 5,405 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 4,278 | 954 | 1,468 | 6,700 |
| Ogwr | 7,633 | 1,170 | 2,718 | 11,520 |
| Rhondda | 3,839 | 669 | 1,373 | 5,881 |
| Rhymney Valley | 7,650 | 973 | 2,450 | 11,073 |
| Taff Ely | 4,863 | 1,074 | 1,933 | 7,869 |
| Brecknock | 1,321 | 430 | 502 | 2,253 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,416 | 618 | 697 | 2,731 |
| Radnor | 558 | 486 | 265 | 1,310 |
| Cardiff | 15,547 | 11,168 | 8,072 | 34,786 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 3,696 | 2,126 | 2,230 | 8,052 |
| Port Talbot | 2,944 | 304 | 1,145 | 4,393 |
| Lliw Valley | 2,916 | 370 | 1,048 | 4,333 |
| Neath | 2,896 | 691 | 1,249 | 4,835 |
| Swansea | 10,027 | 3,448 | 5,136 | 18,611 |
| Total Wales | 140,649 | 45,706 | 60,750 | 247,105 |

*1987-88*
*Amounts granted*

*£ thousands*

| | *Rent rebates* | *Rent allowance* | *Rate rebates* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 2,141 | 538 | 1,454 | 4,133 |
| Colwyn | 1,644 | 2,136 | 1,394 | 5,174 |
| Delyn | 2,415 | 418 | 1,819 | 4,652 |
| Glyndwr | 1,298 | 485 | 584 | 2,367 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,293 | 2,206 | 1,660 | 5,159 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 4,569 | 857 | 2,518 | 7,944 |
| Carmarthen | 1,704 | 820 | 670 | 3,194 |
| Ceredigion | 1,718 | 1,833 | 870 | 4,421 |
| Dinefwr | 1,177 | 246 | 543 | 1,966 |
| Llanelli | 3,797 | 533 | 1,674 | 6,004 |
| Preseli Pembs | 2,773 | 1,020 | 1,138 | 4,931 |
| South Pembroke | 1,810 | 1,061 | 798 | 3,669 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 6,880 | 569 | 1,581 | 9,030 |
| Islwyn | 3,278 | 651 | 1,008 | 4,937 |
| Monmouth | 2,839 | 610 | 1,057 | 4,506 |
| Newport | 8,244 | 2,849 | 4,093 | 15,186 |
| Torfaen | 7,153 | 542 | 2,325 | 10,020 |
| Aberconwy | 1,686 | 1,213 | 1,194 | 4,093 |
| Arfon | 2,914 | 1,479 | 965 | 5,358 |
| Dwyfor | 610 | 503 | 397 | 1,510 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,068 | 416 | 555 | 2,039 |
| Ynys Mon | 3,272 | 1,283 | 1,383 | 5,938 |
| Cynon Valley | 3,397 | 944 | 1,203 | 5,544 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 4,131 | 1,008 | 1,446 | 6,585 |
| Ogwr | 7,582 | 1,251 | 2,655 | 11,488 |
| Rhondda | 3,765 | 751 | 1,348 | 5,864 |
| Rhymney Valley | 7,350 | 1,051 | 2,396 | 10,797 |
| Taff Ely | 4,691 | 944 | 1,928 | 7,563 |

| | Rent rebates | Rent allowance | Rate rebates | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brecknock | 1,342 | 418 | 522 | 2,282 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,378 | 574 | 690 | 2,642 |
| Radnor | 484 | 483 | 252 | 1,219 |
| Cardiff | 14,057 | 11,008 | 8,084 | 33,149 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 3,370 | 2,217 | 2,157 | 7,744 |
| Port Talbot | 2,837 | 339 | 1,189 | 4,365 |
| Lliw Valley | 2,918 | 361 | 1,133 | 4,412 |
| Neath | 2,851 | 698 | 1,329 | 4,878 |
| Swansea | 10,051 | 3,587 | 5,684 | 19,322 |
| Total Wales | 134,487 | 47,902 | 61,696 | 244,085 |

## Public Expenditure

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to publish a separate commentary on Welsh Office public expenditure.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I am pleased to say that the first Welsh Office public expenditure commentary is being published today. The commentary, which has been produced bilingually, expands upon the information already published in the Wales chapter of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 617), and will be a valuable source document for anyone wanting to know more about the Government's expenditure plans for Wales.

I have arranged for copies of the commentary to be made available through the Vote Office.

## Housing Enveloping Schemes

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many housing enveloping schemes have been carried out in each south Wales valley district council area in each year since 1986; how many are planned for 1989, 1990 and 1991; how many houses were involved in each scheme; how much each scheme cost; and from what budget or funds each scheme was funded.

**Mr. Grist** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* Since 1986, nine local authorities in the south Wales valleys have undertaken a total of 38 enveloping schemes incorporating some 4,000 homes at a cost of over £29 million. Details of the projects are given in the following table. The projects have been funded both from local authorities' main housing allocations and from additional resources we have made available.

Local authorities throughout Wales have been invited to submit bids for 1989-90 by 1 April 1989. I am confident these will include substantial new schemes in the valleys area which will enable them to make even greater progress in tackling the problems of the older housing stock.

| Local authority and scheme | Number of houses | Scheme cost £ million | Date of approval |
|---|---|---|---|
| Blaenau Gwent | | | |
| Six Bells, Abertillery | 262 | 2·4 | September 1986 |
| Marine Street, CWM | 230 | 1·4 | September 1987 |
| Cynon Valley | | | |
| Rheola Street, Penrhiwceiber | 75 | 0·6 | September 1986 |
| Park View Terrace Abercwmboi | 105 | 0·8 | September 1986 |
| Wyndham Crescent, Aberaman | 114 | 1·0 | June 1988 |
| John Street, Abercwmboi | 71 | 0·6 | June 1988 |
| Glanlay Street, Penriwceiber | 82 | 0·6 | May 1988 |
| Carnetown, Abercynon | 191 | 1·4 | March 1989 |
| Kings Street-Queen Street, Cwmdare | 88 | 0·6 | March 1989 |
| Dinefwr | | | |
| Victoria Street, Llandovery | 24 | 0·2 | June 1987 |
| Llandeilo | 26 | 0·2 | May 1988 |
| Orchard Street, Llandovery | 28 | 0·3 | October 1988 |
| Islwyn | | | |
| Cwmfelin Fach | 326 | 1·6 | July 1986 |
| Woodside Terrace, Crumlin | 20 | 0·1 | January 1987 |
| West End, Abercarn | 242 | 2·0 | September 1988 |
| Watisville | 73 | 0·7 | December 1988 |
| Viaduct Terrace, Crumlin | 49 | 0·5 | February 1989 |
| Llanelli | | | |
| Silver Terrace, Bury Port | 20 | 0·1 | May 1987 |
| Cross Hands, Llanelli | 25 | 0·2 | February 1989 |
| Neath | | | |
| Canalside | 29 | 0·2 | June 1988 |
| Rhondda | | | |
| Cwmparc | 164 | 1·0 | March 1986 |
| Maerdy Phase II | 192 | 1·3 | March 1986 |
| Ynyswen | 127 | 0·9 | May 1987 |
| Tylorstown | 72 | 0·5 | June 1987 |

| Local authority and scheme | Number of houses | Scheme cost £ million | Date of approval |
|---|---|---|---|
| Penyrenglyn | 140 | 1·0 | July 1987 |
| Maerdy Phase III | 132 | 0·8 | April 1988 |
| Cymmer | 131 | 0·9 | June 1988 |
| Maerdy Phase IV | 92 | 0·7 | June 1988 |
| Ynsfeio | 101 | 0·7 | July 1988 |
| Ystrad and Clydach Vale | 116 | 0·9 | July 1988 |
| Rhymney | | | |
| Jubilee Road, New Tredegar II | 84 | 0·5 | July 1986 |
| Brithdir Phase I | 125 | 0·9 | April 1987 |
| Brithdir Phase II | 185 | 1·5 | April 1988 |
| Torfaen | | | |
| Plas Y Coed, Phase I | 71 | 0·5 | January 1987 |
| Plas Y Coed, Phase II | 25 | 0·2 | August 1987 |
| Hanbury Road, Pontypool, Phase I | 26 | 0·2 | May 1988 |
| Hanbury Road, Phase II | 55 | 0·4 | May 1988 |
| Hanbury Road, Phase III | 73 | 0·6 | June 1988 |

## Housing Allocations

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what capital allocations to housing associations Housing for Wales will make for *(a)* new building and *(b)* renovation in 1989; and what capital allocations are planned for 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. Grist** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* It will not be possible to say how much of the £72 million available to Housing for Wales will be allocated to associations until the value of projected schemes is known. However, Housing for Wales plans to allocate funds in 1989-90 for 1,600 new build and 800 rehabilitation projects. No decisions have yet been made about the ratio of new build to rehabilitation for 1990-91.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what capital allocations were made by the House Corporation to housing associations in the valleys for: *(a)* new building and *(b)* renovation in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Grist** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* This information for the financial years prior to 1984-85 is not held centrally. Allocations in the approved development programme from 1984-85 for new projects were as follows:

£000

| Year | New build | Rehabilitation |
|---|---|---|
| 1984-85 | 3,500 | 10,300 |
| 1985-86 | 4,655 | 7,350 |
| 1986-87 | 7,409 | 6,729 |
| 1987-88 | 8,448 | 9,360 |
| 1988-89 | 19,240 | 10,536 |

**Mrs. Clywd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what capital allocations have been made in each year since their inception to the Welsh priority estates; how much is planned for 1989, 1990 and 1991; and from which budget or funds these allocations have been made.

**Mr. Grist** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The capital allocations which have been made for Welsh priority estates projects since the inception of the programme are as follows:

| Year | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1984-85 | 1·3 |
| 1985-86 | 1·2 |
| 1986-87 | 2·8 |
| 1987-88 | 5·2 |
| 1988-89 | 7·6 |
| 1989-90 | 8·0 |

Decisions on the level of PEP allocations for 1990-91 have not yet been taken.

PEP capital allocations, as with all other capital allocations for local authority housing services, form part of the overall capital resource made available to local authorities in Wales. Decisions on the level and distribution for 1989-90 were announced by my right hon. Friend on 23 November 1988 at column *6*.

## NHS Hospitals (Trust Status)

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals he expects will have National Health Service hospital trust status in 1991; and how many hospitals he expects will eventually achieve that status.

**Mr. Grist** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* It will be possible by the early 1990s for a major acute hospital that so desires to become self-governing, provided that it shows clearly that it will have the capacity to provide efficiently and effectively an adequate range and depth of services to the population it serves. It is too soon to say how many hospitals will initially or eventually request and secure trust status.

# HEALTH

## Records

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department keeps any records of business conducted by health authorities.

**Mr. Mellor:** A wide variety of financial, statistical and other information relating to their business is sent by health authorities to this Department.

## Health Authority Meetings

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of *(a)* full, *(b)* public and *(c)* private meetings of regional health authorities, held for the last five years.

**Mr. Mellor:** This is a local matter.

### Cigarette Advertisements

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will increase the protection for children from exposure to cigarette advertisements in the agreement which he is currently negotiating with the tobacco industry on advertising and health warnings.

**Mr. Mellor:** The Government will be seeking to renegotiate the voluntary agreement on tobacco products' advertising and promotion, and health warnings, but these negotiations are not yet under way. The current agreements already incorporate measures to protect children from exposure to advertisements, but this matter is among those which we intend to address.

### "Working for Patients"

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of Government funds was spent on producing the National Health Service pamphlet "Working for Patients, the Health Service, Caring for the 1990s"; how many of these pamphlets have been printed; and what was the cost of distribution to post offices, as a separate figure.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The cost of printing 3·1 million copies of the pamphlet "Working for Patients" was £117,000.

The Post Office makes a single annual charge for the display of my Department's leaflets and posters. The charge covers distribution to individual Post Offices and changes to the leaflets and posters on display at regular intervals. It is not possible to separate out the costs of the pamphlet "Working for Patients".

### Counterfeit Products

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Taunton, *Official Report*, 10 January, column *604*, what representations he has received about alleged breaches of the requirements listed in that answer; and what action he has taken.

**Mr. Mellor:** We have records of one complaint which is currently under investigation.

### Dioxins

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date he intends to publish his report on the investigations that he has carried out within his areas of responsibility into chlorine-bleached packaging, dioxins and food.

**Mr. Freeman:** A report on dioxins is to be published by the Department of the Environment and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. The Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has been asked to consider the possible hazards to human health from dioxins. The committee's advice will form part of this statement.

### Nottingham Health Authority

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is yet in a position to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North regarding consultation on closures and transfers by the Nottingham health authority.

**Mr. Freeman:** I wrote to the hon. Member on Wednesday 8 March.

### Food Safety

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the delay in answering the question on food safety put down for answer on 15 December 1988 by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), eventually answered on 15 February 1989, giving details of each stage in the processing of question and answer.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I have already apologised to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for the delay in answering his question at column *864* during the debate on 21 February 1989, but I am happy to repeat that apology.

The reply which I gave him on 15 February 1989 answered only the first part of his question. The delay arose because officials were attempting to collect information on staffing levels and costs over the past five years, but eventually had to conclude that this could be achieved only at disproportionate cost. As soon as that decision was taken, the answer was processed without delay.

### Registered Homes Tribunals

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if registered homes tribunals have a right to impose additional categories of registration in addition to those which relate to the number of residents and their age, sex or category.

**Mr. Mellor:** In a recent case (Warwickshire county council v Valerie McSweeney (1988)) the High Court held that a registered homes tribunal's power to impose conditions in respect of a registration for a residential care home is limited to those cases set out in section 5(3) of the Registered Homes Act 1984—that is, as to the total number of residents and their age, sex or category. Decisions of the High Court arising from an appeal on a point of law are binding on subsequent registered homes tribunals.

### Residential and Nursing Homes

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on encouraging a diversity of ownership of private residential and nursing homes.

**Mr. Mellor:** We welcome a broad-based service developed in response to public demand. The extent to which individuals, companies or charitable bodies own private residential care or nursing homes is a matter for their commercial judgment.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many establishments which were formerly used as local authority homes or National Health Service hospitals are now used for private residential or nursing care;

(2) how many former poor law institutions are currently still used for *(a)* local authority residential care, *(b)* National Health Service in-patient care, *(c)* private residential care and *(d)* private nursing care.

**Mr. Mellor:** We do not hold the information requested centrally.

### Nursing Home Fees

**Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the National Health Service accepts responsibility for providing in-patient nursing care for patients needing such care, whose financial resources, including pension entitlements and income support, where applicable, are insufficient to cover nursing home fees.

**Mr. Mellor:** The NHS has a responsibility to provide in-patient nursing care for those patients, whatever their financial circumstances, who have been identified as needing it. It is a matter for health authorities to decide the level and pattern of services in the light of local circumstances and available resources. This might include the potential contribution of private or voluntary facilities.

### "Home Life"

**Mr Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his policy to encourage registration authorities to implement recommendations contained in the publication "Home Life", which are not incorporated in the Registered Homes Act.

**Mr. Mellor:** The Secretaries of State for Social Services and Wales endorsed "Home Life" as an excellent guide to good practice and asked local authorities to regard it in the same light as the general guidance issued from time to time under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. In local authority circular (84)15 we said authorities should draw up local guidelines in the light of the Registered Homes Act 1984 and associated regulations, the guidance issued with that Circular and the recommendations in "Home Life". Copies of these documents are in the Library.

### NHS Assets

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health at what level he expects to set the interest element of the capital charge on National Health Service assets.

**Mr. Freeman:** The interest element of capital charges will be set at a level which is consistent with the cost of capital used for other public sector capital assets. The rate of interest will be announced in due course.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what factors will determine the interest element of the capital charge on National Health Service assets.

**Mr. Freeman:** The rate of interest element of the capital charges for National Health Service assets will be consistent with the cost of capital used for other public sector capital matters.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the valuations of National Health Service land and buildings referred to in paragraph 2.7 of the capital charges working paper.

**Mr. Freeman:** I have placed in the Library a summary of the valuation of the NHS estate as at June 1987. There will be a new valuation of the NHS estate before capital charging is inroduced, and the figures will be available next year.

### Hampshire (Electoral Rolls)

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the predicted *(a)* total population and *(b)* number of people on the electoral roll of each local government district of Hampshire in 1995.

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested is not available. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys does not make projections of either total population or the number of people on the electoral roll for local government districts.

### NHS (Charges)

**Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about National Health Service charges and spectacle vouchers.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I will shortly be laying before the House regulations for increases in prescription charges in the National Health Service in England and Wales to come into effect on 1 April 1989. The prescription charge will increase by 20p from £2·60 to £2·80. This increase of 7·7 per cent. reflects the higher costs of the pharmaceutical services and will provide an extra £10 million in income helping us to increase the total resources available to the Health Service in England and Wales by the equivalent of over £2 billion next year. The new charge will continue to represent less than half the cost of an average prescription to the NHS. Under existing exemption arrangements over three quarters of prescriptions are provided free of charge, and these arrangements will continue. The new charges are therefore only likely to be levied on less than a quarter of all prescriptions.

The four-monthly and annual prepayment certificate fees will increase from £13·50 and £37·50 to £14·50 and £40·00 respectively.

The charges for elastic stockings and tights, wigs and fabric supports supplied through the hospital service will also be increased from 1 April, as shown in table A.

From the same date, we will be making regulations under the powers now available to us in the Health and Medicines Act to extend the system of fully proportional charges for dental treatment to include dentures and bridges, which are currently on a fixed scale of charges. This means that all charges for dental treatment, including dentures and bridges, in the general dental service, and dentures and bridges in the hospital service, will be on a uniform charging basis as a fixed proportion of cost.

Also from 1 April, the values of spectacle vouchers will increase by around 4·5 per cent. but vouchers for those with the poorest sight and who need the most expensive glasses are to increase by 10 per cent. Voucher values for the hospital eye service will rise by the same amount with the exception of the voucher for contact lenses which remains unchanged. The NHS charge for contact lenses prescribed through the hospital eye service will rise from 1 April to equal the voucher value of £26·50. The revised voucher values are shown at table B.

*Table A*
*New hospital service charges from 1 April 1989 (Present charges in brackets):*

| *Elastic stockings and tights, wigs and fabric supports* | £ | £ |
|---|---|---|
| Each elastic stocking | 2·80 | (2·60) |
| Tights supplied through the hospital service | 5·60 a pair | (5·20 a pair) |
| Stock modacrylic wig | 24·00 | (22·00) |
| Partial human hair wig | 62·00 | (58·00) |
| Full bespoke human hair wig | 97·00 | (90·00) |
| Surgical brassiere | 12·00 | (11·00) |
| Spinal or Abdominal support | 16·00 | (15·00) |

*Table B*
*NHS spectacle voucher values from 1 April 1989 (present values in brackets)*

| *Voucher* | £ | £ |
|---|---|---|
| A | 17·00 | (16·25) |
| B | 28·00 | (27·00) |
| C | 46·00 | (44·00) |
| D | 32·75 | (31·00) |
| E | 58·00 | (52·50) |
| F | 98·00 | (89·00) |
| G Hospital } | 98·00 | (89·00) |
| H eye service } | 26·50 per lens | (26·50) |
| Complex | 3·25 | (3·00) |
| lenses | 18·00 | (17·00) |
| Prisms per lens | 3·75 single vision | (3·50) |
| | 4·75 bifocal | (4·50) |
| Tints both lenses | 3·80 single vision | (3·50) |
| | 4·80 bifocal | (4·50) |
| Photochromic | 3·80 single vision | (3·50) |
| both lenses | 4·80 bifocal | (4·50) |
| (Hospital eye service) | | |
| Small frame supplement | 33·00 | (31·50) |
| Supplement for special facial characteristics (Hospital eye service) | 33·00 | (31·50) |

## Health Service Indicators

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the next set of Health Service indicators will be issued.

**Mr. Freeman:** The timetable for issuing the new set of Health Service indicators based on data for 1987-88 and, for the first time, using the Körner minimum data sets is as follows: each regional health authority will be sent the indicator values for its own districts at the end of March to be validated. This is being done at the request of the regions because the indicator definitions are new and untried with the new data. This process of validation will take up to three months. Once the values have been checked the full package of indicators will be brought together and published in July. The aim is to publish the set of the indicators based on 1988-89 data in January 1990.

## Hampshire (Electoral Rolls)

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the total population and *(b)* the number of people on the electoral roll of each local government district of Hampshire in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested is given in the table.

*Total population*

| | *Mid year* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1979* | *1980* | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* |
| Basingstoke and Deane | 127,300 | 129,000 | 131,000 | 132,100 | 134,000 | 136,300 | 137,600 | 137,891 | 138,418 |
| East Hants | 87,800 | 89,600 | 91,600 | 91,700 | 93,600 | 95,000 | 97,000 | 97,760 | 100,210 |
| Eastleigh | 89,200 | 91,200 | 93,000 | 94,000 | 96,000 | 97,600 | 99,000 | 99,523 | 99,882 |
| Fareham | 87,000 | 88,000 | 89,000 | 88,200 | 90,800 | 92,600 | 94,200 | 95,705 | 98,154 |
| Gosport | 77,400 | 78,300 | 77,800 | 77,200 | 77,100 | 77,200 | 77,800 | 77,513 | 77,402 |
| Hart | 73,900 | 76,000 | 76,300 | 76,800 | 77,200 | 79,000 | 80,200 | 81,283 | 83,294 |
| Havant | 115,200 | 115,300 | 115,700 | 115,700 | 116,600 | 117,400 | 118,500 | 118,918 | 118,789 |
| New Forest | 142,300 | 144,100 | 145,500 | 146,200 | 149,000 | 151,800 | 155,600 | 159,000 | 161,250 |
| Portsmouth | 191,900 | 190,200 | 191,400 | 191,000 | 191,600 | 188,600 | 187,900 | 186,884 | 186,822 |
| Rushmoor | 79,700 | 79,800 | 80,600 | 80,400 | 79,400 | 80,600 | 81,400 | 79,145 | 77,671 |
| Southampton | 211,300 | 209,900 | 209,900 | 207,400 | 206,300 | 203,900 | 202,300 | 200,501 | 199,071 |
| Test Valley | 91,500 | 92,100 | 93,700 | 94,100 | 95,500 | 97,100 | 98,700 | 99,335 | 100,399 |
| Winchester | 90,600 | 91,800 | 93,000 | 92,800 | 92,300 | 92,400 | 93,700 | 94,208 | 95,612 |

*Local government electorate*[1]

| | *1979* | *1980* | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basingstoke and Deane | 88,897 | 90,810 | 92,905 | 95,287 | 97,494 | 99,964 | 102,286 | 103,724 | 104,967 | 106,299 |
| East Hampshire | 63,104 | 64,452 | 65,884 | 67,644 | 69,034 | 70,942 | 72,087 | 73,579 | 74,463 | 76,592 |
| Eastleigh | 65,269 | 67,598 | 69,280 | 71,126 | 72,546 | 74,481 | 75,579 | 76,716 | 77,827 | 78,277 |
| Fareham | 62,441 | 63,911 | 64,989 | 66,633 | 67,977 | 69,328 | 70,900 | 71,958 | 73,706 | 75,542 |
| Gosport | 52,057 | 53,464 | 54,619 | 55,088 | 55,955 | 56,930 | 57,881 | 57,947 | 57,936 | 58,828 |
| Hart | 50,675 | 52,038 | 53,130 | 54,406 | 55,568 | 56,652 | 57,755 | 58,935 | 60,260 | 62,187 |
| Havant | 83,333 | 84,485 | 85,752 | 86,847 | 87,821 | 89,541 | 90,483 | 91,737 | 92,845 | 93,233 |
| New Forest | 108,466 | 110,989 | 113,148 | 114,752 | 116,803 | 119,673 | 121,457 | 124,119 | 126,690 | 127,965 |
| Portsmouth | 137,589 | 137,298 | 138,565 | 139,794 | 140,428 | 141,096 | 142,068 | 142,641 | 142,665 | 142,974 |
| Rushmoor | 48,634 | 49,219 | 50,135 | 51,769 | 52,586 | 52,935 | 53,215 | 53,537 | 53,425 | 53,401 |
| Southampton | 159,914 | 159,250 | 159,464 | 160,722 | 159,639 | 159,722 | 159,299 | 159,131 | 158,894 | 158,956 |
| Test Valley | 63,255 | 64,528 | 66,111 | 67,263 | 68,198 | 69,527 | 70,928 | 72,617 | 74,253 | 75,713 |
| Winchester | 66,350 | 67,270 | 68,583 | 69,808 | 70,557 | 71,001 | 71,618 | 72,760 | 73,603 | 74,738 |

*Note:* 1979-85 total populations are in rounded figures.
*Source:* OPCS EL Monitors and OPCS mid year estimates.
[1] The electorate figures relate to registers which came into effect in February of each year, based on qualification in October of the preceding year.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Benefits

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants have been transferred from unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit to invalidity benefit for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I regret the information is not available in the form requested. The following table gives the number of incapacity spells where invalidity benefit commenced in each year and the number of these spells which relate to previous unemployment.

| *Year* | *All commencement of invalidity benefit (i)* | *Claimant unemployed at start of spell (ii)* | *Claim links with unemployment benefit claim (iii)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1987-88[1] | 278 | 126 | 89 |
| 1986-87 | 284 | 120 | 82 |
| 1985-86 | 285 | 106 | 68 |
| 1984-85 | 272 | 103 | 67 |
| 1983-84 | 278 | 101 | 77 |

[1] Provisional.

*Notes:*

1. All figures are in thousands.
2. A spell of incapacity following unemployment may begin with immediate entitlement to invalidity benefit, because there is a link to an earlier spell of incapacity. Where there is no such link, a spell of incapacity following unemployment will begin with entitlement to sickness benefit. The information in columns (ii) and (iii) relates to the situation at the start of the spell of incapacity, where this begins with sickness benefit or invalidity benefit.
3. Many of the cases included in column (iii) will also be in column (ii), but they are not necessarily the same. This is because someone can be unemployed at the start of the incapacity spell, but if they have not registered there is no link with an unemployment benefit claim. Conversely, someone who goes back to work after an unemployment benefit claim but then goes sick within eight weeks has a link with that unemployment benefit claim but is not recorded as unemployed at the start of the incapacity spell.
4. Information is not available to distinguish in columns (ii) and (iii) whether, during the preceding unemployment, the benefit paid was unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit, or a combination of the two.

### Child Benefit

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the percentage take-up of child benefit;

(2) whether the take-up of child benefit has changed since the abolition of universal maternity grants.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The available estimates show that the take-up of child benefit has remained substantially the same (around 98 per cent.) since its introduction in 1977.

### Maternity Benefits

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements have been made by his Department following the abolition of universal maternity benefit to ensure that newly nursing mothers get child benefit claim forms.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Claim forms for child benefit are available, on request, from the Department's local offices. Requests for the forms may be made by post, telephone or personal call to any local office—it does not have to be the one covering the claimant's home area. In addition, leaflet FB8 "Babies and Benefits", which is available from health centres, ante natal and child health clinics and maternity hospitals as well as social security offices, includes a cut-out coupon which can be used to obtain the appropriate claim form.

### Plastic National Insurance Cards

**Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stockport dated 6 March, whether plastic national insurance cards are capable of being adapted for use in cash dispensing machines.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Whether the plastic national insurance number card has the capacity to be adapted to this purpose has not been tested, but we have already made it clear that there are no plans to consider such a use for the card.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the amount of money paid out of the social fund since its inception, both in terms of cash and as a percentage of the social fund budget as a whole, from the following offices: Bolton, Bury, Crewe, Manchester (Sale), Preston (North), Preston (South) St. Helens, Warrington, Widnes and Wigan.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Such information is available from the details held in the Library.

### Rating Reform

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice he is offering housing authorities in Scotland on the need to make fresh assessments of current claims from private tenants to ensure landlords reduce rate and rent charges to reflect the abolition of rates from 1 April.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Local authorities in Scotland have been advised that housing benefit should be assessed on the basis of the amount of rent the tenant is contractually liable to pay to occupy his home. After 1 April, when domestic rates are abolished in Scotland, local authorities will no longer be obliged to apportion rent between rent and rates in cases where the tenant has no personal liability to pay rates but pays an inclusive sum to his landlord. In such cases, the maximum housing benefit payable will therefore be 100 per cent. of the global sum as opposed to 100 per cent. of the amount apportioned as rent plus 80 per cent. of the amount apportioned as rates. Landlords will no doubt take the reduction in their overheads as a result of the abolition of domestic rates into account in setting the level of rents. Local authorities have powers to restrict the amount of housing benefit payable where the rent charged is unreasonably high.

### Family Credit

**Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be in a position to respond to the letter from the honourable Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye concerning the application for family credit from the Reverend John Macleod, Porthahomack, Ross-shire; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** A reply was sent on 8 March.

**Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families are now receiving family credit.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** At the end of February 254,000 families were receiving family credit, and a further 42,400 claims were awaiting determination.

### Transitional Protection

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the following categories of claimants in receipt of income support will receive no increase in their benefit payments as a result of the current year's uprating because of the effect of transitional additions: *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* persons in receipt of a disability premium, *(c)* single parents, *(d)* unemployed married couples, *(e)* unemployed single people, *(f)* unemployed with children, and *(g)* others.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* Precise information is not available. The estimated number of claimants in each of the categories listed who will receive no increase in benefit at this year's uprating is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Pensioners | 200,000 |
| Persons in receipt of disability premium | 10,000 |
| Lone parents | 40,000 |
| Unemployed couples without children | 10,000 |
| Unemployed single people | 190,000 |
| Unemployed couples with children | 10,000 |
| Others | 110,000 |
| Total | 570,000 |

## ENVIRONMENT

### River Pollution

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those firms which have been prosecuted for pollution offences in respect of rivers in each year since 1980; which were convicted; and what was the penalty in each case.

**Mr. Howard:** This information is not held by the Department. However, the new National Rivers Authority will in future enforce water pollution controls on a national and more consistent basis as a result of which information of this nature should become more readily available.

### Grants

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to shorten the time taken to process applications by the private sector for city grant.

**Mr. Trippier:** With the introduction of city grant in May 1988 new procedures were adopted to help reduce the time taken to process applications. These include more thorough pre-application discussions to assist developers in producing workable proposals, a streamlined application procedure and a commitment by the Department to provide an early indication of the progress of each application. There are no plans to revise the procedures but they are kept under review.

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff in his Department in London and in each regional office have been allocated to processing applications from the private sector for urban development grant and city grant for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Trippier:** Urban development grant (UDG) applications were and city grant (CG) applications are handled by regional and centrally located staff who are involved in various aspects of urban renewal work. It is not possible to give a figure for staff devoted solely to UDG and CG work.

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many successful applications by the private sector have been made, broken down by Department of Environment region, for urban development grant and city grant in each of the last five years;

(2) what has been the allocation and expenditure, by Department of Environment region, for urban development grant and city grant for each of the last five years;

(3) what is the total value of projects, broken down by Department of the Environment region, that are dependent on urban development grant or city grant for each of the last five years; and what is his estimate for 1989-90.

**Mr. Trippier:** There are no regional allocations for city grant and there were no such allocations for urban development grant. The tables show the figures requested by region for schemes approved in each year.

*Urban Development Grant*

| *Department of Environment Region* | *Number of Schemes Approved* | *Approved Grant* £ million | *Value of Schemes Approved* £ million | *Grant[1] Expenditure* £ million |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1984-85* | | | | |
| West Midlands | 13 | 1·934 | 8·330 | 3·275 |
| North West | 9 | 5·786 | 34·856 | 1·632 |
| Northern | 7 | 3·154 | 10·460 | 1·464 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 10 | 2·186 | 13·124 | 0·582 |
| London | 4 | 7·982 | 35·295 | 4·605 |
| East Midlands | 3 | 1·104 | 6·316 | 0·614 |
| Merseyside | 3 | 0·419 | 1·685 | 0·917 |
| South West | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South East | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 55 | 22·565 | 110·066 | 13·089 |

| Department of Environment Region | Number of Schemes Approved | Approved Grant £ million | Value of Schemes Approved £ million | Grant[1] Expenditure £ million |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1985-86* | | | | |
| West Midlands | 9 | 2·063 | 8·955 | 4·589 |
| North West | 10 | 6·427 | 30·887 | 5·671 |
| Northern | 8 | 1·225 | 5·511 | 2·637 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 13 | 4·263 | 13·886 | 1·498 |
| London | 5 | 5·576 | 19·967 | 4·655 |
| East Midlands | 1 | 0·460 | 5·213 | 0·900 |
| Merseyside | 1 | 0·164 | 1·999 | 1·614 |
| South West | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South East | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 47 | 20·178 | 86·418 | 21·564 |
| *1986-87* | | | | |
| West Midlands | 13 | 12·421 | 67·746 | 4·581 |
| North West | 10 | 1·531 | 5·535 | 4·196 |
| Northern | 10 | 3·039 | 10·780 | 2·010 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 8 | 2·092 | 7·129 | 4·912 |
| London | 7 | 4·551 | 29·702 | 4·609 |
| East Midlands | 6 | 3·250 | 12·638 | 0·452 |
| Merseyside | 4 | 6·093 | 33·397 | 0·546 |
| South West | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South East | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 58 | 32·977 | 166·927 | 21·036 |
| *1987-88* | | | | |
| West Midlands | 5 | 0·550 | 2·664 | 5·943 |
| North West | 11 | 2·596 | 14·189 | 4·038 |
| Northern | 5 | 5·240 | 18·278 | 3·154 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 10 | 3·626 | 13·454 | 2·480 |
| London | 4 | 2·097 | 8·657 | 5·956 |
| East Midlands | 6 | 3·358 | 21·280 | 1·972 |
| Merseyside | 2 | 0·433 | 1·247 | 0·713 |
| South West | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South East | 1 | 0·249 | 1·118 | 0·090 |
| Totals | 44 | 18·149 | 80·887 | 24·346 |
| *1988-89 (to date)* | | | | |
| West Midlands | 6 | 2·182 | 8·610 | 5·236 |
| North West | 5 | 2·557 | 15·156 | 3·048 |
| Northern | 4 | 1·115 | 4·828 | 2·389 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 8 | 5·008 | 20·994 | 3·538 |
| London | 4 | 2·143 | 12·100 | 2·378 |
| East Midlands | 2 | 0·222 | 1·033 | 3·463 |
| Merseyside | 2 | 0·455 | 1·972 | 3·813 |
| South West | 1 | 0·098 | 1·447 | 0·049 |
| South East | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0·159 |
| Totals | 32 | 13·770 | 66·140 | 24·073 |

[1] Expenditure in any year depends upon the progress on schemes approved in several previous years.

*City Grant (Scheme began May 1988)*

| 1988-89 (to date) | Number of Schemes Approved | Approved Grant £ million | Value of Schemes Approved £ million | Grant Expenditure £ million |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *DOE Region* | | | | |
| West Midlands | 7 | 5·368 | 27·922 | 0·714 |
| North West | 7 | 5·559 | 27·151 | 0·109 |
| Northern | 3 | 0·579 | 2·841 | 0 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 4 | 0·784 | 4·210 | 0 |
| London | 5 | 5·570 | 28·648 | 0 |
| East Midlands | 9 | 8·802 | 38·144 | 0·152 |
| Merseyside | 1 | 0·168 | 2·468 | 0 |
| South West | 1 | 0·145 | 0·485 | 0 |
| South East | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 37 | 26·975 | 131·869 | 0·435 |

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when the processing of city grant was delegated to his Department's regional offices;

(2) by what criteria applications for city grant are referred to be processed by his Department in London.

**Mr. Trippier:** Regional offices are responsible for dealing with proposals and inquiries from developers at the pre-application stage and for receiving and checking formal applications. Complete applications are passed to a city grant appraiser based in London. It is then the responsibility of the Department's central inner cities division to progress the application through to a decision by Ministers.

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much clawback of urban development grant and city grant has been obtained by his Department from the private sector in each of the last five years; and what is his estimate for 1989-90.

**Mr. Trippier:** The following amounts of urban development grant have been clawed back to date:

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1986-87 | 0·63 |
| 1987-88 | 0·96 |
| 1988-89 | 0·27 |

No city grant schemes have yet been completed and thus no grant has been clawed back.

No accurate estimate is possible for 1989-90.

**Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average time taken, by Department of the Environment regions, to process private sector applications for *(a)* urban development grant and *(b)* city grant for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Trippier:** The figures for the processing time of applications are set out in the tables according to the year in which a decision was given. The times for UDG schemes do no include the processing of the application by the local authority before submission to the Department. The times for city grant exclude periods when schemes are, with the agreement of the applicant, held in abeyance.

*Average processing time for applications approved (in days)*
*Urban Development Grant*

| *DOE Region* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Midlands | 162 | 142 | 182 | 246 | 110 |
| North West | 142 | 126 | 187 | 150 | 68 |
| Northern | 147 | 152 | 109 | 182 | 100 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 173 | 114 | 148 | 170 | 120 |
| London | 135 | 143 | 147 | 184 | 96 |
| East Midlands | 0 | 257 | 160 | 153 | 32 |
| Merseyside | 116 | 137 | 299 | 172 | 70 |
| South West | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 61 |
| South East | 0 | 552 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Average processing time for all applications decided (in days)*
*City grant (scheme began May 1988)*

| *DOE region* | *1988-89* |
|---|---|
| West Midlands | 118 |
| North West | 92 |
| Northern | 62 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 93 |
| London | 64 |
| East Midlands | 72 |
| Merseyside | 162 |
| South West | 56 |
| South East | — |

## Storm Damage

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of Government assistance given for repairs and compensation following the storms of October 1987; and if he will give a breakdown of the figure.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To 7 March 1989 the Department has given financial assistance to local authorities totalling £21,311,968 under the Bellwin scheme announced on 21 October 1987. The authorities concerned are listed in the table. Payments to authorities on list A are based on final audited claims. Those in list B are based on 90 per cent. of the amounts in authorities' initial claims. Final settlement will be on the basis of audited claims.

*List A*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Adur | 164,733 |
| Arun | 55,824 |
| Ashford | [1]73,825 |
| Babergh | 57,502 |
| Bracknell | 35,126 |
| Brighton | 250,651 |
| Bromley | 994,042 |
| Canterbury | 297,901 |
| Chelmsford | 64,434 |
| Dover | 30,050 |
| East Hampshire | 13,400 |
| East Hertfordshire | 15,733 |
| Eastleigh | [1]5,339 |
| Forest Heath | 10,561 |
| Gillingham | 50,512 |
| Gosport | 113,702 |
| Gravesham | 80,718 |
| Harlow | [1]3,138 |
| Hastings | [1]77,708 |
| Havant | 18,581 |
| Hove | 125,262 |
| Isle of Wight | 30,617 |
| Lewes | 34,859 |
| Medina | 33,178 |
| Mid Suffolk | 10,092 |
| Mid Sussex | 382,468 |
| Mole Valley | 58,275 |
| New Forest | 41,141 |
| North Hertfordshire | [1]1,137 |
| Reigate and Banstead | [1]8,963 |
| Rochford | 45,502 |
| Rother | 20,431 |
| Rushmoor | 20,237 |
| Sevenoaks | 334,928 |
| Spelthorne | [1]4,526 |

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Stevenage | 12,715 |
| Suffolk Coast | 21,013 |
| Surrey Heath | 18,519 |
| Tendring | 15,111 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 35,449 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 250,483 |
| Wandsworth | 394,797 |
| Waverley | 40,205 |
| Wealden | 66,118 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 15,143 |
| West Sussex | 4,021,001 |
| | 8,455,650 |

[1] Amount paid on the basis of initial claim net of amount to be recovered as a result of final audited claims.

*List B*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Barking and Dagenham | 340,200 |
| Basildon | 35,000 |
| Basingstoke | 29,700 |
| Bexley | 347,600 |
| Braintree | 101,000 |
| Brentwood | 210,000 |
| Broxbourne | 18,000 |
| Castle Point | 32,000 |
| Colchester | 17,000 |
| Christchurch | 74,925 |
| Eastbourne | 103,275 |
| East Sussex | 1,592,000 |
| Edenbridge | 210,600 |
| Epsom and Ewel | 21,600 |
| Great Yarmouth | 11,700 |
| Greenwich | 192,375 |
| Hackney | 235,575 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 28,000 |
| Hertsmere | 25,000 |
| Horsham | 119,475 |
| Ipswich | 168,075 |
| Kent | 3,364,200 |
| Lewisham | 138,375 |
| Maidstone | 148,500 |
| Merton | 222,750 |
| Norwich | 97,200 |
| Poole | 24,975 |
| Portsmouth | 64,125 |
| Shepway | 143,323 |
| Southend on Sea | 278,000 |
| South Wight | 178,200 |
| Suffolk | 47,700 |
| Surrey | 2,631,150 |
| Sutton | 297,500 |
| Swale | 153,000 |
| Tandridge | 247,050 |
| Thanet | 177,525 |
| Thurrock | 35,000 |
| Tower Hamlets | 303,345 |
| Waltham Forest | 259,000 |
| Waveney | 2,700 |
| Woking | 12,150 |
| Worthing | 117,450 |
| Total | £12,856,318 |

## Rating Reform

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will express the Ealing domestic rates of 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 as a notional community charge; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** The illustrative community charges published by the Department are based on local authority returns. The figures for Ealing from 1985-86 to 1988-89 are as follows.

*Illustrative community charge in Ealing*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| 1985-86 | 172 |
| 1986-87 | 164 |
| 1987-88 | 278 |
| 1988-89 | 234 |

**Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the Department's estimate of the community charge for 1990 for the district authorities in *(a)* Merseyside, *(b)* Greater Manchester and *(c)* the London boroughs.

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 7 March 1989]:* The Government have made no estimates of future community charges. Illustrative figures are published on 23 June showing what the community charge would have been in each area had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities.

**Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the estimate of the community charge that his Department expects for each district in *(a)* Cumbria, *(b)* Merseyside and *(c)* the London boroughs.

**Mr. Gummer:** The Government have made no estimates of future community charges. Illustrative figures were published on 23 June showing what the community charge would have been in each area had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities.

## Interest Rates

**Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current standard national interest rate as defined in the Housing Act 1985, schedule 16(2); what were the monthly averages for *(a)* base rate, *(b)* average building society rate of interest and *(c)* standard national rate from the start date of the Housing Act 1985; and how he calculates the standard national interest rate.

**Mr. Trippier:** The current standard national rate, introduced on 6 February 1989, is 13·5 per cent. The standard national rate is calculated taking into account interest rates charged by building societies in the United Kingdom and any movement in those rates.

The monthly averages requested are as follows:

| | *Base rates Selected retail banks* | *Average Building society rate of interest* | *Standard National rate of interest* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1986* | | | |
| April | 10·5 | 12·16 | 12·65 |
| May | 10·0 | 12·04 | 12·00 |
| June | 10·0 | 11·06 | 11·00 |
| July | 10·0 | 11·04 | 11·00 |
| August | 10·0 | 11·04 | 11·00 |
| September | 10·0 | 11·04 | 11·00 |
| October | 11·0 | 11·04 | 11·00 |
| November | 11·0 | 12·28 | 11·00 |

| | Base rates Selected retail banks | Average Building society rate of interest | Standard National rate of interest |
|---|---|---|---|
| December | 11·0 | 12·32 | 12·30 |
| *1987* | | | |
| January | 11·0 | 12·32 | 12·30 |
| February | 11·0 | 12·32 | 12·30 |
| March | 10·0 | 12·32 | 12·30 |
| April | 9·5 | 12·31 | 12·30 |
| May | 9·0 | 11·47 | 11·25 |
| June | 9·0 | 11·28 | 11·25 |
| July | 9·0 | 11·27 | 11·25 |
| August | 10·0 | 11·27 | 11·25 |
| September | 10·0 | 11·28 | 11·25 |
| October | 9·5 | 11·28 | 11·25 |
| November | 9·0 | 11·27 | 11·25 |
| December | 8·5 | 10·34 | 11·25 |
| *1988* | | | |
| January | 8·5 | 10·27 | 10·25 |
| February | 9·0 | 10·26 | 10·25 |
| March | 8·5 | 10·26 | 10·25 |
| April | 8·0 | 10·26 | 10·25 |
| May | 7·5 | 9·84 | 10·25 |
| June | 9·5 | 9·78 | 9·75 |
| July | 10·5 | 9·78 | 9·75 |
| August | 12·0 | 11·45 | 10·34 |
| September | 12·0 | 11·54 | 11·50 |
| October | 12·0 | 12·70 | 11·98 |
| November | 13·0 | 12·71 | 12·75 |
| December | n/a | 12·75 | 12·75 |

*Sources:*

Base rates—"Financial Statistics", table 13.10 (rate at end of period).

Building Society rates—"Financial Statistics", table 13.12.

Standard National rate—Department of the Environment.

### Limehouse Link Road

**Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those sites identified or currently being considered for replacement accommodation for tenants affected by the Limehouse link road, giving for each the size and number of units that could be provided;

(2) where the London Docklands development corporation has purchased or is considering purchasing completed units in private housing developments in docklands in order to rehouse tenants affected by the Limehouse link road; if he will give details of the developments involved including the numbers and types of units and the name of the development company; whether the corporation will purchase units at, below or above prices currently being asked by developers on the open market; and what mechanisms the corporation will adopt to ensure that any units purchased will be made available to tenants at affordable rents;

(3) what consideration the London Docklands development corporation has given in order to rehouse tenants affected by the Limehouse link road, to purchasing completed units at the Ideal Homes Limited development at Timber Wharves Village, London E14.

**Mr. Trippier:** The LDDC has identified a number of sites for replacement housing including:

Timber Wharves, E14—up to 421 units of 2, 3, 4 and 5 bedroom accommodation.

Devons road, E3—70 units of 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom houses.

Lukin street, E1—30 units of 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom houses.

The LDDC recently announced its intention to purchase Timber Wharves, which is a development by Ideal Homes (London) Ltd.

The prices paid for acquisitions are a matter of commercial confidentiality, but are subject to certification by independent valuers and will reflect the benefits of bulk purchase where appropriate. The corporation will assist the housing associations who will manage the properties to ensure that rents are set at levels which the tenants can afford.

**Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest available estimate for the total cost of rehousing tenants affected by the Limehouse link road.

**Mr. Trippier:** Under the LDDC's accord with the London borough of Tower Hamlets, at least 400 households would be rehoused. The LDDC currently estimates that the average cost per household would be £142,000. This is based on assumptions about tenants' choices as between new housing association dwellings and existing council dwellings and about construction costs and so on. It would be offset by the LDDC's receipts from the eventual disposal of property released by rehousing.

### Hazardous Waste

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the figures on imports of special waste given in the answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 28 October 1988, *Official Report*, column *427*.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** It is not yet possible to update the information given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 28 October 1988. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution expects to have the information from the waste disposal authorities later this year.

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide figures for the tonnage of special waste, both indigenous and imported, disposed of in the United Kingdom in each year from 1978 to the most recent year for which figures are available.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Records of imported special wastes have been gathered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (and its predecessors) only since the financial year 1981-82. This information was provided in my answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 28 October 1988, *Official Report*, column *427*. Figures for indigenous special waste arisings have been given in the hazardous waste inspectorate's three reports which have been placed in the Library. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution advises that the total of special waste (indigenous and imported) for financial year 1987-88 is 1,845,833 tonnes.

### Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Ridley:** Copies of the Select Committee reports made since June 1987 which contain recommendations for my Department, and copies of the responses made by the Government, are available in the Library of the House.

### London Docklands Development Corporation

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects a reply to be sent by the London Docklands development corporation to the letter from the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, of 22 February addressed to Mr. Michael Honey.

**Mr. Trippier:** I understand that Mr. Honey will reply this week.

### Voluntary Organisations (Bradford)

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the withdrawal of urban programme funding for voluntary organisations in Bradford, and as to what steps he is taking to ameliorate the effects of discontinuing such funds.

**Mr. Trippier:** I have made no decisions yet on Bradford's urban programme for 1989-90. I hope to do so shortly. I should point out that there are proposals within the programme for the funding of voluntary sector schemes to the extent of £1·29 million. I understand that several projects which have reached the end of their approved funding period, and which were not included in next year's programme, may come forward for consideration. I will of course examine these very closely.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make additional funds available to Bradford metropolitan district council to enable voluntary oranisations currently funded both by public agencies and by the council, to continue to receive funding at current levels.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** We have no plans to do so. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him today by my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) about urban programme funding in Bradford.

### Rent Officers

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the role of the rent officer under the Housing Act 1988;

(2) what guidance is given on the criteria by which the rent officers will decide market rents.

**Mr. Trippier:** Under the draft orders laid before Parliament last month, rent officers would, from 1 April, have the function of assessing whether the rents paid by housing benefit claimants in the deregulated private rented sector are reasonable for housing benefit subsidy purposes, and whether claimants are occupying over-large accommodation. The draft orders specify the criteria to be applied. Rent officers will be required to compare the rent paid by a benefit claimant with the rents paid in the open market by tenants who are not receiving benefit.

### Chlorofluorocarbons

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals for the recovery of chlorofluorocarbons currently in use for domestic or commercial refrigeration.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Both United Kingdom manufacturers of CFCs as well as some refrigeration companies offer a recycling service for used refrigerants. At least one retailer of domestic refrigerators and freezers has agreed to remove old appliances free of charge to extract the refrigerant for recycling.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to prohibit the release of CFCs into the atmosphere.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Overall production and consumption of cholorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is controlled within the European Community by the EC regulation implementing the Montreal protocol. Within that framework we are strongly encouraging action on a voluntary basis to reduce CFC use to the maximum possible extent by such measures as use of alternative substances, products and processes, prevention of leaks and wastage, and recovery and recycling. The steps already being taken by all sectors of industry will ensure that the United Kingdom will more than halve its consumption of CFCs by the end of 1989—10 years ahead of the protocol requirement. Following the initiative of the United Kingdom, EC Environment Ministers agreed on 2 March on the need to reduce CFC production and consumption by at least 85 per cent. as soon as possible with a view to a complete phase out by the end of the century, and to strengthen the protocol accordingly. The "Saving the Ozone Layer" London conference on 5 to 7 March underlined the need for tougher international measures. The United Kingdom hopes that such action will be agreed when the parties to the protocol meet in London 1990.

### Water Pollution (Oxfordshire)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have been affected by the impure water supply in Oxfordshire.

**Mr. Howard:** The diarrhoeal illness cryptosporidiosis is caused by the organism, cryptosporidium, which is widespread in the environment. It is not therefore known how many of the 69 people so far identified this year as affected by the illness in Oxfordshire were infected through the water supply. However, as the organism was positively identified in the water supply to areas where there was a higher incidence of the illness than normal, precautionary advice was given that water to be used by children under two and immuno-compromised adults should be boiled for one minute.

### Badgers

**Mr. Ron Davis** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the changes in the numbers and distribution of badgers in the wild following the passing of the Badgers Act 1973.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The first reliable national survey of the badger population in Great Britain was commissioned by the Nature Conservancy Council and carried out between 1985 and 1988 by Bristol university and the Mammal Society. The initial findings are that there are approximately 42,000 main setts or social groups in Great Britain, equivalent to a population of approximately 240,000 animals. The final results of this study will be used as a baseline for future surveys. It is not possible accurately to assess changes in the British badger population since 1973.

### East Thames-side

**Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on his consultancy study of the housing potential of the five large sites in East Thames-side.

**Mr. Ridley:** The study has provided information on the potential of the five areas in east London for housing development. A copy of the study report is in the Library. It is clear these areas at the Greenwich peninsula, Beckton, Barking reach, the lower Lea Valley and Stratford can make an important contribution towards meeting the pressing housing needs of east London.

The capacity of the areas considered developable depends on many factors, not least decisions on a balance of land uses and the chosen density of housing development. The five areas are substantially owned by local authorities, other public bodies or recently privatised industries. Although parts are in useful occupation, within the areas extensive sites remain undeveloped or underused. To a considerable extent their lack of productive use has been the result of prolonged designation as operational land despite a lack of specific plans for their actual development. Realisation of the unsatisfactory nature of this situation has been growing among those directly concerned. The reasons are, principally, pressure from Government, the rising value of the asset and the opportunity cost of its underuse, and initiative in some cases by local planning authorities. Each of the five areas will require a different solution. To prosper they will need concerted and co-ordinated action by the local authorities, landowners and developers.

There is now enormous scope for mixed housing for at least 20,000 new homes including low-cost dwellings. The study and the Government's new initiatives to improve transport for Docklands and East Thames-side have now helped to bring the prospect of development nearer.

### Ancient Monuments

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the protection available for ancient monuments in the light of the recent decision at Gloucester Crown court relating to Condicote Henge.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Our 13,000 scheduled ancient monuments are an important part of our heritage. Monuments entered on the statutory schedule of ancient monuments are fully protected. English Heritage will continue to press vigorously for prosecution in cases of wilful damage to such monuments.

The recent prosecution at Gloucester Crown court failed because the court was not satisfied with the evidence produced in court that the particular monument was included in the schedule. Documentary evidence was available in the Department's offices in London, but the Department had not been invited to provide a witness. We understand that the question of an appeal is being considered.

### Right to Buy

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will increase the maximum discount allowed to tenants exercising the right to buy their homes.

**Mr. Trippier:** My hon. Friend and many other hon. Members have pointed out that the present limits work unfairly for tenants living in areas where property values are high. My right hon. Friend therefore proposes to lay before the House an order under section 131 of the Housing Act 1985, and regulations under section 171C, raising the limit to £50,000. The present limit of £35,000 was set in January 1987. I am sure the increase will be welcomed by the many tenants in London and the south-east who have not been able to exercise their right to buy with the present limit on discount.

### Housing Act 1988

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on press and public relations material and advertising in respect of the Housing Act 1988 in total; what are future spending plans; and how much has been spent on publicising *(a)* housing action trusts and *(b)* council estate ballots on opting out of council control.

**Mr. Trippier** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* Expenditure on informing people of their rights and opportunities under the provisions of the Housing Act 1988 amounts to about £84,000 to date of which £7,600 relates to housing action trusts including translation of material into ethnic minority languages. There has been no expenditure on publicising council estate ballots on council proposals to transfer their stock. Further expenditure of around £620,000 will be required to inform people about tenants' choice, and to report back to tenants in the proposed HAT areas the results of the consultants studies of their estates. For 1989-90 a total of £1 million has been earmarked for information directly related to recent changes in legislation and policy: the final breakdown has yet to be decided but the programme is likely to include material on housing associations, on tenants choice, on housing action trusts and on the proposed changes to the improvement grant system.

### Capper Pass Works Humberside

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the report from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the subject of the emission of radiation from the Capper Pass works in North Humberside.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has now completed its report on emissions from the Capper Pass smelting works in north Humberside. I hope shortly to place copies in the Library of the House. I will ensure that a copy is also sent to my hon. Friend.

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total final number of *(a)* countries, *(b)* international organisations and *(c)* other interested bodies who have accepted invitations to attend the conference on the ozone layer and chlorofluorocarbons in London on 5 to 7 March.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* A total of 123 countries and the European Community registered attendance at the "Saving the Ozone Layer" London conference on 5 to 7 March. In addition to the United Nations environment programme,

four UN agencies accepted invitations to send an observer. Representatives of the Citizens' Symposium on CFCs also attended, and a large number of industrial companies, trade associations and scientific organisations provided speakers and technical experts.

### Rate Swap Arrangements

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those local authorities which he knows to have entered into interest rate swap arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* The London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham recently sought my right hon. Friend's sanctions for certain payments and receipts due under interest rate swaps and I am aware from press and market reports that other authorities have entered into such arrangements. Individual authorities are not, however, required to inform my Department before entering into swaps and do not do so. Advice on the powers of local authorities to enter into swaps was circulated to all authorities by the Audit Commission last year. I am aware therefore neither of how many authorities have entered into these arrangements nor of how many have done so outside the guidelines on the powers of local authorities to enter into swaps which was circulated to all authorities by the Audit Commission last year.

### Civil Servants (Political Activity)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff within his Department in the category "politically restricted," as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local political activity.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* Nine.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff within his Department in each of the categories *(a)* politically restricted, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* politically free, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, are local authority councillors.

**Mr. Ridley** *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* The following numbers of staff are recorded as being local authority members:

| | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| Politically restricted | 6 |
| Intermediate | 13 |

The Department does not keep a record of the number of staff in the politically free group who are councillors.

## DEFENCE

### RAF Finningley

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the present operational duties of Royal Air Force Finningley; and what are the future proposals for this base.

**Mr. Neubert:** RAF Finningley is the centre for training all non-pilot aircrew for the Royal Air Force, and for advanced multi-engine pilot training. It is also the base for Yorkshire universities air squadron, and air experience flight and the headquarters of the search and rescue wing. Finningley is designated as a co-located operating base for use by American forces in time of war. There are no plans to change the role of the station.

### Royal Artillery Range, Hebrides

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the operation at the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides, in September 1988, involving a West German Army helicopter.

**Mr. Neubert:** The helicopter referred to was a West German army CH 53 deployed in support of a British Army air defence demonstration held on 13 September 1988. The helicopter added realism to the demonstration by deploying a Javelin missile detachment and recovering them after the missile firing.

### Exercise North Star 89

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role Royal Air Force Stornoway will play in Exercise North Star 89.

**Mr. Neubert:** None.

### Stornoway Airport

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many movements by Tornado aircraft were recorded at Stornoway airport in 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** During 1988 Tornado aircraft were temporarily deployed to Stornoway on eight separate occasions for a single day. Records kept do not identify by aircraft type the number of movements undertaken during the day whilst there.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the results of the noise surveys carried out at Stornoway airport in July 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** Evaluation of the results of the noise survey is almost complete and I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account was taken of run and break manoeuvres by military aircraft during the noise surveys at Stornoway airport in July 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** Run and break manoeuvres are rarely carried out at Stornoway and none was observed during the noise survey. Such manoeuvres would, in any case, be unlikely to affect the position of the average 70dB(A) noise contour.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account was taken of overshoot manoeuvres by military aircraft during the noise surveys at Stornoway airport in July 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** Noise measurements were taken of 18 overshoot manoeuvres (13 by Phantom F4 aircraft and five by Tornado).

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account was taken of noise from ground engine running by military aircraft during the noise surveys at Stornoway airport in July 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** The aim of the noise survey was to measure the noise associated with representative aircraft operations at sites which would enable the computer predicted average 70dB(A) noise contour to be validated. Due to the limited duration of the military exercise it was not possible to take specific measurements of noise from ground engine running. Experience of noise surveys at other military airfields suggests that the noise from this activity would not affect the position of the noise contour.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions are given to military pilots using Stornoway airport *(a)* during periods of military activation of the airfield and *(b)* during periods when the airport is under civilian operational control, concerning the carrying out of run and break manoeuvres.

**Mr. Neubert:** Military pilots practising run and break manoeuvres at Stornoway airport are instructed to approach runway 36 at a minimum height of 600 ft or 1,000 ft if there is any civilian light aircraft or helicopter activity within the circuit area; and runway 18 at a minimum height of 1,000 ft. Pilots should approach with a displacement of 400 ft from the centre line of the runway to the west side and break to the east, away from the populated area. These instructions apply whether air traffic control is being provided by military or civilian personnel.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many simulated air attacks were made on Stornoway airport during its period of activation for Exercise Ocean Safari in September 1987;

(2) how many simulated air attacks were made on Stornoway airport during its period of activation for Exercise Flanagan in July 1988;

(3) how many simulated air attacks were made on Stornoway airport during its period of activation for Exercise Teamwork in September 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** There were no simulated attacks made on Stornoway airport during these exercises.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many simulated air attacks have been made on Stornoway airport since 16 May 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** As my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) said in his reply at column *352* on 16 May 1988, there is no requirement for Highlands and Islands Airports Limited to maintain records of simulated air attacks by military aircraft on Stornoway airport, during the normal periods of civil use. However records are maintained by the RAF when the airfield is activated for military exercises.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what minimum height and maximum speed are specified in the instructions to military fast jet pilots carrying out simulated air attacks on Stornoway airport.

**Mr. Neubert:** Simulated air attacks at Stornoway airport are very infrequent and are subject to restrictions of height, speed and angle of approach as set out by Highlands and Islands Airports Limited.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many practice approaches were carried out by military aircraft at Stornoway airport in 1988.

**Mr. Neubert:** During 1988 there were 278 recorded practice approaches made by military aircraft at Stornoway airport. Of these 134 were made during Exercise Flanagan, when RAF Stornoway was activated from 8 to 17 July, and 42 during Exercise Teamwork during the period 30 August to 12 September.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the planned dates of activation of Stornoway airport for military exercises during 1989; and if he will list the title, scope and purpose of the exercise in each case.

**Mr. Neubert:** At present it is planned that Stornoway airport will be activated for military activity during the following periods: 20 June to 8 July 1989 and 7 to 18 September 1989. I will write to the hon. Member nearer the time giving specific details of the exercises.

### Military Aircraft (Run and Break Manoeuvres)

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those military airfields in the United Kingdom where restrictions are imposed on the carrying out of run and break manoeuvres by military aircraft.

**Mr. Neubert:** Run and break manoeuvres take place at most military airfields according to local conditions. To specify all local restrictions would not be possible without disproportionate cost and effort.

### RAF Stornoway

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role was played by RAF Stornoway in Exercise JMC 89/1.

**Mr. Neubert:** None.

### Coastal Communications System

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the United Kingdom maritime coastal communications system; when he expects the system to become operational; and if he will list the locations of any of its installations in the Western Isles.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The United Kingdom maritime coastal communications system (UKMACCS), which became operational in April 1987, provides high frequency communications to and from ships of the Royal Navy from the United Kingdom coastline out to 200 nautical miles. There are no installations associated with this system in the Western Isles.

### RAF Aird Uig

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the equipment of RAF Aird Uig following the recommendations on Royal Air Force tactical communications equipment set out in paragraph 82 of Cm 228, "Implementing the Lessons of the Falklands Campaign: Government Response to the Fourth Report from the Defence Committee, Session 1986-87".

**Mr. Neubert:** The report in question and the Government's response to it covered military communications over extensive distances between the United

Kingdom and the south Atlantic in 1982. These have now been improved in a number of ways. The equipment at RAF Aird Uig is a NATO facility designed to support maritime operations over much shorter distances in the north Atlantic. This equipment meets with NATO requirement. There have been no recent changes to it nor are any planned in the immediate future.

### Z-Berths

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ports are currently being considered as possible locations for new Z-berths; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Royal Navy's requirements for port visits by nuclear-powered submarines are continually under review. When a port appears suitable and practical, the safety considerations are discussed with local civil authorities. Swansea is at pesent under consideration as a possible location for a new Z-berth. My officials have also had preliminary discussions with the port and local authorities at Tilbury.

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the port of Hull has been taken off the list of ports with approved Z-berths; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** After navigational problems had been encountered on two occasions, the Royal Navy reluctantly decided in 1985 to discontinue visits to Hull by Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines.

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current and future status of the Z-berth in the port of Barry.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Use of the Z-berth in Barry by royal naval nuclear-powered submarines has been discontinued temporarily because of difficulties in maintaining the water level at low tide. We understand that Associated British Ports intends to replace lock gates and modernise the berth's facilities in the near future; once this has been done the berth should again be suitable for use by nuclear-powered submarines.

### Tain Bombing Range, Ross-shire

**Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on any alterations he is considering over the use of Tain bombing range, Ross-shire, for use by the Army for mortar practice.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* The possibility of the Army making very occasional use of the range at RAF Tain for mortar practice is currently under consideration. No decisions have been taken.

### Low Flying

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what point after take-off an aircraft is considered to be on a low-level flight; and if that definition always applies in determining low-level flight accidents.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 18 January 1989]:* An aircraft is judged to have been involved in accident at low level when the accident occurs after it is clear of the airfield area and it is engaged in the low-flying element of its sortie.

### Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what stage he has reached in his consideration of the most cost effective location for those parts of the directorate general of defence quality assurance now at Woolwich and Bromley.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I have concluded that a move to Preston farm in Teesside is the most cost-effective solution for the headquarters and laboratories of the directorate general of defence quality assurance now at Woolwich and Bromley. The move would concentrate the headquarters functions and main laboratories of the directorate on a single site with fully modern facilities, while at the same time releasing the Woolwich and Bromley sites for disposal and redevelopment. We will be consulting the trades unions, as is normal practice. Some 1,500 jobs are involved, of which about 650 would be good quality scientific and engineering posts and about 250 would be for apprentices.

### Accident Statistics

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Navy Sea King off Falmouth on 26 September 1984.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While hovering above the water in Falmouth bay, the aircraft suffered an engine failure. A controlled landing was made on the water. None of the crew suffered any injuries. Subsequently, the aircraft was recovered and damage to the airframe was assessed as category 3 (repairable on site but requires assistance beyond the unit's own technical resources).

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Navy Sea King at the Royal Navy AS, Culdrose on 24 August 1984.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Lightning at RAF Binbrook on 19 July 1984.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Shortly after the Lightning touched down, its right main undercarriage collapsed and the aircraft veered off the runway and through the airfield perimeter fence. There were no casualties. The aircraft suffered category 3 damage.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Tornado at RAF Honington on 8 November 1983.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the

damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Sea King in the English Channel on 20 June 1983.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to an Army Scout helicopter at Sek Kong, Hong Kong, on 18 January 1983.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* During a practice landing, the Scout's tail rotor struck the ground, causing the aircraft to land heavily, resulting in category 3 damage. The crew suffered minor injuries.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Phantom at RAF Stanley on 24 October 1982.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Navy Hunter at the Royal Navy AS at Yeovilton on 19 August 1982.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* After suffering a bird strike while exercising in the Portland sea areas, the Hunter returned to RNAS Yeovilton. Unable to lower the nose-wheel, the pilot landed the aircraft on a prepared foam strip, using the main wheels alone. The pilot was uninjured. The aircraft suffered category 3 damage.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Bulldog of East Midlands Universities Air Squadron in 1982.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Buccaneer of the 15th Squadron over West Germany on the 8 March 1982.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While at 2,000 ft. above the Nordhorn range in the Federal Republic of Germany, a Buccaneer of 15 Squadron sustained a broken turbine blade, which resulted in an engine fire. The pilot landed successfully and without injury at the German Air Force base at Hopsten. Aircraft damage was assessed at category 3.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Canberra at RAE Bedford on 30 November 1981.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]* Whilst undertaking a night landing in stormy weather at RAE Bedford the Canberra's wheels failed to grip the runway due to an excess of rain water. The pilot raised the undercarriage and the aircraft skidded to a halt. Originally, the damage to the aircraft was assessed at category 3. Subsequently, however, it was considered that, due to the aircraft's age, it would not be economic to repair it.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Vulcan at Goose Bay, Canada on 13 November 1981.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There was no accident and there were no casualties. Following a report of a large fuel leak, category 2 (repairable within unit resources) damage to the main cabin conditioning duct of this aircraft was discovered. Subsequently, because of the type, age and location of the aircraft and the damage suffered, the aircraft was written off as beyond economic repair.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Lightning at RAF Binbrook on 27 March 1981.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* After landing, the Lightning's undercarriage retracted accidentally. There were no casualties. The aircraft suffered category 3 damage.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Navy Sea King in the English channel on 13 October 1980.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While conducting a sonar exercise in Falmouth bay, the Sea King suffered an engine failure. The pilot made a controlled landing on the water and taxied the aircraft to a local beach. There were no casualties. The aircraft suffered category 2 damage.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident at Royal Air Force Valley on 27 May 1980.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* After landing at RAF Valley, a RAF Hawk aircraft's left brake failed to operate correctly and the aircraft left the runway. Both pilots ejected and suffered minor injuries. The aircraft suffered category 3 damage when hitting a stanchion belonging to the end of runway arrester equipment.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Hunter, serial number XL567, on 18 August 1980.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of

damage and *(c)* the casualties whether civilian or military resulting from the accident to a Royal Aircraft Establishment Canberra at RAF Manston on 20 December 1979.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement *(a)* the circumstances surrounding the accident to an Army Scout helicopter in Canada on 26 August 1979 and *(b)* the damages caused by the accident.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While undertaking a routine flight over a training area in Suffield, Canada at a height of 30 ft above ground, the Scout's engine cut out, leading the pilot to make an emergency landing. The helicopter struck the ground heavily and sufered category 3 damage. The crew sustained minor injuries.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1980" shows no major injuries resulting from low-flight accidents overseas for 1979, when table 9 of his letter on 16 August to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, lists four "Army Other" for the year 1979.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There were two such major injuries resulting from an Army helicopter accident overseas during low level flying in 1979. These were omitted inadvertently from the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1980" but were correctly detailed in my predecessor's letter of 16 August.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the death of an Royal Air Force navigator in a Tri-National Tornado training establishment crash in Wales on 17 June 1986 is not included in the lists attached to his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The accident to a German Air Force aircraft and the crew fatalities were listed at annex D of my predecessor's letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member. It was omitted inadvertently from table 4.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the foreign military aircraft accidents listed in his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, occurred during low-level flights.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* No.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* fatalities, *(b)* serious injuries, *(c)* loss of aircraft, *(d)* serious damage to aircraft and *(e)* other damages to military or civilian property resulting from the accident of a Royal Air Force Hawk on 21 April 1983.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While transitting over Fort Angustus as part of a formation, a Hawk aircraft struck power cables, suffering category 3 damage. The rear seat passenger ejected, suffering major injuries, but the pilot landed the aircraft safely. A second Hawk sustained very minor damage after hitting aerial debris caused by the ejection. The power cables required repair, costing £2,886.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Jaguar accident caused by disorientation at 6,000 ft on 6 August 1981 was not included as a low-level flight accident.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* This aircraft had completed its low-level manoeuvre and climbed to 5,500 ft before the accident occurred. It would not, therefore, have been accurate to include it among accidents that had taken place during low-level flight.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is still his policy that all accidents to aircraft of the three services which have involved loss of or serious damage to aircraft or which have resulted in fatalities or serious injuries are to be listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Yes.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which major injuries resulting from the Tornado/Jaguar collision on 12 July 1984 listed in table 5 of his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, are not included in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985".

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The major injury suffered by one member of the aircrew was omitted inadvertently from the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985." The relevant information provided in my predecessor's letter of 16 August 1988, was correct.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether accidents which occurred following pull-up from low-level flights, caused by disorientation in cloud about 2,000 ft, are included in the statistics of low-level flight accidents.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* If the circumstances giving rise to an accident began to develop at or above 2,000 ft above the ground, following a successful pull-up from low level, then clearly such an accident would not be classified as having occurred during low-level flight.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to include in the statistics of low-level flight accidents those occurring during unauthorised low-level display flying.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The Ministry of Defence maintains comprehensive accident records pertinent to flight safety. These records do not deal specifically with accidents occurring during low-level flying, since such information of itself is usually not considered directly relevant to flight safety. All questions from hon. Members about accidents during low-level flight are researched individually according to the information sought. Where appropriate, answers make it clear that information is included or excluded. In my predecessor's letter dated 23 March 1988 and 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member, copies of which were placed in the Library, it was stated that accidents during flying displays were not included in statistics relating to low-level flying exercises.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" lists only two injuries resulting from the accident on 12 July

1986, when the lists of deaths and major injuries to military personnel as result of low-level flying attached to his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, record three injuries for that same accident.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The three injuries resulting from the accident to a Gazelle on 12 July 1986 were included in table 5.4 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987"; one injury was excluded inadvertently from table 5.8. The relevant information provided in my predecessor's letter of 16 August 1988 was correct.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the two major injuries resulting from the Royal Navy accident of 7 December 1983 were omitted from the lists in table 9 of his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Royal Navy accident records were not computerised until 1985. Details of accidents before that year can be obtained only by manual search of old accident and signal logs. The information referred to was contained in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984" but omitted inadvertently from my predecessor's letter.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1983", records no major injuries when table 5 of his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, lists two Royal Navy other major injuries.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* If the hon. Member rereads volume 1 of the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1983", he will see on page 49 a reference to a Royal Navy Sea King accident in which two Royal Navy personnel suffered major injuries. This was the figure quoted in my predecessor's letter of 16 August 1988.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the accident to the Lightning, which occurred during unauthorised flying aerobatics on 26 June 1983, was not included in his statistics of low-level flight accidents.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident on that date.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the date of the accident to a Royal Navy Wessex listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984" as 7 December 1983 and in his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, as 1 December 1983.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The correct date was 7 December 1983.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the accident to a Sea Harrier off Scotland on 15 October 1987 included in the lists provided in his letter of 16 August to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, but excluded from his lists in the letter of 23 March 1988 to the same hon. Member effectively took place.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Yes.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the accident to a Royal Navy Sea King on 29 February 1984 was omitted from the lists in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985" and included in the lists provided in his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Only major accidents (categories 4 and 5) are set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". This accident (category 3) was included in the list provided by my predecessor only in response to a specific question tabled by the hon. Member.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Jaguar aircraft which made an emergency landing at RAE Bedford in 1984 has flown since that accident; what is its current status; and which unit was assigned to carry out repairs on it.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Whilst undertaking a low-flying sortie the pilot was forced to divert from his planned path by adverse weather. In gaining altitude though cloud, his aircraft struck Charwelton radio tower and subsequently landed at RAE Bedford. The damage to the aircraft was assessed as category 3. Subsequently, however, it was decided that the aircraft was beyond economic repair and the wings are now being used for tests at RAE Farnborough.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the accident to an Army Gazelle of 29 April 1986, as listed in his reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), *Official Report*, column *449*, 16 November 1987, was not included in the lists in his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* It was omitted inadvertently.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1983" lists only one injury resulting from the accident on 15 September 1982 when the lists of deaths and major injuries to military personnel as a result of low-level flying, attached to his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, records two injuries for that same accident.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The two major injuries resulting from the accident on 15 September 1982 were included in table 6·6 volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1983", but one injury was omitted inadvertently from annex F, volume 1. The relevant information in my predecessor's letter of 16 August 1988 was correct.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" lists four Royal Air Force fast jet major injuries in the Tornado crashes on 3 June and 27 July 1987 when the list in the table in his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, records only two such major injuries for 1987.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* My predecessor's letter of 16 August omitted inadvertently the major injuries sustained by the two aircrew of the RAF Tornado which crashed at Manby on 3 June 1987.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" lists only two injuries for the accident on 18 March 1987 when the list of deaths and major injuries to military personnel as a result of low-level flying, attached to his letter to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, of 16 August 1988, records three injuries for that accident.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* My predecessor's letter should have referred to only two major injuries resulting from this accident. The third casualty received only minor injuries.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Royal Navy Sea King crash in Oman on 30 November 1986 was omitted from the lists in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987".

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The "Statement on the Defence Estimates" includes only major (category 4 and 5) accidents. Damage from this accident was assessed as very minor.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the accident to a Sea King on 23 July 1987 included in the lists provided in his letter of 23 March 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan was excluded from the lists in his letter to the same hon. Member of 16 August 1988.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* Since the accident occurred while the aircraft was landing it should not have been included in my predecessor's letter of 23 March.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the accident to a Royal Navy Sea King on 23 September 1987 occurred during landing as stated in annex E of his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, or during low-level flying, as stated in his reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), *Official Report*, column *449*, 16 November 1987.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The Sea King helicopter owned by Westlands but under military registration was undertaking sonar trials at low level when it suffered an engine failure and ditched into the sea.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether in 1979 there were two Royal Air Force fast jet major injuries as shown in table 5 of his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, or one as listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The major injury to the pilot of the RAF Hunter resulting from a crash on 6 July 1979 was omitted inadvertently from the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1980". The relevant information provided by my predecessor in his letter of 16 August 1988 was correct.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Navy Bulldog at RAF Leeming on 1 June 1981.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While carrying out a practice forced landing without power at RAF Topcliffe, the RAF Bulldog flown by a Royal Navy pilot hit the runway heavily and the landing gear collapsed. The aircraft slid some 100 m along the runway. Category 3 damage was sustained by the aircraft, while the engine and propeller were written off. The pilot suffered slight shock.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Buccaneer of the 16 Squadron at Nellis Air Force base, Nevada, in November 1981.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* There is no record of such an accident.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were *(a)* the circumstances of, *(b)* the nature of the damage and *(c)* casualties resulting from the accident to a Royal Air Force Jet Provost of the central flying school on 5 July 1984.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* While the pilot was practising aerobatics at a height of some 6,800 ft, a fuel leak caused an engine fire. The pilot made a successful forced landing at RAF Leeming and was not hurt. Originally, damage to the aircraft was assessed at category 3. Subsequently, however, it was considered that as the aircraft was nearing the end of its projected flying life it would not be economic to repair it.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1983" records only three major injuries for 1982 when table 9 of his letter of 16 August 1988 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, lists four Army other major injuries for that year.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* One such injury was omitted inadvertently from the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1983". The relevant information provided in my predecessor's letter of 16 August 1988 was correct.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what unit carried out the repairs on the Royal Air Force Tornado which crashed at RAF Wildenrath on 14 April 1987; and if the aircraft has now re-entered service.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* This aircraft is currently being repaired at RAF Laarbruch by a working party from 431 maintenance unit. It should return to service later this year.

## RAF Phantom XV591

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the withdrawal from use of the Royal Air Force Phantom serial number XV591 during 1987.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* During routine servicing, a serious defect was discovered in this aircraft. It was decided that, since the Phantom FG1 fleet is soon to be withdrawn from service, this aircraft was beyond economical repair.

## Strobe Lights

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the total expenditure in each year since 1979 on the fitment of high intensity strobe lights to military aircraft of the three services;

(2) if he will make a statement on progress in fitting high intensity strobe lights to military aircraft of the three services;

(3) when the fitment of high intensity strobe lights of RAF Nimrod aircraft was first proposed; what is the current status of the proposal; and what funding has been provided for this programme.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* High intensity strobe lights (HISLs) have so far been fitted to aircraft of the three services as follows:

| | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Royal Navy | |
| Sea Harrier | 100 |
| Gazelle | 80 |
| Army | |
| Scout | 100 |
| Lynx | 85 |
| Gazelle | 65 |
| Royal Air Force | |
| Dominie | 100 |
| Harrier 3/4 | 95 |
| Harrier GR5 | [1]100 |
| Jaguar | 100 |
| Hercules | 75 |
| Buccaneer | 54 |
| Hawk | 100 |
| VC10 C1 | 100 |
| Jetstream | 65 |
| Bulldog | [2]— |
| Sea King | 100 |
| Chinook | [3]5 |
| Puma | 85 |
| Gazelle | 50 |
| Wessex | 68 |

[1] Fitted during manufacture.
[2] Programme about to commence.
[3] Trial programme.

Consideration is being given to fitting HISLs on a further six RAF aircraft types including Nimrod. It is not, however, our practice to comment on whether individual items are included in the forward defence programme. The installation of HISLs is undertaken only as part of a larger modification programme for each aircraft. It would not, therefore, be possible to identify separately the discrete expenditure on HISLs for military aircraft since 1979, without disproportionate cost and effort.

### Accident Data Recorders

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the military aircraft types operated by the three services which are fitted with accident data recorders; and in what year each type was first fitted with this equipment;

(2) what plans exist to fit accident data recorders to aircraft types operated by the three services which do not currently carry such equipment.

**Mr. Neubert** *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* The following RAF fixed wing aircraft types entered service fitted with accident data recorders (ADRs):

VC-10 (1966), Nimrod (1967), Harrier (1969), Hawk (1976), Tornado GR1 (1980), Tornado F3 (1984), BAe 146 (1986), Tristar (1986), Tucano (1988).

The Andover was modified to carry ADRs from 1970. There are no current plans to fit ADRs retrospectively to other military aircraft.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 10 March 1989*

## PRIME MINISTER

### CSCE (Scottish Representations)

**Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will indicate what attitude the Government intend to adopt towards the submission made by the Scotland United Nations Committee to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe regarding the Scottish governmental situation.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government do not consider the subject of devolution for Scotland relevant in the CSCE context.

### "Our Future World"

**Dr. Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 6 March to the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness, (Mr. Franks), *Official Report*, column *388*, she will place in the Library a full copy of the Natural Environment Research council report on global environmental research, the abridged version of which, entitled "Our Future World," was placed in the Library on 6 March.

**The Prime Minister:** No. The Natural Environment Research Council report on global environmental research was commissioned by the advisory council on science and technology which decided that an abridged version should be published.

### Official Duties (Rail Travel)

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions since May 1979 she has travelled by rail in the United Kingdom while carrying out official duties; and what are the considerations taken into account when deciding what form of transport is to be used when travelling outside London.

**The Prime Minister:** I regret that for reasons of practicality and security it is dificult for me to travel by rail on official business. I do so when a suitable opportunity arises, the last being in February 1987.

### Refrigerants

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will instruct all Government Departments to specify wherever possible the refrigerant R22 in preference to R12 or R502 when purchasing refrigeration equipment; if she will take steps within the European Community Council of Ministers to provide for similar guidance to be given in other Community countries; and if she will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** Government Departments have been asked to review their policies, specifications and practices with a view to promoting the objective of reducing use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) to the maximum possible extent. The Government's policies are aimed at ensuring that production and consumption of CFCs, whether in the public or the private sector, are eliminated as quickly as possible, and that all possible steps are taken to minimise emissions of CFCs currently in use.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### Child Care Facilities

**Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will ensure that the local education authorities' development programmes for further education provision outlined in the White Paper, "Employment for the 1990s" provide child care facilities which allow (i) parents and (ii) mothers, to attend colleges, further education institutes, polytechnics and universities.

**Mr. Jackson:** Under the Education Reform Act, my right hon. Friend approves LEAs' schemes for the planning of further education provision. But he will not approve the individual plans themselves. Approval of LEA development plans for work-related further education is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

### Centre for Religious Education

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is now able to announce the results of his discussions about the future of the Centre for Religious Education after the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The future of the Inner London education authority's specialist teachers' centres, one of which is the Centre for Religious Education, is being discussed by the Inner London councils.

### St. Anne's Primary School, Worksop

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his Department has not approved St. Anne's primary school, Worksop, from the recent submissions by Nottinghamshire county council for an aided sector grant under the reorganisation of primary education in south Worksop, Nottinghamshire.

**Mr. Butcher:** St. Anne's Church of England primary school did not feature in Nottinghamshire's published proposals approved in October last year to reorganise primary education in south Worksop.

### Under-fives

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total public expenditure on *(a)* local authority day nurseries, *(b)* local authority playgroups, *(c)* grants to the voluntary sector for provision for under-fives, *(d)* local authority nursery schools, *(e)* local authority nursery classes and *(f)* the under-fives in primary reception classes for each year from 1975 to 1988 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; and what was the total number of children participating in each type of provision for each year, together with the total numbers in the three to four years age group for each year.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** Local authority day nurseries and playgroups and other facilities for day care are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Otherwise, the relevant expenditure is:

| Financial year | (c) DES grants to national voluntary organisations £ thousands | | (d) Nursery schools | | London education authority expenditure (£ millions) (e) Nursery classes | | (f) Under fives in primary classes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cash | 1987-88 real terms | Cash | 1987-88 real terms | Cash | 1987-88 real terms | Cash | 1987-88 real terms |
| 1975-76 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1976-77 | n/a | n/a | 21 | 54 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1977-78 | 22 | 50 | 21 | 48 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1978-79 | 18 | 37 | 22 | 45 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1979-80 | 35 | 61 | 25 | 44 | 50 | 88 | 87 | 153 |
| 1980-81 | 31 | 46 | 30 | 44 | 64 | 95 | 108 | 160 |
| 1981-82 | 39 | 53 | 34 | 46 | 77 | 104 | 120 | 162 |
| 1982-83 | 54 | 68 | 35 | 44 | 90 | 113 | 134 | 169 |
| 1983-84 | 60 | 72 | 37 | 45 | 100 | 120 | 159 | 192 |
| 1984-85 | 60 | 69 | 39 | 45 | 106 | 122 | 177 | 203 |
| 1985-86 | 63 | 69 | 41 | 45 | 113 | 123 | 186 | 202 |
| 1986-87 | 71 | 75 | 45 | 47 | 131 | 138 | 205 | 216 |
| 1987-88 | 113 | 113 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

*Note:* The cash prices for the earlier years have been converted into 1987-88 real terms using the Gross Domestic Product (market prices) deflator.

Related numbers of children are:

| | All 3 to 4 year olds as at previous August (thousands) | Pupils under five as at January (thousands) (d) Nursery schools | (e) Nursery classes | (f) Under fives in primary classes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1975 | 1,434 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1976 | n/a | 45 | 111 | 282 |
| 1977 | 1,275 | 48 | 139 | 245 |
| 1978 | 1,196 | 48 | 153 | 214 |
| 1979 | 1,135 | 48 | 162 | 218 |
| 1980 | 1,091 | 48 | 167 | 213 |
| 1981 | 1,064 | 48 | 173 | 206 |
| 1982 | 1,078 | 49 | 186 | 201 |
| 1983 | 1,142 | 50 | 198 | 210 |
| 1984 | 1,197 | 49 | 209 | 236 |
| 1985 | 1,199 | 50 | 217 | 246 |
| 1986 | 1,180 | 49 | 223 | 236 |
| 1987 | 1,180 | 50 | 227 | 241 |
| 1988 | 1,190 | 50 | 235 | 248 |

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing by local authority area the latest figures for *(a)* estimated population of up to four year-olds, *(b)* the number of pupils in nusery schools and nursery classes and *(c)* the full-time equivalent number of pupils in nursery classes.

**Mrs. Rumbold:** The information requested is given in the table.

*Children under five in each local education authority January 1988*

| | Estimated population of 3 and 4 year olds | Under 5's in nursery schools and classes | FTE under 5's in nursery classes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barking | 3,900 | 1,197 | 613 |
| Barnet | 7,600 | 2,214 | 912 |
| Bexley | 5,400 | 728 | 277 |
| Brent | 7,000 | 2,283 | 1,153 |
| Bromley | 6,600 | 124 | 62 |
| Croydon | 8,400 | 576 | 88 |
| Ealing | 8,100 | 2,712 | 1,098 |
| Enfield | 6,800 | 1,430 | 715 |
| Haringey | 5,300 | 2,126 | 1,098 |
| Harrow | 5,200 | 827 | 433 |
| Havering | 5,400 | 220 | 110 |
| Hillingdon | 6,000 | 2,742 | 1,311 |
| Hounslow | 5,500 | 3,773 | 2,717 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 3,100 | 956 | 367 |
| Merton | 4,200 | 1,645 | 833 |
| Newham | 6,700 | 3,875 | 1,488 |
| Redbridge | 5,500 | 555 | 290 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 3,600 | 619 | 278 |
| Sutton | 4,100 | 805 | 283 |
| Waltham Forest | 6,000 | 2,396 | 1,080 |
| Inner London | 59,000 | 22,368 | 12,323 |
| Birmingham | 28,600 | 9,284 | 4,514 |
| Coventry | 8,300 | 1,973 | 845 |
| Dudley | 7,400 | 2,398 | 1,058 |
| Sandwell | 8,000 | 3,668 | 1,849 |
| Solihull | 4,800 | 1,412 | 706 |
| Walsall | 6,800 | 3,898 | 1,602 |
| Wolverhampton | 6,600 | 3,827 | 1,492 |

| | Estimated population of 3 and 4 year olds | Under 5's in nursery schools and classes | FTE under 5's in nursery classes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowlsey | 5,000 | 1,909 | 965 |
| Liverpool | 12,300 | 6,049 | 3,079 |
| St. Helens | 4,700 | 1,436 | 686 |
| Sefton | 7,100 | 2,042 | 881 |
| Wirral | 8,700 | 1,620 | 681 |
| Bolton | 7,400 | 2,783 | 1,296 |
| Bury | 4,500 | 1,062 | 558 |
| Manchester | 12,200 | 7,080 | 5,170 |
| Oldham | 6,200 | 2,099 | 1,430 |
| Rochdale | 6,200 | 1,849 | 537 |
| Salford | 5,900 | 3,040 | 1,924 |
| Stockport | 7,400 | 1,089 | 174 |
| Tameside | 5,700 | 2,351 | 1,043 |
| Trafford | 5,400 | 772 | 387 |
| Wigan | 8,100 | 2,081 | 954 |
| Barnsley | 5,700 | 2,783 | 1,320 |
| Doncaster | 7,700 | 3,001 | 1,536 |
| Rotherham | 6,800 | 2,733 | 1,345 |
| Sheffield | 11,800 | 4,982 | 2,276 |
| Bradford | 14,500 | 5,249 | 2,493 |
| Calderdale | 5,100 | 1,377 | 860 |
| Kirklees | 10,300 | 4,071 | 1,723 |
| Leeds | 17,500 | 5,947 | 2,956 |
| Wakefield | 8,000 | 3,781 | 1,710 |
| Gateshead | 4,900 | 1,682 | 831 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 7,000 | 2,792 | 1,492 |
| North Tyneside | 4,700 | 2,456 | 1,124 |
| South Tyneside | 3,800 | 1,939 | 618 |
| Sunderland | 8,400 | 2,941 | 1,020 |
| Avon | 22,600 | 3,399 | 1,290 |
| Bedfordshire | 15,100 | 4,498 | 1,767 |
| Berkshire | 20,400 | 4,945 | 1,516 |
| Buckinghamshire | 17,100 | 2,053 | 771 |
| Cambridgeshire | 16,600 | 1,940 | 695 |
| Cheshire | 24,300 | 5,039 | 2,137 |
| Cleveland | 15,900 | 8,474 | 4,168 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 10,400 | 1,449 | 676 |
| Cumbria | 11,500 | 2,419 | 856 |
| Derbyshire | 22,600 | 6,386 | 2,951 |
| Devon | 22,500 | 2,214 | 1,055 |
| Dorset | 13,300 | 797 | 399 |
| Durham | 14,900 | 5,727 | 1,666 |
| East Sussex | 14,400 | 994 | 361 |
| Essex | 38,100 | 2,218 | 1,048 |
| Gloucestershire[1] | 12,500 | 0 | 0 |
| Hampshire | 38,600 | 1,895 | 824 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 16,100 | 974 | 552 |
| Hertfordshire | 25,200 | 7,457 | 2,893 |
| Humberside | 21,700 | 7,105 | 3,450 |
| Isle of wight | 2,500 | 141 | 81 |
| Kent | 37,500 | 1,907 | 916 |
| Lancashire | 36,200 | 6,129 | 1,405 |
| Leicestershire | 23,600 | 5,070 | 3,274 |
| Lincolnshire | 13,200 | 991 | 377 |
| Norfolk | 16,500 | 853 | 227 |
| North Yorkshire | 15,600 | 2,772 | 1,337 |
| Northamptonshire | 14,500 | 2,535 | 1,134 |
| Northumberland | 7,600 | 1,965 | 980 |
| Nottinghamshire | 25,100 | 11,805 | 5,757 |
| Oxfordshire | 14,700 | 1,857 | 714 |
| Shropshire | 9,700 | 1,179 | 477 |
| Somerset | 10,500 | 81 | 64 |
| Staffordshire | 26,300 | 5,860 | 2,790 |
| Suffolk | 16,200 | 2,281 | 1,095 |
| Surrey | 23,800 | 2,695 | 1,143 |
| Warwickshire | 11,600 | 2,052 | 669 |
| West Sussex | 15,500 | 534 | 47 |
| Wiltshire | 14,000 | 285 | 144 |
| England | 1,195,800 | 284,542 | 132,349 |

[1] There are no nursery schools or primary schools with designated nursery classes in Gloucestershire. All pupils under five attend infant classes in primary schools.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Race Relations

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has not yet replied to the two letters from Mr. Day, the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, of 31 August and 21 December 1988.

**Mr. John Patten:** I wrote to Mr. Day on 9 March.

### Consumers (Consultation)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Hurd:** The Home Office is regularly in touch with a wide variety of groups representing consumers of the services it manages.

### Jamaican Citizens

**Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Jamaican citizens were removed or refused entry to the United Kingdom as not being genuine citizens in *(a)* the first six weeks of 1988 and *(b)* the first six weeks of 1989; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Renton:** The information is not available in the form requested. At the major ports, 46 Jamaican citizens were initially refused entry during the first six weeks of 1988. The figure for the corresponding period in 1989 was 81.

### Illegal Immigrants

**Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were arrested as being illegal immigrants in the first six weeks of *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989; and what were their nationalities.

**Mr. Renton:** The available information is as follows:

| Nationality | First Six Weeks of 1988 (i) | 1988 (ii) | 1989 (i) | 1989 (ii) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Algeria | 4 | 4 | 26 | 23 |
| Australia | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Austria | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Bangladesh | 21 | 17 | 32 | 28 |
| Barbados | 1 | — | 1 | — |
| Brazil | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 |

| Nationality | First Six Weeks of 1988 (i) | 1988 (ii) | 1989 (i) | 1989 (ii) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 1 | — | — | — |
| Cameroon | 1 | — | — | — |
| Canada | 2 | 1 | — | — |
| China | 1 | — | 4 | 3 |
| Colombia | 11 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| Congo | — | — | 1 | — |
| Cyprus | 5 | 2 | 2 | — |
| Czechoslovakia | 2 | 2 | — | — |
| Ecuador | 1 | — | 1 | 1 |
| Egypt | 1 | — | 2 | — |
| Finland | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| France | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Gambia | — | — | 2 | — |
| Ghana | 52 | 39 | 35 | 23 |
| Holland | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Hong Kong | 8 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| India | 26 | 18 | 29 | 24 |
| Indonesia | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Iran | 5 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Israel | 2 | 2 | 2 | — |
| Italy | 1 | — | — | — |
| Ivory Coast | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Jamaica | 6 | 2 | 10 | 6 |
| Japan | 3 | — | 5 | 1 |
| Jordan | — | — | 1 | — |
| Kenya | — | — | 2 | 1 |
| Korea | 1 | — | 2 | — |
| Libya | — | — | 3 | — |
| Malaysia | 4 | — | 4 | 3 |
| Mauritius | 2 | 2 | 3 | — |
| Mexico | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Morocco | 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Nepal | — | — | 3 | 3 |
| Nigeria | 53 | 41 | 59 | 39 |
| Pakistan | 16 | 7 | 25 | 20 |
| Peru | 1 | — | 2 | 2 |
| Philippines | — | — | 3 | 1 |
| Poland | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Portugal | 9 | 9 | 16 | 8 |
| Romania | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Saudi Arabia | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Sierra Leone | 1 | — | 2 | 1 |
| Singapore | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Spain | 6 | 1 | 7 | 4 |
| Sri Lanka | 25 | 1 | 7 | 1 |
| St Lucia | — | — | 1 | — |
| Sudan | 1 | — | 1 | 1 |
| Sweden | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Syria | 1 | — | — | — |
| Thailand | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Togo | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Tunisia | — | — | 3 | 3 |
| Turkey | 59 | 43 | 49 | 29 |
| USA | 4 | 2 | 1 | — |
| Yugoslavia | 5 | — | 9 | 4 |
| Zaire | 1 | — | 3 | — |
| Zimbabwe | — | — | 1 | — |
| Stateless/Nationality Uncertain | 7 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| | 376 | 227 | 403 | 259 |

*Note:* For each year column (i) gives the number of illegal entrants dealt with; column (ii) records the number of those in column (i) who were detained.

### Passports

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to provide passports for Mrs Penelope Eve Brooke, née Butler, born 6 July 1942, and her son James Richard Henry Ormonde Brooke, born 10 November 1972, applications for which were sent to the Passport Office on 6 November 1987 and 13 December 1987 by recorded delivery.

**Mr. Renton:** The passports are being sent by registered post today. The application form for Mrs. Brooke's son was not fully completed, and although a second partly completed application was subsequently provided, some queries remained, about which the Passport Office wrote to Mrs. Brooke on 31 January 1988. I very much regret that the applications were not dealt with after she had replied to that letter.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contingency plans he has available to deal with distortions of the balance of payments figures by the work of computer hackers.

**Mr. Forth:** The design of the computer system used by my Department for calculating the United Kingdom visible balance of trade is such that it is impossible for access to be gained by external hackers.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the security of his Department's computer files is regularly checked for breaches by internal or external unauthorised access.

**Mr. Forth:** Where appropriate, the computer systems in use in my Department which hold sensitive information incorporate audit trails which record all accesses made to the system. These audit trails are used to check whether unauthorised attempts have been made to access information held.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Housing Capital Investment

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list at 1987-88 outturn prices, local authorities' housing capital investment *(a)* in Greater London, *(b)* in the south-east outside London, *(c)* in the south-west, *(d)* in East Anglia, *(e)* in the east midlands, *(f)* in the west midlands, *(g)* in the north, *(h)* in the north-west, *(i)* in Yorkshire and Humberside and *(j)* in England as a whole: (1) during 1981-82, (2) during 1983-84, (3) during 1985-86 and (4) during 1987-88 and (i) on mandatory renovation grants, (ii) on discretionary renovation grants, (iii) on enveloping, (iv) on other environmental works in HAAs or GIAs, (v) on slum clearance, and (vi) on lending to private persons for renovation activity.

(2) if he will list at 1987 outturn prices, local authorities' housing capital investment *(a)* in Greater London, *(b)* in other metropolitan areas, *(c)* in non-metropolitan areas, *(d)* in non-metropolitan areas in the south-east and *(e)* in England as a whole: (i) during 1981-82, (ii) during 1983-84, (iii) during 1985-86 and (iv) during 1987-88 and (1) on new building, (2) on renovation of local authority stock, (3) on renovation grants, (4) on loans to housing associations and (5) on other housing activities.

**Mr. Trippier:** I have today laid tables giving the relevant information in the Library.

## River Pollution

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list how many miles of rivers have been downgraded from each grade to the one below, and to a lower grade in each region for each year since 1980.

**Mr. Howard:** Changes in the lengths of rivers and canals in each quality class recorded between the 1980 and 1985 river quality surveys are shown, by water authority, in appendix V to the report of the 1985 river quality survey of England and Wales. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

The 1985 river quality survey showed that rivers in England and Wales continued to be of a high quality with 90 per cent. assessed as of good or fair quality. For those lengths of rivers surveyed in both 1980 and 1985, a total of 4,490 km (12 per cent.) improved in quality, while 5,440 km (14 per cent.) were downgraded. However, because of differences in the methods used between authorities and changes between surveys, it is uncertain whether this small apparent net deterioration represents a real change. But it did appear that the hitherto upward trend of improvements in river quality had, at least for the time being, been checked. Details of changes between quality classes recorded in individual years between 1980 and 1985 are not held by the Department.

The lengths of rivers and canals recorded in each class in the years 1985-87 have been published in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" (No. 11, 1988) a copy of which has been placed in the Library. This information indicates that since 1985 there has been some increase in the length of good and fair quality rivers and a reduction in the length of poor and bad quality rivers. The improving trend thus appears to have been resumed. However these results are not directly comparable with the results from the river quality survey because they are based on more limited surveys carried out by the water authorities.

The next comprehensive river quality survey is planned to take place in 1990.

## County Councils (Statistics)

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each county council (i) the net expenditure in each year since 1977-78, (ii) the domestic and business precept in each year since 1977-78, (iii) the percentage rise in the precept in each year since 1977-78, (iv) the percentage rise in the precept in the periods 1977-78 to 1980-81, 1981-82 to 1985-86, 1986-87 to 1989-90 and 1977-78 to 1989-90, (v) the change in the number of staff employed at the end of the periods 1977-78 to 1980-81, 1981-82 to 1985-86, 1986-87 to 1989-90 and 1977-78 to 1989-90 expressed in numbers and percentage terms, (vi) the political composition of the councils in 1977 to 1981, 1981 to 1985, 1985 to 1989; and if he will list the councils in rank order by largest increase in precept over the period 1985-86 to 1989-90 starting with the council with the highest increase in that period.

**Mr. Gummer:** The available information has been placed in the Library.

## Water Meters

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reviews are being considered in respect of installing water meters in all new homes due to be constructed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Moynihan:** We have no plans to review the installation of water meters in new properties. Under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988, water undertakers have the right to insist either that a meter is installed, or that the plumbing is such as to allow a meter to be installed at a later date in connecting all new supplies from 1 April. The exercise of this power will be a matter for individual water undertakers.

## Mortgage Defaults

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on recent trends in the level of building society arrears and repossessions.

**Mr. Trippier:** The latest building society figures show a continued downward trend in levels of mortgage arrears and possessions, which we welcome. Nevertheless, each mortgage possession is distressing for those involved. It is important that borrowers who find themselves in difficulties should contact their lender at the earliest opportunity.

## Council of Environment Ministers

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Council of Environment Ministers' meeting held on 2 March.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) on Monday 6 March at column 480.

## Ozone Layer

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures the Government intend to take to render more equitable the burdens of conforming to the Montreal protocol between industrialised nations and developing nations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** A clear message of the London "Saving the Ozone Layer" conference held on 5-7 March was that ways of helping developing countries should be a major feature of the review of the Montreal protocol—which will be initiated at the first meeting of the contracting parties in Helsinki in May—and should be urgently examined in all appropriate international contexts. The protocol already gives low consuming developing countries more time to comply with its controls on chlorofluorocarbons and halons and includes provisions to help developing countries to implement the protocol and gain access to environmentally safe alternative substances and technologies. At the Helsinki meeting, the United Kingdom, the European Community and the other parties will consider how to take these provisions forward.

### Council House Sales

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to announce the result of his deliberations about an increase in the present level of the maximum discount allowed under the right-to-buy scheme.

**Mr. Trippier:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis).

**Mr. Robert. G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to help council tenants exercise their right to buy their homes.

**Mr. Trippier:** Sales remain buoyant, and are expected to exceed 150,000 in England in the current financial year, the second highest annual total since the right to buy was introduced. The tenants of some local authorities, however, suffer serious and inexcusable delays in exercising their right to buy. Section 124 of the Housing Act 1988 gives such tenants a new power to have the rent they pay while the delay continues set against the purchase price of their homes. There will also be a corresponding reduction in the period during which there is a liability to repay discount on resale. This new procedure comes into operation on 10 March. It will bring welcome help for tenants prevented from buying their homes by incompetent or obstructive landlords.

### Travellers' Children

**Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the numbers of travellers' children of school age as detailed in the statistics gathered by his Department's gipsy sites branch.

**Mr. Trippier** *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The latest estimates (extrapolated from an 85 per cent. rate of return from local authorities) indicate approximate numbers of 8,000 traveller children of school age.

## TRANSPORT

### London Underground (Security)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many police personnel have been deployed on the London Underground in each of the last 20 years.

**Mr. Portillo:** Police officers in post in the division of the British Transport police responsible for London Underground at the end of each of the last 10 years were:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 134 |
| 1980 | 156 |
| 1981 | 264 |
| 1982 | 278 |
| 1983 | 266 |
| 1984 | 242 |
| 1985 | 261 |
| 1986 | 319 |
| 1987 | 306 |
| 1988 | 319 |

### Drink-driving

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current figures for drinking and driving in Great Britain; and what information he has as to what the figures are for those countries where random breath testing has been introduced.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** At the moment, the most reliable measure of drinking and driving in Great Britain over the last 10 years is the percentage of drivers killed in road accidents who had a blood alcohol content above the legal limit. The following tables show this percentage, for motor cycle riders and car drivers separately, for the years 1978 to 1987. The table also includes similar figures, for all drivers or riders, for the Australian states of Victoria and New South Wales, except that a blood alcohol content of more than 50mg/ml, the legal limit for Australia, is used.

*Percentage of rider/drivers killed with a blood alcohol content above the legal limit.*
*Great Britain (legal limit 80mg/ml): Australia (limit 50mg/ml): 1978-1987.*

| *Year* | *Great Britain* | | *Australia* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Motor-cycle riders* | *Car drivers* | *Victoria*[2] | *New South Wales*[2] |
| 1978 | 29 | 33 | 48 | — |
| 1979 | 31 | 32 | 40 | — |
| 1980 | 29 | 32 | 44 | — |
| 1981 | 28 | 31 | 38 | — |
| 1982 | 29 | 36 | 37 | 40 |
| 1983 | 23 | 31 | 37 | 36 |
| 1984 | 27 | 26 | 33 | 33 |
| 1985 | 22 | 28 | 38 | 33 |
| 1986 | 22 | 25 | 38 | 34 |
| 1987 | 25 | 23 | — | — |

*Note:* 1987 figures are provisional.
[1] RBT introduced in 1976.
[2] RBT introduced in 1982.

These figures show an overall ten percentage point decline in the number of car drivers killed over the legal limit in both Great Britain and Victoria. In New South Wales, a decline of only six points has occurred since introduction of RBT in 1982, compared with 11 points in the United Kingdom over the same period. We understand the rate in NSW may now be rising again slightly. It should be borne in mind that the legal limits are different. Nevertheless, the proportion of such cases in the Australian states remains higher than in Great Britain.

International comparisons are difficult because of the lack of standard measures of drinking and driving. The United Nations publishes figures of "accidents involving one or more persons under the influence of alcohol". This is interpreted differently by different countries. For Great Britain, the figures given are for the number of accidents in which an involved driver subsequently failed a breath test. For other countries the accidents where a driver died and was found to be over the legal limit are also included. In some countries, the influence of alcohol is reported by the police on a subjective basis, and in others a blood test may be required. A number of countries include accidents involving drunken pedestrians in their figures.

### Traffic Examiners

**Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for improving the management of the traffic examiners and their resources.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Special emphasis is being placed on improving the deployment of traffic examiners and in further developing the effectiveness of enforcement.

Management of traffic examiners and their resources is being significantly improved following the implementation of the recommendations made by an efficiency review of traffic examiners and enforcement.

The introduction of an annual national enforcement plan provides for traffic examiner resources to be concentrated on major areas of enforcement including overloading, drivers hours and tachographs. Budgets and the personal objectives of the traffic examiners can be aligned more closely with the national enforcement plan targets. A restructuring of the supervisory and senior traffic examiner grades is in hand.

It is proposed to appoint an enforcement manager in each traffic area office and headquarters with increased responsibilities for planning and directing enforcement and the more effective use of resources to support the national enforcement plan.

Senior traffic examiners will also have increased responsibilities for local enforcement of their geographical sectors and for the management of their teams, which are being increased in size.

**Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals for traffic examiners to prosecute guilty plea cases against HGV/PSV operators and drivers without using solicitors.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Yes. That was one of the accepted recommendations of an efficiency review of traffic examiners and enforcement.

Trials have been carried out which have proved the efficiency and cost effectiveness of this method. From 1 April, all traffic examiners in England and Wales will prosecute a proportion of guilty plea cases. In Scotland prosecutions will continue to be handled by the procurator fiscal.

**Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the responsibilities and duties of the traffic examiners.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Traffic examiners are appointed by the Secretary of State under section 56 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. They enforce road safety legislation governing the use of United Kingdom based and foreign operated HGVs and PSVs, including the requirements of goods and passenger operator licensing, vocational drivers licensing, tachographs and drivers' records, vehicle weights and construction and use regulations. Their work is a much valued contribution to road casualty reduction. Traffic examiners are departmental staff deployed and managed locally in the traffic areas. They support the Secretary of State and the traffic commissioners by ensuring that the targets set out in the Department's annual national enforcement plan are met and that resources are used effectively in meeting the priorities contained in the enforcement plan.

**Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any traffic area offices have had to limit prosecutions of HGV operators and drivers because of financial constraints.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Only in the Leeds traffic area office were some cases not presented to solicitors between October and December 1988. This was because a number of large and costly cases absorbed a large part of the budget allocation. Despite that, three times more cases were prosecuted between April and December 1988 than in the corresponding period of 1987.

**Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Leeds traffic area office has sufficient resources to allow offences reported by traffic examiners to be prosecuted.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Yes. Extra resources have now been made available to the Leeds Office, and cases are either being referred to solicitors, or being presented in court by traffic examiners. Warning letters are also being sent to operators and drivers by the traffic area office.

**Mr. Jaques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods and passenger vehicles will be examined by traffic examiners in the current year; and if he will make a statement about the levels of enforcement proposed for 1990.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The Department's national enforcement plan for 1988-89 provides for 285,000 United Kingdom and foreign-registered goods and passenger vehicles to be examined by traffic examiners. Of these 100,000 United Kingdom and foreign goods vehicles will be weighed. Over 1,100,000 HGV and PSV drivers' tachograph charts will be checked, and nearly 32,000 visits to operators made.

We are well set to meet or exceed these targets. Results for the first nine months of the year show that 91 per cent. of the year's target for vehicles examined, 93 per cent. for vehicle weighings, 99 per cent. for tachographs screening and 81 per cent. for operator visits had already been achieved.

Further increases in the main areas of traffic examiner enforcement activity are proposed in the national enforcement plan for 1989-90. A further 16 per cent. United Kingdom and foreign-registered HGV and PSVs will be examined and 15 per cent. more HGVs will be weighed; 16 per cent. more tachograph charts will be checked and 9 per cent. more operator visits will be made.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Changes and Achievements

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the changes and achievements in his areas of responsibility as *(a)* Lord President of the Council and *(b)* Leader of the House, since June 1987.

**Mr. Wakeham:** My responsibilities as Lord President since January 1988 and as Lord Privy Seal before that have not changed during this period. My office has continued to discharge its constitutional and statutory functions efficiently, whilst making significant economies in staff and administrative costs.

Similarly, my responsibilities as Leader of the House have not changed. The rights and privileges of the House as a whole have been upheld and the passage through the House of the Government's legislative programme and other business has been effectively supervised and facilitated.

## House Passes

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many House passes are currently issues for each of the categories of pass.

**Mr. Wakeham:** For reasons of security, it is not possible to provide this information.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many passes are available for research assistants with access to the Library; and how many hon. Members have *(a)* one, *(b)* two or more and *(c)* none of these passes issued on behalf of their staff.

**Mr. Wakeham:** The Services Committee has ruled that a maximum of 200 places are available for right hon. and hon. Members' research assistants who may have access to the main House of Commons Library. The breakdown is as follows:

*(a)* 196
*(b)* 2
*(c)* 450

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give the number of photo-passes to the Press Gallery held by staff of each Government Department.

**Mr. Wakeham** *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The latest pass office figures show that a total of six photo-passes have been issued to departmental press officers giving them access to the Press Gallery on a permanent basis. A breakdown is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Prime Minister's Office | 2 |
| Central Office of Information | 2 |
| Home Office | 1 |
| Ministry of Defence | 1 |

In addition, 160 departmental press officers hold photo-passes which enable them to apply, on a day-to-day basis, for a pass to admit them to the Parliamentary Press Gallery when their official duties require it. A breakdown is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Prime Minister's Office | 4 |
| Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 3 |
| Cabinet Office | 3 |
| Customs and Excise | 2 |
| Ministry of Defence | 14 |
| Department of Education and Science | 9 |
| Department of Employment | 16 |
| Department of Energy | 14 |
| Department of the Environment | 17 |
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office | 7 |
| Department of Health<br>Department of Social Security | 16 |
| Home Office | 18 |
| Northern Ireland Office | 1 |
| Office of Fair Trading | 1 |
| Scottish Office | 1 |
| Department of Trade and Industry | 22 |
| Department of Transport | 3 |
| Treasury | 6 |
| Welsh Office | 3 |

## WALES

### Capital Allocations

**Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the capital allocations for each Welsh county and district for each year since 1981 and capital allocations hypothecated to particular services between 1981-82 and 1984-85.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** *[pursuant to his reply, 2 March 1989, c. 300]:* Owing to a typing error an incorrect figure was quoted; the full reply is as follows.

The information requested is given in the following tables. Capital allocations shown for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are provisional. Allocations form only part of local authority capital investment capacity. Gross spending provision (excluding provision for law and order services) for all district and county councils in Wales for 1989-90 is £450 million, an increase of 8.2 per cent. over 1988-89.

*Local authority capital allocations 1981-82 to 1989-90*

*£000*

| *Local authority* | *1981-82* | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 3,528 | 4,018 | 3,788 | 3,245 | 3,242 | 3,567 | 3,938 | 2,710 | 2,774 |
| Colwyn | 2,590 | 3,862 | 3,127 | 2,675 | 2,595 | 2,360 | 2,831 | 2,250 | 2,365 |
| Delyn | 2,266 | 3,543 | 4,200 | 4,461 | 4,087 | 4,801 | 3,077 | 2,512 | 2,823 |
| Glyndwr | 1,393 | 1,957 | 2,656 | 1,770 | 1,986 | 1,983 | 1,903 | 1,809 | 1,616 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,861 | 2,464 | 2,597 | 2,077 | 1,972 | 2,265 | 4,211 | 4,192 | 2,995 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 5,767 | 6,480 | 5,357 | 5,724 | 5,399 | 7,936 | 7,717 | 5,921 | 7,080 |
| Carmarthen | 2,940 | 4,311 | 8,924 | 4,125 | 3,547 | 3,933 | 4,432 | 3,057 | 3,109 |
| Ceredigion | 2,728 | 4,381 | 5,135 | 3,316 | 2,755 | 3,158 | 3,494 | 2,858 | 2,868 |
| Dinefwr | 1,009 | 1,717 | 2,743 | 1,694 | 1,456 | 1,651 | 1,867 | 2,224 | 1,885 |
| Llanelli | 3,895 | 5,710 | 5,395 | 4,204 | 3,175 | 3,349 | 3,919 | 3,357 | 4,187 |
| Preseli | 2,007 | 2,699 | 4,663 | 4,170 | 3,282 | 2,891 | 3,306 | 3,267 | 2,590 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 1,428 | 2,825 | 4,443 | 3,439 | 2,978 | 2,803 | 5,067 | 3,287 | 2,196 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 5,265 | 12,111 | 12,176 | 8,315 | 6,727 | 10,197 | 12,870 | 8,629 | 10,933 |
| Islwyn | 3,474 | 5,692 | 5,899 | 5,130 | 5,625 | 9,324 | 8,209 | 7,681 | 4,439 |
| Monmouth | 2,110 | 3,563 | 5,176 | 4,026 | 3,942 | 3,854 | 4,157 | 2,703 | 2,779 |
| Newport | 8,357 | 13,750 | 11,038 | 7,996 | 8,418 | 9,713 | 9,262 | 7,642 | 6,928 |
| Torfean | 3,441 | 5,329 | 5,266 | 4,696 | 4,665 | 6,253 | 7,000 | 6,311 | 5,319 |
| Aberconwy | 2,076 | 2,223 | 2,575 | 1,942 | 1,877 | 1,908 | 2,357 | 1,987 | 3,645 |

| Local authority | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arfon | 3,583 | 3,810 | 4,207 | 3,356 | 2,692 | 2,761 | 3,411 | 3,750 | 3,210 |
| Dwyfor | 1,086 | 1,508 | 3,460 | 2,114 | 1,435 | 2,225 | 2,539 | 2,000 | 1,464 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,625 | 1,692 | 5,175 | 2,475 | 1,313 | 1,452 | 1,728 | 1,942 | 1,665 |
| Ynys Mon | 1,954 | 3,162 | 6,559 | 2,945 | 3,701 | 4,617 | 4,847 | 3,725 | 2,973 |
| Cynon Valley | 2,767 | 3,520 | 5,035 | 4,216 | 3,680 | 4,831 | 6,793 | 7,213 | 4,984 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 3,941 | 6,006 | 5,616 | 3,806 | 3,111 | 5,116 | 6,179 | 5,090 | 5,477 |
| Ogwr | 5,354 | 7,881 | 7,419 | 6,016 | 5,481 | 6,051 | 8,493 | 6,805 | 5,475 |
| Rhondda | 5,521 | 7,117 | 13,745 | 8,943 | 8,558 | 10,959 | 12,738 | 17,771 | 12,706 |
| Rhymney Valley | 5,162 | 7,770 | 6,856 | 5,766 | 6,238 | 8,544 | 10,648 | 10,131 | 6,595 |
| Taff Ely | 6,377 | 10,201 | 10,133 | 5,886 | 5,049 | 5,782 | 7,696 | 5,751 | 5,148 |
| Brecknock | 1,745 | 1,602 | 3,043 | 1,715 | 2,066 | 3,444 | 3,270 | 1,689 | 2,120 |
| Montgomeryshire | 1,411 | 1,608 | 3,685 | 1,782 | 1,741 | 1,921 | 2,119 | 2,118 | 2,171 |
| Radnor | 889 | 1,497 | 1,758 | 1,108 | 970 | 1,109 | 1,426 | 1,187 | 1,042 |
| Cardiff | 17,029 | 19,559 | 24,792 | 19,551 | 15,924 | 19,094 | 21,060 | 17,933 | 15,289 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 5,082 | 5,730 | 7,776 | 4,687 | 3,903 | 5,224 | 5,981 | 4,517 | 4,031 |
| Port Talbot | 2,262 | 2,489 | 2,674 | 2,315 | 1,899 | 3,509 | 4,389 | 3,843 | 3,544 |
| Lliw Valley | 3,486 | 4,569 | 4,447 | 3,782 | 3,155 | 3,692 | 4,069 | 3,638 | 3,608 |
| Neath | 2,165 | 5,239 | 4,802 | 2,779 | 3,123 | 3,731 | 4,417 | 3,978 | 3,512 |
| Swansea | 9,398 | 18,845 | 17,957 | 14,112 | 10,788 | 12,317 | 12,563 | 12,234 | 10,418 |
| Clwyd | 8,561 | 9,507 | 12,653 | 12,014 | 12,249 | 14,092 | 16,649 | 16,797 | 12,840 |
| Dyfed | 8,967 | 13,184 | 11,175 | 9,110 | 11,369 | 16,615 | 16,594 | 15,455 | 16,948 |
| Gwent | 20,677 | 29,506 | 24,855 | 21,437 | 13,000 | 17,582 | 21,466 | 18,479 | 24,019 |
| Gwynedd | 7,124 | 10,989 | 7,222 | 8,354 | 11,528 | 8,565 | 9,197 | 7,907 | 7,903 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 18,624 | 19,350 | 17,193 | 19,985 | 17,102 | 22,708 | 24,077 | 23,111 | 26,648 |
| Powys | 5,304 | 6,314 | 4,634 | 3,730 | 3,904 | 6,950 | 7,111 | 6,055 | 6,110 |
| South Glamorgan | 18,080 | 21,457 | 19,395 | 14,068 | 23,008 | 26,764 | 32,411 | 29,607 | 18,132 |
| West Glamorgan | 12,398 | 13,787 | 11,949 | 11,071 | 14,389 | 19,233 | 20,124 | 18,163 | 22,247 |
| Total Districts | 136,972 | 200,440 | 234,297 | 170,359 | 152,455 | 188,325 | 213,983 | 189,570 | 150,841 |
| Total Counties | 99,735 | 124,094 | 109,076 | 99,769 | 106,649 | 132,509 | 147,629 | 135,589 | 130,033 |
| Total Wales | 236,707 | 324,534 | 343,373 | 270,128 | 259,104 | 320,834 | 361,612 | 323,286 | 300,810 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1981-82*

£000

| Local Authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other Services | Urban Programme | Total Allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 229 | 0 | 2,520 | 685 | 94 | 3,528 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,610 | 980 | 0 | 2,590 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,350 | 590 | 326 | 2,266 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 47 | 0 | 1,000 | 346 | 0 | 1,393 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 850 | 1,011 | 0 | 1,861 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 43 | 0 | 3,230 | 1,881 | 613 | 5,767 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,030 | 870 | 40 | 2,940 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 37 | 1,740 | 934 | 17 | 2,728 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 850 | 159 | 0 | 1,009 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 85 | 1,950 | 1,476 | 384 | 3,895 |
| Preseli | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,740 | 267 | 0 | 2,007 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,140 | 213 | 75 | 1,428 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 241 | 0 | 4,010 | 385 | 629 | 5,265 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 312 | 0 | 2,280 | 674 | 208 | 3,474 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,850 | 260 | 0 | 2,110 |
| Newport | 0 | 702 | 0 | 6,500 | 545 | 610 | 8,357 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 34 | 0 | 2,890 | 359 | 158 | 3,441 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,420 | 656 | 0 | 2,076 |
| Arfon | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2,500 | 892 | 190 | 3,583 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 770 | 316 | 0 | 1,086 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,020 | 605 | 0 | 1,625 |
| Ynys Mon | 0 | 16 | 0 | 1,370 | 533 | 35 | 1,954 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,430 | 248 | 89 | 2,767 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 306 | 0 | 2,704 | 773 | 158 | 3,941 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 106 | 0 | 4,530 | 645 | 73 | 5,354 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 118 | 102 | 4,310 | 458 | 533 | 5,521 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 353 | 14 | 3,650 | 948 | 197 | 5,162 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 37 | 87 | 5,830 | 374 | 49 | 6,377 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,110 | 635 | 0 | 1,745 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 31 | 0 | 950 | 430 | 0 | 1,411 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 640 | 249 | 0 | 889 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 881 | 0 | 10,690 | 5,050 | 408 | 17,029 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,200 | 1,881 | 1 | 5,082 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 97 | 0 | 1,800 | 261 | 104 | 2,262 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,760 | 726 | 0 | 3,486 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,720 | 393 | 52 | 2,165 |
| Swansea | 0 | 320 | 0 | 6,674 | 2,067 | 337 | 9,398 |

| Local Authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other Services | Urban Programme | Total Allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 3,521 | 3,499 | 585 | 0 | 623 | 333 | 8,561 |
| Dyfed | 2,743 | 4,792 | 578 | 0 | 725 | 129 | 8,967 |
| Gwent | 3,758 | 12,988 | 723 | 0 | 3,003 | 205 | 20,677 |
| Gwynedd | 2,271 | 2,685 | 413 | 0 | 1,536 | 219 | 7,124 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 8,609 | 6,167 | 1,122 | 0 | 2,517 | 209 | 18,624 |
| Powys | 2,269 | 2,338 | 303 | 0 | 394 | 0 | 5,304 |
| South Glamorgan | 2,559 | 13,898 | 692 | 0 | 632 | 299 | 18,080 |
| West Glamorgan | 5,050 | 3,623 | 765 | 0 | 2,956 | 4 | 12,398 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 3,874 | 325 | 97,618 | 29,775 | 5,380 | 136,972 |
| Total Counties | 30,780 | 49,990 | 5,181 | 0 | 12,386 | 1,398 | 99,735 |
| Total Wales | 30,780 | 53,864 | 5,506 | 97,618 | 42,161 | 6,778 | 236,707 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1982-83*

£000

| Local Authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other Services | Urban Programme | Total Allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 13 | 0 | 2,873 | 784 | 348 | 4,018 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,342 | 1,520 | 0 | 3,862 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,681 | 1,135 | 727 | 3,543 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 100 | 0 | 1,581 | 276 | 0 | 1,957 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,273 | 1,191 | 0 | 2,464 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,616 | 1,592 | 1,272 | 6,480 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,823 | 484 | 4 | 4,311 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 52 | 3,635 | 693 | 1 | 4,381 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,278 | 239 | 200 | 1,717 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 100 | 3,104 | 772 | 1,734 | 5,710 |
| Preseli | 0 | 30 | 0 | 1,783 | 771 | 115 | 2,699 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,365 | 300 | 160 | 2,825 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,172 | 853 | 1,086 | 12,111 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,685 | 460 | 547 | 5,692 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,917 | 595 | 51 | 3,563 |
| Newport | 0 | 578 | 0 | 10,956 | 1,075 | 1,141 | 13,750 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,370 | 670 | 289 | 5,329 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,708 | 515 | 0 | 2,223 |
| Arfon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,936 | 417 | 457 | 3,810 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 6 | 0 | 1,119 | 383 | 0 | 1,508 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,289 | 403 | 0 | 1,692 |
| Ynys Mon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,471 | 681 | 10 | 3,162 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,830 | 552 | 138 | 3,520 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 25 | 0 | 2,885 | 2,418 | 678 | 6,006 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 113 | 0 | 6,197 | 1,037 | 534 | 7,881 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 212 | 0 | 5,546 | 681 | 678 | 7,117 |
| Rhymney | 0 | 236 | 0 | 6,211 | 934 | 389 | 7,770 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 5 | 55 | 7,020 | 3,121 | 0 | 10,201 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,283 | 319 | 0 | 1,602 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,292 | 276 | 40 | 1,608 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,376 | 121 | 0 | 1,497 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 997 | 0 | 13,607 | 4,100 | 855 | 19,559 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,812 | 895 | 23 | 5,730 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,842 | 647 | 0 | 2,489 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,078 | 491 | 0 | 4,569 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,118 | 762 | 359 | 5,239 |
| Swansea | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,760 | 7,397 | 688 | 18,845 |
| Clwyd | 4,016 | 2,750 | 184 | 0 | 2,314 | 243 | 9,507 |
| Dyfed | 3,726 | 6,545 | 720 | 0 | 1,705 | 488 | 13,184 |
| Gwent | 4,211 | 22,370 | 1,163 | 0 | 1,700 | 62 | 29,506 |
| Gwynedd | 2,108 | 2,660 | 712 | 0 | 5,050 | 459 | 10,989 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 9,046 | 7,745 | 1,022 | 0 | 1,245 | 292 | 19,350 |
| Powys | 2,726 | 2,770 | 319 | 0 | 499 | 0 | 6,314 |
| South Glamorgan | 4,214 | 14,430 | 1,087 | 0 | 1,033 | 693 | 21,457 |
| West Glamorgan | 4,048 | 4,740 | 851 | 0 | 4,143 | 5 | 13,787 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 2,315 | 207 | 145,834 | 39,560 | 12,524 | 200,440 |
| Total Counties | 34,095 | 64,010 | 6,058 | 0 | 17,689 | 2,242 | 124,094 |
| Total Wales | 34,095 | 66,325 | 6,265 | 145,834 | 57,249 | 14,766 | 324,534 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1983-84*

| *Local authority* | *Education* £000 | *Transport* £000 | *PSS* £000 | *Housing* £000 | *Other services* £000 | *Urban programme* £000 | *Total allocation* £000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,922 | 462 | 404 | 3,788 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,483 | 594 | 50 | 3,127 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,025 | 1,357 | 818 | 4,200 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,345 | 311 | 0 | 2,656 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,189 | 1,408 | 0 | 2,597 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,833 | 787 | 737 | 5,357 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8,160 | 652 | 112 | 8,924 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,478 | 657 | 0 | 5,135 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,334 | 211 | 198 | 2,743 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 82 | 3,745 | 984 | 584 | 5,395 |
| Preseli | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,526 | 477 | 660 | 4,663 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,804 | 274 | 365 | 4,443 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,236 | 843 | 1,097 | 12,176 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 90 | 0 | 5,215 | 415 | 179 | 5,899 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,643 | 472 | 61 | 5,176 |
| Newport | 0 | 60 | 0 | 9,137 | 1,331 | 510 | 11,038 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,370 | 621 | 275 | 5,266 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,006 | 569 | 0 | 2,575 |
| Arfon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,469 | 418 | 320 | 4,207 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 35 | 0 | 3,032 | 393 | 0 | 3,460 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,282 | 1,804 | 89 | 5,175 |
| Ynys Môn | 0 | 530 | 0 | 5,260 | 650 | 119 | 6,559 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,323 | 451 | 261 | 5,035 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 132 | 0 | 3,993 | 1,034 | 457 | 5,616 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 78 | 0 | 5,870 | 1,202 | 268 | 7,419 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 105 | 0 | 12,030 | 816 | 794 | 13,745 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 205 | 0 | 5,465 | 811 | 375 | 6,856 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 58 | 0 | 8,886 | 1,077 | 112 | 10,133 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,851 | 192 | 0 | 3,043 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,393 | 292 | 0 | 3,685 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,593 | 165 | 0 | 1,758 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 2,038 | 0 | 17,835 | 3,915 | 1,004 | 24,792 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,333 | 2,219 | 224 | 7,776 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 50 | 0 | 1,982 | 377 | 265 | 2,674 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,992 | 410 | 45 | 4,447 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,892 | 419 | 491 | 4,802 |
| Swansea | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11,365 | 5,520 | 1,072 | 17,957 |
| Clwyd | 4,746 | 5,460 | 820 | 0 | 759 | 868 | 12,653 |
| Dyfed | 3,817 | 5,044 | 720 | 0 | 1,324 | 270 | 11,175 |
| Gwent | 5,430 | 16,199 | 1,040 | 0 | 1,565 | 621 | 24,855 |
| Gwynedd | 2,035 | 3,517 | 716 | 0 | 747 | 207 | 7,222 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 7,391 | 7,527 | 852 | 0 | 1,149 | 274 | 17,193 |
| Powys | 2,102 | 2,073 | 194 | 0 | 257 | 8 | 4,634 |
| South Glamorgan | 4,557 | 11,923 | 741 | 0 | 1,600 | 574 | 19,395 |
| West Glamorgan | 4,247 | 4,943 | 1,476 | 0 | 1,283 | 0 | 11,949 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 3,382 | 82 | 184,297 | 34,590 | 11,946 | 234,297 |
| Total Counties | 34,325 | 56,686 | 6,559 | 0 | 8,684 | 2,822 | 109,076 |
| TOTAL WALES | 34,325 | 60,068 | 6,641 | 184,297 | 43,274 | 14,768 | 343,373 |

*Capital allocations hypothecated to services 1984-85*

£'000s

| *Local Authority* | *Education* | *Transport* | *PSS* | *Housing* | *Other Services* | *Special Projects* | *Urban Programme* | *Total Allocation* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,234 | 370 | 0 | 641 | 3,245 |
| Colwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,089 | 475 | 0 | 111 | 2,675 |
| Delyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,459 | 731 | 900 | 1,371 | 4,461 |
| Glyndwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,521 | 249 | 0 | 0 | 1,770 |
| Rhuddlan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 951 | 1,126 | 0 | 0 | 2,077 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,746 | 630 | 0 | 1,348 | 5,724 |
| Carmarthen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,571 | 539 | 0 | 15 | 4,125 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,790 | 526 | 0 | 0 | 3,316 |
| Dinefwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,414 | 169 | 0 | 111 | 1,694 |
| Llanelli | 0 | 0 | 66 | 2,737 | 787 | 0 | 614 | 4,204 |
| Preseli | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,862 | 382 | 250 | 576 | 4,170 |
| South Pembroke | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,323 | 219 | 350 | 547 | 3,439 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6,238 | 674 | 0 | 1,403 | 8,315 |
| Islwyn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,499 | 332 | 0 | 299 | 5,130 |
| Monmouth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,599 | 378 | 0 | 49 | 4,026 |
| Newport | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6,554 | 734 | 0 | 708 | 7,996 |
| Torfaen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,002 | 497 | 0 | 197 | 4,696 |
| Aberconwy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,635 | 307 | 0 | 0 | 1,942 |

| Local Authority | Education | Transport | PSS | Housing | Other Services | Special Projects | Urban Programme | Total Allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arfon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,940 | 334 | 0 | 82 | 3,356 |
| Dwyfor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,800 | 314 | 0 | 0 | 2,114 |
| Meirionnydd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,352 | 1,123 | 0 | 0 | 2,475 |
| Ynys Môn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,350 | 520 | 0 | 75 | 2,945 |
| Cynon Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,090 | 361 | 0 | 765 | 4,216 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,521 | 827 | 0 | 458 | 3,806 |
| Ogwr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,011 | 962 | 0 | 43 | 6,016 |
| Rhondda | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7,468 | 653 | 0 | 822 | 8,943 |
| Rhymney Valley | 0 | 240 | 0 | 4,412 | 649 | 0 | 465 | 5,766 |
| Taff Ely | 0 | 20 | 0 | 4,999 | 862 | 0 | 5 | 5,886 |
| Brecknock | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,321 | 154 | 0 | 240 | 1,715 |
| Montgomeryshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,548 | 234 | 0 | 0 | 1,782 |
| Radnor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 976 | 132 | 0 | 0 | 1,108 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 1,881 | 0 | 12,557 | 3,132 | 0 | 1,981 | 19,551 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,080 | 1,375 | 0 | 232 | 4,687 |
| Port Talbot | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,586 | 302 | 0 | 427 | 2,315 |
| Lliw Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,220 | 328 | 0 | 234 | 3,782 |
| Neath | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,064 | 335 | 0 | 380 | 2,779 |
| Swansea | 0 | 16 | 0 | 9,073 | 3,282 | 500 | 1,241 | 14,112 |
| Clwyd | 3,797 | 6,174 | 500 | 0 | 607 | 0 | 936 | 12,014 |
| Dyfed | 3,054 | 4,059 | 600 | 0 | 1,059 | 0 | 338 | 9,110 |
| Gwent | 4, 344 | 14,418 | 850 | 0 | 1,252 | 0 | 573 | 21,437 |
| Gwynedd | 1,628 | 5,390 | 400 | 0 | 598 | 0 | 338 | 8,354 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 5,513 | 11,551 | 1,200 | 0 | 919 | 500 | 302 | 19,985 |
| Powys | 1,682 | 1,742 | 100 | 0 | 206 | 0 | 0 | 3,730 |
| South Glamorgan | 3,646 | 7,527 | 600 | 0 | 1,280 | 0 | 1,015 | 14,068 |
| West Glamorgan | 3,398 | 5,437 | 1,000 | 0 | 1,126 | 0 | 110 | 11,071 |
| Total Districts | 0 | 2,157 | 66 | 125,592 | 25,004 | 2,100 | 15,440 | 170,359 |
| Total Counties | 27,062 | 56,298 | 5,250 | 0 | 7,047 | 500 | 3,612 | 99,769 |
| Total Wales | 27,062 | 58,455 | 5,316 | 125,592 | 32,051 | 2,600 | 19,052 | 270,128 |

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Public Record Office

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the scales of charges for services provided by the Public Record Office to commercial genealogists.

**The Attorney-General:** The Public Record Office does not distinguish between commercial genealogists and other users in respect of fees and charges made for services it provides. The full range of fees currently charged, under section 2(5) of the Public Records Act 1958, is set out in the Public Record Office (Fees) Regulations 1988 (1988 No. 1385).

## THE ARTS

### Sponsorship (Tobacco Companies)

**Mr. Wheeler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the current annual total of sponsorship of the arts by tobacco companies; if he will list these individually and in relation to other commercial sponsorship; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Luce:** The total amount of sponsorship in 1988-89 by tobacco companies is not known. The business sponsorship incentive scheme has brought £5·7 million new sponsorship to the arts in the current financial year, of which £3,000 has come from tobacco interests. Arts organisations are free to decide what sponsorship to accept.

### Libraries (Charges)

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends that under his proposed new regulations library authorities should be able to charge students resident or studying within their areas to reserve books relevant to their studies; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* As I said in my statement on 8 February at columns *987-88*, I intend in the proposed regulations to give library authorities discretionary power to charge any person for obtaining and notifying the availability of an item reserved, subject to a limit which I shall prescribe. Subject to that limit on which I shall in due course consult, authorities will have total freedom to decide whom to charge and what concessions to give.

### Museums

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish a table showing attendances of all the national museums in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Luce** *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The estimated number of visitors in each of the last five years to the 11 national museums and galleries (including their outstations) for which I am responsible is as follows:

| | Estimated attendances | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* |
| British Museum | 3,467,044 | 4,142,092 | 3,869,639 | 4,007,885 | 4,172,472 |
| British Museum (Natural History) | 3,022,254 | 3,354,351 | 3,239,685 | 1,999,130 | 1,671,380 |
| Imperial War Museum | 1,365,888 | 1,291,435 | 1,175,834 | 1,184,959 | 1,086,587 |
| National Gallery | 2,936,926 | 3,156,725 | 3,182,365 | 3,566,568 | 3,228,153 |
| National Maritime Museum | 600,000 | 600,000 | 380,099 | 442,005 | 707,399 |
| National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside | — | — | [1]1,163,304 | 1,328,844 | 1,525,672 |
| National Portrait Gallery | 581,395 | 516,148 | 624,520 | 590,841 | 638,595 |
| Science Museum | 4,510,103 | 4,607,852 | 4,824,906 | 4,732,784 | 3,861,433 |
| Tate Gallery | 1,265,605 | 996,565 | 1,153,355 | 1,742,156 | [2]2,091,267 |
| Victoria and Albert Museum | 2,079,204 | 2,067,202 | 1,439,636 | 1,398,688 | 1,430,637 |
| Wallace Collection | 177,613 | 178,770 | 170,797 | 168,109 | 157,524 |
| Total | 20,006,032 | 20,911,140 | 21,224,140 | 21,161,969 | 20,571,119 |

[1]The Office of Arts and Libraries became responsible for NMGM in 1986 following the dissolution of the Merseyside County Council. Figures for previous years are unavailable.
[2]Figure includes Tate Gallery Liverpool which opened in May 1988.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### HMSO

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his written answer of 14 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *584*, what financial and performance targets he has set Her Majesty's Stationery Office for 1989.

**Mr. Lilley:** My right hon. Friend has today laid a further Treasury minute setting HMSO the financial target for 1989 of achieving a profit after interest in current cost accounting (CCA) terms of £1·7 million. This compares with a CCA profit after interest of £0·8 million actually achieved in 1987-88.

I have also set various performance targets designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which HMSO delivers its services. These are:

| | *1987-88 Actual per cent.* | *1989 Target per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| Value for money | | |
| Paper and stationery | 6·54 | 8·0 |
| Office machinery | 10·39 | 11·5 |
| Printing and binding | 5·03 | 8·9 |
| Service and quality | | |
| *Supply* | | |
| Stock catalogue items | 87·00 within 5 working days | 90·00 within 5 working days |
| *Publications* | | |
| Dispatch of orders by mail | Average of 6 days | 90·00 within 5 working days |
| *Print procurement* | | |
| Orders delivered to time | | |
| vital | 97·00 | 100·0 |
| overall | 93·00 | 95·0 |
| Delivered without fault | 99·30 | 100·0 |
| *Production* | | |
| Jobs delivered to time | | |
| basic | 94·00 | 100·0 |
| other | 92·00 | 95·0 |
| Delivered without fault | 99·00 | 100·0 |

### Computers (Security)

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any records of unauthorised entry into his Department's computer files.

**Mr. Brooke:** The Treasury has no evidence of any unauthorised entry or attempted unauthorised entry into the Department's computer files.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether security of Treasury computer files is regularly checked for breaches by computer hackers.

**Mr. Brooke:** The Treasury takes all forms of security (including computer security) very seriously. The Department regularly reviews the security measures in place.

### Consumers (Cost of Living)

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an index for the cost of living for consumers based on the retail price index but excluding indirect taxes, including value added tax, excise duties and rates, measured at December each year from 1973 to 1979 taking the value of the index as 1979 equals 100.

**Mr. Lilley** *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The following are estimates of the movement in the RPI excluding VAT, excise duties and rates measured at December each year. Information before 1974 is not available.

| | *December 1979 = 100* |
|---|---|
| | *Index* |
| 1974 | 51 |
| 1975 | 62 |
| 1976 | 72 |
| 1977 | 80 |
| 1978 | 87 |
| 1979 | 100 |

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Consumers (Consultations)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements there are for consulting British consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is in regular touch with a large number of individuals and groups which use our services and have an interest in the issues the Department handles.

## DEFENCE

### Low-level Flying, East Lothian

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the speed, height and purpose of the low-level flights over Giffard, East Lothian, at *(a)* 2.30 pm on 6 February, *(b)* 3.35 pm on 8 February, *(c)* 11.50 am on 9 February, *(d)* 10.55 am and 12 noon on 10 February and *(e)* and 2.45 pm on 16 February;

(2) if he will make a statement on the speed, height and purpose of the low-level flight over grid reference 66.8 x 45.9 near Pencaitland, East Lothian, at 8.20 pm on 15 February; and if he will also explain his policy for such flights during hours of darkness.

**Mr. Neubert:** Military aircraft are authorised as a matter of routine to carry out low-level flying training in the areas mentioned at heights no lower than 250 ft and at speeds normally not exceeding 450 knots. Pilots must be capable of operating in darkness and therefore some strictly limited night flying is necessary.

Policy is that low-level flying training should be completed before 11 pm wherever possible because my Department recognises that aircraft noise can be particularly intrusive at night.

### Military Bases (Security)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military bases in Britain employ private security firms to *(a)* guard entrances to the bases and *(b)* in any other capacity.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Private security firms are employed at 27 military bases. It would not be in the interests of security to disclose the precise nature of the tasks which they perform.

### HMS Gannet (Helicopter Flight)

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 42, to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, he will name the three local residents taken on board a naval helicopter from HMS Gannet, and the criteria governing their selection for this facility.

**Mr. Neubert:** I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

### Radioactive Waste Conference (Gloucester Hotel)

**Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* officials of his Department, *(b)* officials from the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston and *(c)* officials from the Royal Naval Establishment at Devonport attended the conference on radio active waste at the Gloucester hotel on 22 and 23 February.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Thirteen Ministry of Defence officials attended the conference on radio-active waste. Ten were from the atomic weapons establishment at Aldermaston and two from the naval base at Devonport.

### Nuclear Submarines

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the next Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine to be brought out of service.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No firm decision has yet been taken on when the next Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine will be brought out of service.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Social Fund

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the social fund budget for the year has been spent to date.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Information relating to expenditure of the social fund budgets for the period to 31 January 1989, the latest for which firm figures are available, is in the national summary tables placed monthly in the Library.

### Transitional Payments

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when transitional payments will cease; and what will take their place.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We have already announced that housing benefit transitional payments will be reduced by £2 a week from 10 April 1989, the date of the uprating of Social Security benefits. For those in receipt of £2 a week or less, the payments will terminate on that date. Some payments will have ceased during the year because of a change in the applicant's circumstances. Housing benefit transitional payments were introduced to help vulnerable groups at the changeover to the new scheme in April 1988. This help was intended to be only transitional and it was made clear at the outset that transitional payments would be withdrawn in due course, for example, as other benefits increased.

### Funeral Payments

**Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), *Official Report*, column 294, he will lay the regulations needed to extend eligibility for social fund funeral payments.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I have today laid before Parliament the Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Expenses (General) Amendment Regulations 1989. These regulations will extend eligibility for help with funeral expenses under the social fund to people who qualify for community charge rebate in Scotland from April 1989 and community charge benefit in England, Wales and Scotland from April 1990.

### Pensioners (Earnings)

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of *(a)* ending the earnings limit to pension entitlement and *(b)* raising the earnings limit to £100 per week.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* The estimated public expenditure costs of *(a)* abolishing

the retirement pension earnings rule and *(b)* increasing the level of permitted weekly earnings to £100 would be £355 million[1] and £40 million[1] respectively in 1989-90.

[1] These estimates are based on 1989-90 benefit rates, and do not take account of tax effects.

### Transitional Protection

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate (i) the number of claimants who were awarded transitional protection following the implementation of the Social Security Act, (ii) the number of claimants who are still in receipt of transitional protection within each category and (iii) the number of claimants whose overall benefit will not rise on uprating day as a result of transitional protection.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* Precise information is not available for income support claimants. An estimated 1·4 million income support claimants were awarded transitional protection when that benefit was introduced in April 1988. Estimated numbers in the categories used in the technical annex to the White Paper on the reform of social security (Cmnd. 9691), still receiving transitional protection at the end of March 1989 are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Pensioners 80+ | 170,000 |
| Pensioners aged 60-79 | 340,000 |
| All pensioners | 510,000 |
| Persons receiving the disability premium | 30,000 |
| Lone parents | 160,000 |
| Couples with children | 30,000 |
| Others | 470,000 |
| Total | 1,200,000 |

An estimated 3·9 million income support claimants will receive a benefit increase at this year's uprating; approximately 570,000 are expected not to receive an increase.

To date 176,529 people have received housing benefit transitional payments and 149 have received income support transitional payments from the transitional payments unit in Glasgow. At 1 March 1989, 169,409 applicants were still receiving housing benefit transitional payments and 59 were receiving income support transitional payments, broken down into the following categories:

| | *Housing benefit* | *Income support* |
|---|---|---|
| Pensioners | 128,546 | 25 |
| Families with children | 19,796 | 25 |
| Sick and disabled | 11,585 | 9 |
| Widows | 8,636 | — |
| Industrial Injury Benefit recipients | 454 | — |
| War Pensioners | 392 | — |

An estimated 1,200 people receiving housing benefit transitional payments and 59 people receiving income support transitional payments are expected to receive no overall increase in their benefit income at uprating.

Sixty-five former family income supplement claimants received a protected amount following the change to family credit. A small proportion may still be receiving it. No one will still be receiving protection by the time of the April uprating.

### Income Support

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what would be the additional cost in Halifax if full uprating was awarded to all those in receipt of income support irrespective of payment of transitional additions;

(2) how many claimants in Halifax were awarded a transitional addition in April 1988; and how many of these will as a result receive this April *(a)* reduced uprating and *(b)* no uprating;

(3) what percentage of the following categories of claimants in Halifax in receipt of income support will receive no increase in their benefit payments as a result of this year's uprating because of the effect of transitional additions *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* persons in receipt of a disability premium, *(c)* single parents, *(d)* unemployed married, *(e)* unemployed single, *(f)* unemployed with children and *(g)* others.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 6 March at column *445*.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the additional cost of uprating would have been if full uprating was awarded to all those in receipt of income support irrespective of payment of transitional additions.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* Precise information is not available. The estimated additional cost would have been around £70 million.

## HEALTH

### Protein Fractionation Centre

**Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the medicines inspectorate has recently visited the protein fractionation centre; and if he is satisfied that this manufacturing facility has adequate accommodation to justify the issue of a manufacturing licence.

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the right hon. Member to the reply to him yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

### Consultation Exercises

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost in *(a)* real and *(b)* cash terms for each of the last five years to his Department and its predecessors producing and distributing printed material pertaining to consultation exercises on matters within his present responsibilities as (i) Green Papers and (ii) White Papers.

**Mr. Freeman:** Green and White Papers are generally published by HMSO. The Department, as did its predecessor the Department of Health and Social Security, purchase the number of copies they require of each paper for distribution internally, and to certain other recipients, from HMSO. The information on the costs of such purchases can be produced only at disproportionate cost. Records of distributions are not retained and retrospective distribution costs cannot therefore be calculated.

### Counterfeit Products

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps, following the product recall in

respect of the import of counterfeit Zantac tablets, his Department is taking to ascertain the extent of penetration of these or other counterfeit products into use by patients in the United Kingdom;

(2) what safeguards he is now preparing under the product licences (parallel imports) scheme to ensure that there is no repetition, in the case of any other product, of the importation of counterfeit Zantac tablets, apparently of Greek origin; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Mellor:** No evidence has appeared to show that any such counterfeit tablets actually reached United Kingdom pharmacists or patients.

Tests carried out on retained samples suggested that all supplies with the suspect batch number distributed within the United Kingdom may have been genuine. A batch of counterfeit Zantac tablets was rejected by a parallel importer and returned to his Greek suppliers. These counterfeits were accordingly discovered under existing safeguards.

Surveillance operations already carried out by the Department include a sampling and testing programme by the medicines inspectorate, requirements for licensed importers to verify the identity of each batch of imported material and close co-operation with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society inspectors.

We are still investigating the background to the counterfeit material and will be considering whether any changes may be necessary to the United Kingdom parallel import scheme. We also maintain close co-operation with our colleagues in the European Community.

### Life Support Systems

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are undertaken to protect intensive care or other patients from electronic interference in the normal operation of automated life support systems in the light of patient deaths in France.

**Mr. Freeman:** Patients are fully protected by the requirement that all such equipment in use in the NHS is constructed to the standard of BS 5724 (IEC 601-1) and the manufacturers are subject to approval under the Department's manufacturer registration scheme. Our central defect centre has no reports of difficulties arising of the kind experienced in France.

### Child Abuse (Greenwich)

**Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received about allegations of sexual and other abuse of children at homes run by the London borough of Greenwich; and what action he is taking in the matter.

**Mr. Mellor:** The attention of the Department has been drawn to a number of alleged matters of serious concern in community homes in the London borough of Greenwich. The social services inspectorate has discussed these issues with senior officers of the council and has been assured that all allegations are thoroughly investigated by the authority. The inspectorate also discussed the action being taken following its report on the management review of residential child care in the borough in 1987 and will continue to monitor the situation.

### AIDS

**Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the numbers by country of birth for each of the last three years for the following categories as recorded by the Parkside health authority *(a)* AIDS patients, *(b)* HIV positive patients and *(c)* drug dependency patients.

**Mr. Mellor:** We do not hold this information centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of Parkside health authority for this information.

**Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total budget spent on AZT for each of the years for which figures are available; and what the estimated budget for AZT for the next five years will be.

**Mr. Mellor:** We do not hold information centrally on the total costs of prescribing Zidovudine (formerly known as AZT). Some general practitioners are known to be prescribing the drug, but information about these prescriptions is not yet available. Zidovudine is also prescribed in the hospital service. In 1988-89, a total of £58·6 million has been made available to health authorities in England specifically as a contribution to the extra costs in providing AIDS and HIV related services, including the cost of Zidovudine. This figure will increase in 1989-90 to nearly £130 million.

### Under-fives

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing by local authority area the latest figures for *(a)* estimated population of up to four-year-olds, *(b)* local authority day nursery places provided and *(c)* full-time equivalent local authority day nursery places provided.

**Mr. Mellor:** The latest information on estimated population of children aged up to four years old and local authority day nursery places provided in each local authority in England are published in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1987, England", copies of which are available in the Library.

We cannot identify the number of full-time equivalent local authority day nursery places provided in figures we collect centrally.

### Travelling Expenses

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to amend the National Health Service (Travelling Expenses in Remission of Charges) Regulations 1988, so that he can deal with the cases of people wanting help with National Health Service costs stockpiled at Newcastle.

**Mr. Mellor:** I intend to lay regulations amending the National Health Service (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations, to take effect from 10 April. The amendments will apply only to claims made after that date. Claims currently stockpiled will be assessed under the existing regulations when the problem referred to in my reply to the hon. Member on 7 March, at column *491*, has been resolved.

### Sight Tests

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the new arrangements for sight testing are to come into effect.

**Mr. Mellor:** I have today laid two sets of regulations. The first will extend the National Health Service voucher scheme for glasses. The second will restrict National Health Service sight tests to the following groups:

- Children under 16
- Full time students under age 19
- People or their partners who are receiving Income Support or Family Credit
- People entitled to full remission of National Health Service charges
- The registered blind or partially sighted
- Those who are prescribed complex lenses
- Diagnosed diabetic and glaucoma sufferers
- Parents, brothers, sisters and children age 40 and over of glaucoma sufferers.

Financial assistance will be available through the voucher scheme towards the cost of their sight test for those on low income who are not eligible for a National Health Service test.

The regulations will also extend the current voucher scheme to provide help for adults with the cost of the repair or replacement of their spectacles where the loss or damage was the result of the person's disability, injury or illness.

We are consulting further on regulations which will set out the duties to be undertaken when a person's sight is tested.

I would like to make it clear that the second set of regulations to which I have referred does not impose a new charge for sight testing: it simply removes the National Health Service subsidy from people other than those in the groups listed in the table.

### DHSS (Partition)

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the partition of the Department of Health and Social Security as it affects the Civil Service.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* With effect from 1 April 1989 there will be separate administration votes for the two Departments details of which have already been published in this year's public expenditure White Paper. Each Department will employ its own staff, but a few internal management services will be administered by one Department on behalf of the other on a common service basis where this is cost effective.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Woodlands

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names, locations and areas of woodland grant scheme applications in excess of 100 hectares submitted since the start of the scheme in England, showing those for which an environmental assessment has been requested by the Forestry Commission; and if he will give the reasons why environmental assessment has not been requested in other cases.

**Mr. Ryder:** There have been no applications under the woodland grant scheme for more than 100 hectares of new planting in England.

### Badgers

**Mr. Amos:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards badgers.

**Mr. Ryder:** The welfare of badgers as a protected species is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, while the Badgers Act is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. However, I am required under section 9 of the Badgers Act (as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) to deal with applications to take badgers which are causing serious damage to land, crops, poultry or other forms of property. The Government's policy for dealing with badgers to control tuberculosis in cattle is that recommended by Professor Dunnet following his review in 1986. Action taken against badgers is limited to those farms where badgers have been implicated in a tuberculosis breakdown in cattle and consists of trapping and humanely killing the badgers, except those identified as lactating sows, which are released unharmed. In both such cases damage to agriculture has to be demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt before action is authorised.

### Beef Premium

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what administrative arrangements will be applied in connection with the payment of the Community special beef premium at livestock markets for slaughter and at slaughterhouses to comply with the condition that the premium may not be paid on more than 90 male animals from any farm; and if he will take any steps to ensure that cattle breeders in the less favoured areas will benefit from this scheme.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) my right hon. Friend announced on 6 March that the Community special premium for beef would in the first instance be applied in Great Britain when cattle are sold at live markets for slaughter and at slaughterhouses. Each beef producer may apply for premium on up to 90 head of male animals per year; this condition will be controlled centrally through computer systems on which the scheme will be run. Farming and trade interests see advantage in applying the premium on-farm, which would help to ensure that breeders in the less favoured areas would benefit directly from the scheme. Agriculture Ministers will review the practicability and cost effectiveness of moving in due course to an on-farm basis.

### Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to amend the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986.

**Mr. Donald Thompson:** My right hon. Friend laid before Parliament today the Dairy Produce Regulations 1989, which replace similar regulations made in 1986 and amended in 1988 and earlier this year.

The new regulations introduce changes to the quota transfer rules, including new procedures for the appointment of arbitrators in cases of dispute. They take into account changes in European Community legislation

which affect the calculation of liability to supplementary levy. A number of redundant provisions, most of them relating to the allocation of new quota rights, have not been re-enacted. Other changes have been made to clarify the meaning of certain provisions in the light of experience.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Select Committee Recommendations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Cope:** The five recommendations made about this Department contained in the reports of the Select Committee on Employment issued since June 1987, to which Government responses have been published, have been accepted in whole or in part by the Government, or have covered ground where the Government are already taking action.

### Consumers (Consultation)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Cope:** My Department maintains close contact with its clients. In the course of evaluating departmental programmes and activities surveys are undertaken of scheme participants and, where relevant, their employers or other intermediaries. The employment service collects information about customer attitudes through a wide range of surveys and due account is taken of their findings in planning future developments. Our proposals for training and enterprise councils will pass responsibility to employer-led groups at a local level. Our measures for assisting small firms and encouraging enterprise reflect demand from the small business sector and the views of participants in departmental schemes and representative organisations. All our health and safety proposals are subject to extensive public consultation and are submitted by the tripartite Health and Safety Commission. My Department also has regular discussions with business and client groups at regional and area level.

### Career Development Loans

**Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the people who obtained career development loans since the scheme was launched in 1986 were women; and how many of these women had children *(a)* in the under-fives age group and *(b)* in the five to 16 age group.

**Mr. Cope:** Since career development loans were launched in 1986, a total of 2,431 loans have been approved, of which 949, or approximately two out of every five loans, have been taken out by women. At the time of application, 35 of these women had children only in the under-five age group, 103 had children only in the five to 16 age group and a further 20 had children in both age groups.

### Training Schemes

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total Government expenditure on all Government-funded training schemes for each year since 1970, at 1988 prices.

**Mr. Cope:** The Manpower Services Commission was established in 1974 and expenditure figures can be provided only from the financial year 1974-75 onwards.

The total expenditure on training schemes by the Manpower Services Commission, and the Training Commission at 1988 prices was as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1974-75 | 318·5 |
| 1975-76 | 468·2 |
| 1976-77 | 598·1 |
| 1977-78 | 625·3 |
| 1978-79 | 728·6 |
| 1979-80 | 735·1 |
| 1980-81 | 810·4 |
| 1981-82 | 981·7 |
| 1982-83 | 1,087·8 |
| 1983-84 | 1,249·0 |
| 1984-85 | 1,283·5 |
| 1985-86 | 1,352·7 |
| 1986-87 | 1,491·5 |
| 1987-88 | 1,613·1 |

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to ensure that training schemes offer training and do not consist of simple labouring.

**Mr. Cope:** All YTS and employment training follows a laid-down design framework; trainees are wherever possible offered the opportunity to obtain recognised vocational qualifications; and staff of my Department's Training Agency, including the training standards advisory service, oversee the provision.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what opportunities are offered by training agencies in Glasgow to udertake training in landscape gardening.

**Mr. Cope** At present in Glasgow there are 146 training opportunities available in landscape gardening under YTS and 393 under employment training.

### Workplaces (Inspections)

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers' terms and conditions of employment were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in the last year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Nicholls:** Wages inspectorate statistics are not compiled for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions. Scotland is one division. The percentage of workplaces checked in Scotland in 1988 is included in a reply given in the *Official Report* of 1 March at columns *201-6*.

No information is available on the percentage of workers whose pay was checked in individual wages inspectorate divisions. Terms and conditions of employment, other than statutory requirements on minimum pay, are not a matter for the wages inspectorate.

### Earnings

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold at the latest available date in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole;

(2) how many and what percentage of the full-time male work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold at the latest available date in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

**Mr. Nicholls:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 8 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns 569-70.

### Construction Workers (Head Protection)

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he proposes to allow a religious exemption for Sikh construction workers in respect of head protection.

**Mr. Cope:** We recently received proposals from the Health and Safety Commission for regulations to require head protection to be worn by persons in construction work. These are being given careful consideration, together with the question whether an exemption should be allowed for turban-wearing Sikhs.

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the incidence of head injuries to construction workers wearing turbans in the past 12 months.

**Mr. Cope:** No separate statistics are kept by the Health and Safety Executive for head injuries to construction workers wearing turbans.

### National Training Task Force

**Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places on the national training task force have been allocated to women.

**Mr. Cope:** Two women have agreed to serve on the national training task force. They are Sophie Mirman, chairman and joint managing director of Sockshop International plc and Prudence Leith, managing director of Prudence Leith Ltd. Members have been appointed in an individual capacity because of their personal commitment to training.

### Work-related Further Education

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations about the 1989-90 level of funding for the work-related further education programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Cope** *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has written to the Secretary of State about the funding for work-related further education shown in the recent public expenditure White Paper.

A decrease in allocations to local education authorities is partially offset by an increase in the work-related further education development fund.

## SCOTLAND

### Blood Products

**Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums are currently outstanding to the blood transfusion service from the private sector for the supply of blood products.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I am informed by the Common Services Agency, of which the Scottish national blood transfusion service is a division, that its policy is that invoices should be paid by the end of the month following the month of issue. As at 8 March 1989, three invoices, the largest being for £2,225, were outstanding beyond that period. The Common Services Agency is pursuing prompt payment of the outstanding accounts.

### Protein Fractionation Centre

**Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Her Majesty's Government have completed the new building works required to ensure that the protein fractionation centre of the Scottish national blood transfusion service meets the standards of good manufacturing practice proposed by the medicines inspectorate in 1980-81.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The medicines inspectorate visited the protein fractionation centre in June 1988 and made recommendations in October 1988, including one relating to the expansion of storage areas. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Health gave approval in principle last month for new building works at the protein fractionation centre. The Common Services Agency will arrange for the building works to be carried out as quickly as practicable.

### Select Committees (Recommendations)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Agriculture and Energy Select Committees have each completed reports since June 1987 involving 12 recommendations falling within my field of responsibility. Eight of these have been accepted in whole or in part, or noted where no further action by Government was sought.

### Consumers (Consultation)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

**Mr. Rifkind:** In the Scottish Office there are extensive formal and informal arrangements to ensure that the views of interested parties including consumers are known and taken fully into account both in relation to existing work and the development and implementation of new initiatives. In particular, views on new initiatives are

canvassed widely through consultation documents. In response to a recommendation by the Scottish Consumer Council, comments received are placed on a public file (unless respondents request confidentiality) for the benefit of interested parties.

## Health Service (Grading)

**Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present position on grading of sisters at the Institute of Neurological Sciences at Southern General hospital.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** As a result of the regrading exercise 22 sisters have been graded F, 20 G, and one H.

## Forestry

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what circumstances the Forestry Commission requires an environmental assessment of a forestry proposal to convert native woodland or scrub into plantations of non-native trees.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 apply only to new planting. Proposals to convert existing woodland or scrub would therefore not require an environmental assessment.

Under the Government's broadleaved policy, woodland which is now broadleaved is expected to remain so, and special attention is given to ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands to ensure continuance of their special features.

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the rates of return on investment achieved by each conservancy of the Forestry Commission for its commercial forestry holdings at the time of the last quinquennial review; what was the date of that review; and if he will explain the costing depreciation and accounting proceedures used in making his assessment of return.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The last quinquennial review was undertaken by the Forestry Commission as at 31 March 1987. The rates of return on new planting and restocking for each conservancy are listed in special note 3 of the financial statements and accounts published in the Forestry Commission's 67th annual report and accounts 1986-87, copies of which are in the Library. The Forestry Commission's accounting policies are explained in note 1 to these accounts.

## Labour Statistics

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of people who were classified as long-term unemployed in (a) Greenock and Port Glasgow, (b) Strathclyde and (c) Scotland as a whole in December 1979, December 1982 and December 1988.

**Mr. Lang:** As the duration analysis of unemployed claimants is calculated quarterly, the information in the table relates to January in each of the years 1980, 1983 and 1989 ; due to changes in the coverage of the statistics during the period the figures are not directly comparable. (Parliamentary constituency figures were not compiled before June 1983.)

*Claimants unemployed for over one year*

| | *January 1980* | *January 1983* | *January 1989* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Greenock and Port Glasgow Parliamentary constituency | n.a. | n.a. | 3,123 |
| Strathclyde Region | 29,393 | 75,242 | 63,515 |
| Scotland | 46,915 | 119,874 | 106,190 |

This information is available in the Library.

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of unemployment, expressed as a percentage, according to the latest available figures for *(a)* the Greenock travel-to-work area, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and what were the comparable figures 10 years ago.

**Mr. Lang:** The unemployment rates for these areas on 12 January 1989 (the latest date for which information is available) are provided in the table, together with the data available for January 1979. Due to changes in the coverage and compilation of the count the latest unemployment figures and those available for 1979 are not directly comparable.

| | *Unemployment percentages* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *January 1979* | *January 1989* |
| Greenock travel-to-work area | 12·0 | 16·5 |
| Strathclyde region | 9·8 | 10·4 |
| Scotland | 8·4 | 12·1 |

This information is available in the Library.

## Beef Premium

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what administrative arrangements will be applied in connection with the payment of the Community special beef premium at livestock markets for slaughter and at slaughterhouses to comply with the condition that the premium may not be paid on more than 90 male animals from any farm; and if he will take any steps to ensure that cattle breeders in the less favoured areas will benefit from this scheme.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** My right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 6 March at column *433*, announced that the Community special premium for beef would in the first instance be applied in Great Britain when cattle are sold at live markets for slaughter and at slaughterhouses. Each beef producer may apply for premium on up to 90 head of male animals per year; this condition will be controlled centrally through the computer systems on which the scheme will be run. Farming and trade interests see advantage in applying the premium on-farm, which would help to ensure that breeders in the less-favoured areas would benefit directly from the scheme. Agriculture Ministers will review the practicability and cost effectiveness of moving in due course to an on-farm basis.

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# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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**SESSION 1988–89**

*27th February–10th March 1989*

## SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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### *Scope and arrangement of the Index*

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

### *Abbreviations*

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